



CENTRE FOR QUALITY ASSESSMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION

EVALUATION REPORT

STUDY FIELD of BUSINESS

at Šiaulių valstybinė kolegija

Expert panel:

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Study Field Data

Title of the study programme	<i>International Business</i>
State code	6531LX082
Type of studies	Professional bachelor studies
Cycle of studies	First
Mode of study and duration (in years)	Full-time (3 years) Part-time (4 years)
Credit volume	180
Qualification degree and (or) professional qualification	Professional Bachelor in Business Management
Language of instruction	Lithuanian
Minimum education required	Secondary education
Registration date of the study programme	2016.03.14

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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 the 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 on 09 May, 2022.

Ass. Prof. dr. Natalie Aleksandra Gurviš-Suits, *Department of Business Administration, Tallinn University of Technology, Estonia.*

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Ms Indrė Baltakytė, *Faculty of Economics & Management, 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.	Information on graduation papers and financial resources

1.4. BACKGROUND OF BUSINESS FIELD STUDIES AT ŠIAULIŲ VALSTYBINĖ KOLEGIJA

Šiaulių valstybinė kolegija (hereinafter referred to as the Institution and/or ŠVAKO) was established in 2002 as a result of merger of Šiauliai Higher School of Medicine and Šiauliai Higher Technical School. Today the Institution is the only professional higher education institution in Šiauliai County. The Institution has 2 faculties: has the Faculty of Health Care (3 departments) and Faculty of Business and Technologies (5 departments), there is also Studies and Science Coordination Unit as well Activities Planning and Management Unit. The Institution has 20 study programmes. As of the years 2021–2022 there are 1304 students studying at the Institution and 830 in the Faculty of Business and Technologies and in 2021 there were 384 graduates. The Institution employs about 100 lecturers and has more than 300 social partnership agreements and actively cooperates with strategic social partners - Šiauliai Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Crafts, Šiauliai Industrialists Association, Lithuanian Engineering Industry Association, Baltic Furniture Cluster and Lithuanian Plastics Cluster.

II. GENERAL ASSESSMENT

Business study field and first cycle at **Šiaulių valstybinė 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	4
2.	Links between science (art) and studies	4
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	3
7.	Study quality management and public information	3
	Total:	24

*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 (not applicable to HEIs operating in exile conditions)

According to SER, the aim of the study programme is “to train qualified international business specialists, capable to analyse business environment and processes, to create and manage a business, to implement international business projects, to communicate and negotiate in foreign languages by focusing on the changing international business environment, consumer needs and company’s goals by applying the latest scientific knowledge and socially responsible business principles in national and international markets”.

Learning outcomes identified for each programme are coherent with the aim of the programme, and the VI Qualification Level Description of National Lithuanian Qualifications Framework addressing all the main descriptions, are clearly formulated and divided into four groups: knowledge, understanding, special skills, and general abilities. Complexity level of the learning outcomes corresponds to National Lithuanian Qualifications Framework qualification requirements and the European Qualifications Framework (EQF). The evaluated programme is developed and regularly updated in line with the Šiaulių valstybinė kolegija Development Strategy for 2021–2030 and Strategic Action Plan for 2022–2024. The mission and visions of the Institution was reformulated in regards with the latest developments in the business environment. Therefore, the study programme aims to provide an important contribution to the development of smart Šiauliai region.

The programme is also closely attached to the latest requirements of the labour market in line with Lithuania's Progress Strategy Lithuania 2030, which outlines the importance of „paying close attention to the promotion of entrepreneurship and support for business creation”. The aim and learning outcomes of the programme also consider the Šiauliai City Strategy for Economic Development and Attracting Investment, aiming to provide

the local market with young entrepreneurs with strong practical and theoretical knowledge and skills.

In addition, the main focus of the programmes is its practical relevance and adherence to the needs of the labour market and the socially responsible development of the Šiauliai region. Programme also has an ESG impact including the course of *International Business Ethics and Social Responsibility* and the *Environmental and Human Safety* as well as a strong international aspect. During the visit, the expert panel noted that all the stakeholders are committed to the strong internalisation of the study programme and are actively participating in its regular updates. Social partners expressed a high level of cooperation with the Institution and it became evident that these learning outcomes are developed in tight cooperation with social partners and are regularly reviewed in line with the latest changes on the labour market.

According to SER “The uniqueness of the programme is also shown by the fact that students can choose one of three groups of subjects for deepening their knowledge in the study field: *International Business Marketing, International Business Finance or International Business Company Management*”. The expert panel has the opinion that the selected criterions are not the uniqueness but the general characteristics of the programme. The experts would recommend reformulating the uniqueness and pointing out its focus on the local labour market needs and the sustainable development of the Šiauliai region.

The expert panel considers it useful to find truly unique things about the programme in order to attract potential students and actively promote them on the market. It is also necessary to pay more attention to marketing the study programme. Make sure that the administration takes an active part in this process by spreading a good word of mouth, inviting marketing related social partners, alumni and current student and external advisers to guide the discussions, and look for ideas outside the category. During the visit, it became obvious that certain actions need to be taken in regard to identifying the target market of the programmes: it seems that ŠVAKO is aware of channels and methods for attracting students from Lithuania. However, more attention should be paid to social media where all current school children spend most of their time. Students can be attracted to assist to communicate via channels or at least – ask to audit ŠVAKO’s plans or actions. It would be also useful to choose certain countries (1-2 would be the best) to have a real breakthrough targeting foreign students. It will be helpful to participate in local study fairs, exhibitions, etc. This cooperation would be successful for both sides as foreign students will be looking for truly international experience and at the same time bring it to ŠVAKO.

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

According to SER The aim of the study programme is “to train qualified international business specialists, capable to analyse business environment and processes, to create and manage a business, to implement international business projects, to communicate and negotiate in foreign languages by focusing on the changing international business environment, consumer needs and company’s goals by applying the latest scientific knowledge and socially responsible business principles in national and international markets” is in line with the mission of the Institution. According to SER, Institutions’ mission concentrates on preparation of qualified specialists with Bachelor Degree adapting quickly to the changes at the labour market and creating a sustainable entrepreneurial contribution to the development of society, environment and the local region. The aims of the study programmes also correspond to the latest Strategic Action Plan for 2022–2024 contributing to the development of smart Šiauliai region, which was developed in close cooperation with Šiauliai City Municipality Administration, Šiauliai Academy of Vilnius University and Šiauliai Industrialists Association.

During the visit, it became evident that field and cycle study programme aims and outcomes are in line with the mission and strategic priorities of the Institution. The structure of the evaluated study programme enables achievement of stipulated learning outcomes by preparing highly educated professionals equipped with all required knowledge, research and personal skills as well as social abilities to start their career in the selected field of specialisation.

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

The structure of each study programme is based on the legal documents on higher education in the Republic of Lithuania, ECTS User’s Guide 2015 and the Lisbon Recognition Convention.

Programme corresponds to legal requirements as indicated in table No. 1.

Table No. 1. Study Programme’s International Business compliance to general requirements for first cycle study programmes

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	131
ECTS for internship	No less than 30 ECTS	33
ECTS for final thesis (project)	No less than 9 ECTS	12
Contact hours	No less than 20 % of learning	49,6%
Individual learning	No less than 30 % of learning	50,4%
Practical training and other practice placements	No less than one third of the programme	46.1%

Source: SER

During the studies students have two internships – professional and final. The structure of the programme and the duration enables to achieve the stipulated learning outcomes of the evaluated study programmes. During the meeting, it was stressed that students are satisfied with their study plan; they highly value the distance-learning option and are happy with smart communication with teaching staff and their availability and readiness for consultations.

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

The compatibility is achieved by meeting the requirements of the Law on Higher Education and Research of the Republic of Lithuania, Order No V-535 of the Minister of Education and Science of the Republic of Lithuania of 9 May 2010 “On the Approval of the Description of the Lithuanian Qualifications Framework”, Descriptor of the Study Field of Business Studies, General Requirements for the Provision of Studies and the ECTS User guide, 2015. While formulating learning outcomes HEI used the principle “from general to specific”

by determining the general aim of the programme and learning outcomes, supported by the course learning outcomes, which in turn are supported by the implemented teaching methods. During the study process the following modern teaching methods are implemented: case studies, simulations, team-work, discussions, situation modelling etc. However, it would add value to the program to implement contemporary student oriented learning methods like choice boards, flipped classrooms etc. which encourage students to seek for information and share it with teachers and classmates

During the visit, the expert panel noted that in some cases it was hard to provide evaluation of both hard and soft skills obtained during the course. Therefore, it would be useful to Introduce curriculum mapping to evaluate the skills developed throughout the course both hard and soft including digital ones.

In general, it can be concluded that the curriculum of the study courses and the stipulated teaching and assessment methods enable distinctive evaluation of the knowledge and skills obtained during the study process and are compatible with each other as well as with the aims, and learning outcomes of the Business study field and the evaluated programmes.

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 programme is developed and structured in accordance with the general requirements for professional higher education studies leading to the Professional Bachelor's Degree, the modular structure of the studies and the ECTS credit system. Each Programme consists of 180. The methods of study organisation used by Institution in the implementation of the Programmes are student class (contact) work and independent work with the ratio of approximately 50%/50%.

The curriculum of the study programmes is developed in order to provide students with general knowledge, research and social skills as well as special skills and abilities. The first year gives an overview of the business and management process in general supported by the courses of Economics, Management and Business Foreign Language, then followed by the and provides an overview of the selected study field by introducing the subjects of Accounting and Finance, Statistics, International Sales Management, International Logistics and International Marketing. These courses enable students to define the path of future specialisation and during the second year to choose among International Business Marketing,

International Business Finance and International Business Company Management, which are supported by the particular courses aimed to ensure the required knowledge and skills in the selected area.

Programme also has a strong practical aspect achieved by two internships which is also useful for choosing the possible topic for a graduation paper. The modules are allocated in a reasonable sequence and represent a coherent and explicit set of learning outcomes and evaluation criteria following the “general to specific” rule. Each module has well-defined learning objectives followed by the learning objectives of each course included in a particular module. During the visit, it became evident that programme courses ensure consistent development of competences of students enabling them to reach the learning outcomes and the aim of the programme.

The expert panel can conclude that the programme has a well-defined module structure following the logic of study process aiming to deepen knowledge by obtaining general skills and competences first and logically followed by the ones aiming to develop the specific competences in line with the selected specialisation. The expert panel finds it useful to incorporate sharing modules with HEIs from Baltic and Scandinavian countries to boost the number of students and the added value of the study programme. During the visit, it was noted by the alumni that the current version of the programme is more of a hard skill, and it would be useful to have more soft skills incorporated.

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

Students are given a possibility to choose full-time and part-time studies. All studies have a component of distance learning, enabling studies to create personalised study plans. During the visit, students mentioned that these options are highly valued by them and they highly value cooperation with the teaching staff, which is always available for consultations and always provides responses on time.

Students can choose elective subjects related to the selected specialisation in marketing, management or business field. Each particular specialisation is supported by the appropriate courses aiming to broaden obtained knowledge and skills in the particular area. Erasmus+ programme also gives students a perfect opportunity to personalise their studies by spending a semester or a whole academic year abroad or in other HEI, get valuable experience, obtain new knowledge and get intercultural social and personal skills. There is also a possibility to

pass the internship of two months in the company or organisation outside Lithuania and get a personal experience of international labour market terms and conditions. At the end of the course students can choose the topic of their graduation paper in accordance to their interests and selected specialisation and attach it to the needs of a particular company or industry.

Study programme is regularly updated following the requirements of social partners, recommendations of the alumni and the needs of the local region and labour market. Regular meetings with stakeholders are organised by the Institution to keep up to date with latest developments in the field of business. During the meeting with social partners it was mentioned that they are constantly involved in these meetings and have a good overview of the study process and the qualification of the students and highly value the competences of graduates.

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

Final thesis preparation and defence procedure is regulated by the Description of Graduation Paper Development, Defence and Evaluation Procedure of Business and Public Management and Social Sciences Study Field Groups Programmes of the Faculty of Business and Technologies. Students have the right to defend a final thesis after the completion of the study programme and getting positively evaluated for all the courses. The final topic is chosen by the student in cooperation with supervisor and social partners representing a relevant problem of the selected company. The topic is later approved by the Dean and the defence schedule and date are stipulated by the Head of the Department.

The Defence Committee always includes five members, with three being experienced professionals in the field of the study Programme (one can be an academic from other HEI), one appointed as a Chair of the Qualification Committee. Students have to prepare their thesis in accordance with general requirements as well as the principles of academic honesty and integrity.

Experts' panel confirms that graduation papers are of a good quality with the topics focusing on contemporary real business situations. It can be concluded that during the studies students get all the necessary skills and knowledge to prepare and successfully defend graduation papers. This was confirmed during the visit by reviewing the selected theses by the expert panel. During the visit, an expert panel got confirmation from students that they highly appreciate cooperation with academic and social partners while writing their graduation papers.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. Strong collaboration with social partners.
2. Strong regional approach to the programme, and high awareness of understanding mission and aims of the Institution among all stakeholders.

(2) Weaknesses:

1. Lack of curriculum mapping – useful tool to identify academic gaps and evaluate the coherence of the study process.
2. There should be more courses developing soft skills including the digital ones.

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

The Institution has a strong focus on applied research, which is also reflected in the Strategy for 2021-2030. During the years of 2019-2021 teaching staff actively participated in international conferences and developed and presented 38 papers at national and international conferences in Estonia, Azerbaijan, Latvia, Italy, Portugal, Finland, Denmark, and Belarus. Academic staff also takes an active part in various research projects, during the years 2019-2021 more than 14 research projects with the dedicated funding were carried out.

The results of the projects are practically implemented and disseminated among colleagues and social partners. Academic staff also acts as an external expert for various organisation and companies in the field of business and management as well as the members of the editorial board of various scientific journals, professionals association (EAA, Lithuania Association of Accountants), chair of the sessions on international conferences and external evaluator of the study programmes carried out by the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education.

Teaching staff of the evaluated programme is fully aware of the Erasmus+ programme teaching and staff exchange opportunities and is very active in sharing and gaining new

experience. During the visit of the expert panel, five teachers of the International Business study programme were on Erasmus trip, others confirmed their participation visiting Albania, Italy, Portugal etc. The teaching staff was satisfied with the selection process and the required paperwork. During the meeting, the representatives of the teaching staff also confirmed that they are always welcomed to use various opportunities to attend conferences and seminars as well as participate in the Erasmus programme funded by the Institution.

In general, it can be concluded that the research-related activity of the teaching staff is quite high, which is supported by the data of Table 2.

Table No. 2. Research-related activity of the teaching staff.

Year	Year Publications in peer-reviewed publications	Presentation at conferences	Third-party Funded research	Total
2019	14	21	6	41
2020	11	11	5	27
2021	9	6	3	18

There is a registered periodical peer-reviewed journal “Applied Scientific Research” Šiaulių valstybinė kolegija, published since 2022 focusing mainly on the applied research conducted on the international level aiming to attract academics from Lithuania and abroad. Publications are free of charge in both Lithuanian and English, the journal has an online version only (<https://ojs.svako.lt/>).

The expert panel acknowledges the efforts of the Institutions’ dedication to research results and various publications and would recommend engaging experts-practitioners in publication activities in the form of joint cooperation.

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

During the visit, the expert panel got full evidence that teaching staff implements case study methods in the study process. Lecturers also actively use contemporary study methods like discussion, practical projects worked out in teams, visits to companies and use

the latest available literature and databases for research and teaching activities. Teachers are active in presenting their research at scientific conferences, but less active in publishing papers in peer-reviewed journals. Annex 3 in the SER presents only 19 such publications. Moreover, the research output of study field faculty is decreasing (SER, p.17, Table 2.1).

Academic staff also share experience during guest lecturers and Erasmus visits. Teaching staff of the Institution actively participates in the Erasmus programme bringing new knowledge, skills and teaching techniques back home to disseminate best practices among colleagues and students. During courses relevant extra teaching material is incorporated into the study process like ISO9000 standards, online marketing complexes: 2P-2C-3S, 4S, 6I, quality improvement measures and methods: LEAN, 5S, 6 Sigma methodologies, latest version of Incoterms etc. The expert panel would recommend active involvement of alumni practitioners in the teaching process.

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

During the visit it became evident that the Institution has modern facilities and resources to enable students to get involved in scientific research and in the study process. Each year an International Annual Student scientific conference “Business, New Technologies and Smart Society”, is organised where students are encouraged to take an active part and present their research findings in joint cooperation with the teaching staff. Conference proceedings are also published and made publicly available.

During the evaluation period, a total of 5 students prepared publications together with the members of the teaching staff: 2019 - two students, 2020 -one student; 2021 - two students. In 2021 three students made presentations at the international students’ conference.

Strong link between research and studies is also secured by the topics of the graduation paper being closely related to the practical field. Usually topics consist of analysis of the real-life problems in a certain company, followed by offering solutions and giving practical recommendations.

Foreign professors and teaching staff involved in Erasmus programmes also contribute to deep interrelation of scientific research and study process. However, during the meetings and visit it was noted that alumni could be more actively attracted to the teaching process as invited guest lecturers and cooperate with both teaching staff and students in

various research projects.. are not The expert panel concluded that all the necessary conditions are enabled by the Institution to involve students and teaching staff in the applied research and various scientific activities.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. Strong focus on the applied research.

(2) Weaknesses:

1. Rather low cooperation of academic staff with social partners in terms of research and scientific projects.
2. Low involvement of alumni into the teaching process.

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 rules are provided on the website of the ŠVAKO. Admission to the study programme takes place in accordance with the procedure prescribed by law, which is administered by LAMA BPO (Lithuanian Association of Higher Education Institutions to organize general admission). There are no special requirements for admission to the study programme, but the competitive score of the candidates is the most important criterion. The competitive score is based on the minimum admission requirements for ŠVAKO. The minimum requirements shall be established in accordance with the procedure established by the Minister of Education, Science and Sports of the Republic of Lithuania. ŠVAKO advises from the contacts listed on the website. During the expert panel visit, all of the students stated that they were satisfied with this criterion and found no problems.

During the visit it became evident that ŠVAKO is aware of channels and methods on how to attract students from Lithuania. However, more attention should be paid to social media where all current school children spend most of their time. Students can be attracted to assist to communicate via channels or at least – ask to audit ŠVAKO's plans or actions. It would be also useful to choose certain countries (1-2 would be the best) to have a real

breakthrough for targeting foreign students by participating in local study fairs. This cooperation will be successful for both sides in regard to sharing international experience.

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

ŠVAKO applies the assessment, recognition, and crediting of non-formal and informal learning competencies. ŠVAKO recognizes competencies acquired in the system of non-formal adult education or through self-education, which a person can substantiate and prove as the study results of programmes or individual subjects carried out at the Faculty of Business and Technology. To do this, applicants must complete a registration form and prepare a portfolio in consultation with the staff responsible. After completing these steps, they must attend a meeting of the evaluation committee, where, upon successful recognition of the acquired competencies, supporting documents are provided. The procedure for the assessment and recognition of non-formal learning achievements is paid by the candidate. By the expert panel, this is standard procedure.

3.3.3. Evaluation of conditions for ensuring academic mobility of students

Students have the possibility to spend a period of studies outside of Lithuania according to the agreement and international mobility programmes (Erasmus+ and Nordplus).

The Erasmus+ programme provides students with opportunities to go to study (for 4-5 months) or internship (2-3 months) in the institutions of the European Union (EU) or non-EU countries with which ŠVAKO has concluded a cooperation agreement. A list of institutions that students can visit is available on the ŠVAKO website. There are two selections for Erasmus+ studies and Erasmus+ internships per academic year. One selection takes place in March and another selection in October. All students can participate in the selection. Students must submit a cover letter, a curriculum vitae, and an evaluation sheet approved by the dean's office for the final semester. The level of proficiency in the language or language of the intended institution of study at the institution is also assessed. The student's communication skills and readiness for intercultural experience are assessed. An important criterion is the student's involvement in social activities. During the period of 2019-2021 in total 10 students participated on Erasmus+ program: 2019 – six students, 2020 – 2 students and 2 in

2021. According to SER and the information received during the meetings “the Erasmus+ exchange programme aims at 4 percent student mobility from the total number of students (Education Exchange Support Foundation). The number of incoming students during this period equals to 13.

Scholarships are given to exchange students. Students with special needs can apply for additional support. During the online visit these aspects were all confirmed by students.

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

Students can receive a subsidised loan for tuition or part-time tuition or living expenses. The procedure for granting, administering, and repaying loans shall be established by the Government. Accommodation services for students are offered in two newly renovated and modernised dormitories, primarily for orphans, carers, and the disabled (or disabled parents / single parents). The need for dormitories among students is fully met. ŠVAKO students can receive free psychological help. Students are also provided with career support. During the meeting with the group of experts, the students stated that they were informed about the ways of support. It was also stated that support is provided quickly, and counselling is helpful. Consultations are held by contact, using MS Teams or e-mail. Students can express themselves in a variety of artistic, cultural, physical, and scientific activities. All kinds of support for students are effective.

3.3.5 Evaluation of the sufficiency of study information and student counselling

At the beginning of the course, all students are introduced to the procedure and criteria for the assessment of the study results of the subject, the responsibility for the unfairly performed tasks, interim reports, and examinations are explained. At the end of each semester, students are asked to complete a Programme Performance Assessment Questionnaire. Students provide feedback on all study subjects for that semester and may write additional notes. The results and remarks of the survey allow for improving the quality of the implementation of the whole Programme and the content and teaching of individual subjects in order to achieve the intended results. During the meeting with the experts, the students stated that their comments are considered.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. ŠVAKO provides complete, clear, and accessible information to the public and students.
2. Studies at ŠVAKO can be combined with work – both in full-time and part-time modes.

(2) Weaknesses:

1. Low level of encouragement of students to cooperate with the teaching staff in the field of science.

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 process comprises a variety of teaching methods going from the traditional lecture to the use of simulations. This diversity calls on the student to take an active role in his/her learning and is a positive aspect of the programme. Furthermore, the study process allows students to study both in part-time and full-time modes.

The core programme is completed by a selection of subject groups that allow for the individualisation of the studies and take the students' needs into account. The choice is limited to 3 specialisations, all in line with industry requirements and allowing for a deepening of the selected study area.

Learning takes place in various environments going from the classroom to industry and even virtual environments. Coursework is complemented by a 2-month internship in either a local or international business that enables the consolidation of the learning outcomes in a real-life situation and allows the students an initial contact with their future profession.

Many of the faculty are currently involved in research and have published at the national and international levels, some even together with their students. This impacts the teaching and course content in a positive manner allowing for a transfer of knowledge directly from the field to the classroom. The Expert panel feels that the needs of the students are being

considered and that the intended learning outcomes are being reached through a rich variety of processes. The expert panel also noted the absence of English-speaking faculty staff to support and promote the internationalisation of the programme.

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

Access to the study programme goes past addressing only socially vulnerable groups. The College provides support for potential students through visits to the senior classes in the area and providing consultations on subjects that will be assessed on the State exams that the students must pass before applying to the programme. This is to be commended as this approach is very inclusive and is in line with the Institution's aim to "ensure social integration, human rights and equality for all" (SER, pg.29).

Both the Study Record and the Student Support Office provide services for students with special needs. Additionally, teachers may also identify students who require more individualised programmes to successfully accomplish their studies. Instruments such as social scholarships and state-subsidised loans ensure access to the programme for all. And students with special needs are also eligible for financial assistance through a different State-subsidised instrument.

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

Student study progress is evaluated through both interim and final assessments. This is relatively standard and could be expanded, for example, through the inclusion of peer assessments or the use of portfolios. Student progress is systematically monitored during and at the end of each semester. Students having difficulty with their studies are identified early on in the programme and a variety of measures are available to support the student in the pursuit of his/her studies. Teachers may also initiate support for students during their first year of study. This monitoring of the student study progress allows for the subsequent planning of the study process at an individual level.

Students receive feedback in a variety of forms both in class and assessment-related throughout the semester as well as having the possibility to consult with their teachers. In addition, to the feedback students receive, there are a variety of support services

available to all students including counselling, library services, and the Self-study Centre among others, all which promote student self-assessment. In addition to this, there are seminars available for the students to attend which help them to assess and take responsibility for their learning.

Despite these measures, the student numbers show a significant decrease after the first year of the programme. The Institution has identified reasons for this decrease, however, is encouraged to review what can be done to counter this.

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

In terms of graduate employability, graduates should have no trouble finding employment with average employment levels for business specialists in the region coupled with close collaboration with social partners.

In terms of career-tracking the Institution is developing processes that can be put into place as the programme grows. No fundamental shortcomings were identified.

The Institution is particularly sensitive to regional needs and works closely with its social partners to align the programme with industry requirements. Frequent exchange with all the stakeholders allows for constant updating of the programme as market demands evolve.

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

The Institution has policies in place to maintain academic integrity and prevent any form of discrimination. Students are also supported through various student services including counselling and psychological services to deal with any issues that may arise.

The lowering of the cut-off grade for admissions in 2022 will encourage the inclusion of a wider range of students and prevent grade-related discrimination. The Institution's administration is confident that there is sufficient experience amongst the faculty to support students who may be less well prepared to meet the required level.

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

A procedure of appeal is in place and the students are made aware of it. At this time no appeals have been registered in the programme under evaluation accordingly the effectiveness of the procedure cannot be evaluated. There are no notable shortcomings in the procedures currently set up.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. Collaboration between teachers and students for publications, conferences, and research related events, national and international.
2. Close relations with social partners and local industry to develop a programme suited to their needs.

(2) Weaknesses:

1. Very low student numbers.
2. A lack of English-speaking faculty to support the internationalisation of the programme.

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 Šiaulių valstybinė kolegija business study field and study programme International Business involves 29 teachers; however, during the 2021-2022 academic year study field subjects are taught by 13 teachers and the ratio between the number of field teachers and the number of students studying was 1:3 (13 teachers / 34 students). Such a high teacher/student ratio is justified by the number of study courses delivered and that several subjects are taught by several teachers (SER, p. 33).

All teachers have at least a master's degree, and nine of them have PhD, thus the proportion of staff with PhD degree is 31% - this could be considered as high for the level of the programme. The pedagogical work experience of the teachers ranges from 6 to 37 years. The majority of the Field teachers have at least 3 years of practical experience in the subject

they teach; however, 2 teachers have only internships, and one teacher without any practical experience.

Teachers are active in presenting their research at scientific conferences, but less active in publishing papers in peer-reviewed journals. Annex 3 in the SER presents only 19 such publications. Moreover, the research output of study field faculty is decreasing (SER, p.17, Table 2.1).

This allows concluding that the number and qualification of the lectures in the Šiaulių valstybinė kolegija study field comply with the Description of General Requirements because more than 10 percent of the college study field subjects are taught by scientists. More than half of the field of study teaching staff have not less than 3 years of practical work experience in the subject area they are teaching. Teachers with a doctoral degree teach 43 percent of the scope of study field subjects, and 12 percent of study field subjects are taught by doctoral students.

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

The mobility of teachers in the Business field of study at Šiaulių Valstybinė kolegija programme takes place mainly as part of ERASMUS+ and is particularly encouraged. The International Relations Office announces the ERASMUS+ programme selection contest for teachers once a year following the Description of the Procedure (from the SER document).

During the three years, 7 teachers made academic mobility visits abroad and went to 16 mobility visits (Table 5.3 from the SER). This accounts for 33 percent of all field teachers; still, outgoing mobility has decreased significantly during 2020 - 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Considering the number of students, the study Programme has good numbers of incoming mobility. During the three years, 13 teachers from 9 countries came to ŠVAKO (SER, p.38, Table 5.4).

During the visit, teachers confirmed that they regularly receive information about mobility opportunities and that all teachers have equal opportunities for academic mobility. In addition to mobility, before Covid-19 ŠVAKO organised International Week, during which the academic exchange development possibilities for teachers as well as students were discussed with the arriving foreign partner representatives, and visiting foreign teachers gave lectures to the Programme students.

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

The Institution implements staff competences development and improvement system that is described in the Quality Manager's Human Resources Management procedure. This system includes the teachers' competences development strategic directions, competences development planning, organisation, and implementation monitoring, evaluation, and recording activities. In addition, the Institution has other formal procedures related to staff development - Description of Procedure of Staff Internships and Description of Procedure of Staff Academic Visits.

During the visit, the confirmation was received that the competence development needs are planned annually by the teachers together with the Head of Department taking into account the Department's annual activity plans, the teacher's tenure workload plans, and the teacher's expressed desires. All the staff have equal conditions to professionally improve their skills in formal or informal ways.

Every year all teachers have to account for their scientific methodological work during the meeting in the Department. Every 5 years teacher qualification attestation is carried out. During attestation teachers' compliance with job requirements and teachers' activities during the term are assessed.

It can be concluded that overall conditions of competence improvement of teaching staff are good; still, some of the lecturers lack professional experience. However, this gap is filled by the possibility to participate in professional internships.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. Good proportion of teaching staff have PhDs.
2. The number of the academic staff is high concerning the number of the students in the programme.

(2) Weaknesses:

1. Professional work experience of all members of the teaching staff should be ensured.

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 resources available are quite traditional but good and include both informal and formal spaces to support the learning process. During the discussions held with the expert committee reference was made to the “Enhancement of Physical Well-being Project” currently underway which should allow for the development of more leisure spaces for the students. There is still room for innovation in the resources available for teaching and learning specifically for the Faculty of Business and Technology, for example increased use of simulation, a collaborative workspace, use of video by both the students and teachers, or multiscreen classrooms for concurrent group work and presentations.

There is a large variety of informational resources available to support students in their studies and this at both the individual, and group levels. Information is linked to the study programme, to student-wellbeing, to research and to leisure. Faculty mentioned during the discussions with the expert panel that there is still a need for some resources such as Microsoft 365.

Financial resources are also well documented, with information about scholarships, student housing and financial support available.

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

The Institution is aware that resources call for continual updating but should pay attention to both physical and including formal and informal spaces, and the virtual resources, from moodle through to online databases that can enhance the teaching. Additionally, attention should also be paid to the inclusion of digital tools that can impact teaching and learning such as Wooclap, Prezi, Jamboard, etc.

A budget is available for the updating of resources and there are mechanisms which allow for all stakeholders to make suggestions for new acquisitions, renovations or other changes.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. The variety of resources available;
2. The commitment to the continued development of learning facilities and resources and the integration of the faculty and students in this process.

(2) Weaknesses:

1. Limited online resources for teachers;
2. Good traditional learning spaces but a lack of innovative learning facilities.

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

The ŠVAKO internal quality management system is implemented to manage the quality assurance processes incorporating the principles of EFQM (the European Foundation for Quality Management). According to SER „At least once a month the Department organises a meeting to which the Department' teachers are invited. During the Department' meetings, quality improvement issues, survey results, student achievement, the topics of the Graduation Papers are approved, the Department' annual plans and reports are approved, teachers' workload plans and reports, the Studies Field Committee proposals for improving the quality of studies, etc. are discussed“. During the expert online-visit it was noted that changes and improvements of the study programme are not updated frequently. Such frequency of meetings is questionable and proved to be not organised that frequently. According to SER „Students and employers are involved into the Committee; they participate in implementing and monitoring the Programme, express their opinion, make concrete proposals and participate in decision making regarding field study programmes implementation.“ During the meetings it was mentioned that students submit their proposals to the Student Council and they are passed to the Committee. It was also mentioned that students have meetings about changes in the program and how the program can be made more attractive and contemporary. Students also outlined that there is a good relationship and cooperation with the administration at they feel like the most important part of our college. Latest student

proposals and the actions of the institutions are made publicly available at <https://svako.lt/lt/studentams/studijos/studiju-kokybe>.

There is no Alumni involvement in study committee activity, the graduates experience and insights would be profitable for study programme improvement. The members of the committee consist of three teachers of the Business Studies Field, one representative of students and employers, and the Head of the Department. Experts would suggest adding more social partners into study committee meetings. The opinion of one social partner would not be very representative of the market situation.

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

According to SER “When updating the Programme in 2018, taking into account the opinion of teachers and students and in order to ensure the consistency of the achievement of learning outcomes, the study plan was amended: *Methodology of Applied Research* and *International Business Organization and Business Simulation Practice* were transferred to the further semester. Taking into account the opinion of teachers and students and in order to ensure the consistency of the achievement of learning outcomes”. There is a lack of information about study programme content improvement after committee meetings. According to SER „Ties with the graduates are constantly maintained on purpose to evaluate their satisfaction with the study Programme, to find out their opinion about the study quality, what general and (or) professional skills they lack when gaining a foothold in the labour market“. During the site-visit, from Alumni this information was not provided. Inviting Alumni as guest lecturers to share experience, involvement in committee activity would bring additional value to internal quality assurance. ŠVAKO has enthusiastic and motivated graduates that expressed a desire to share their experience with students. The strong collaboration with social partners was noticeable seeking to improve internal quality assurance. Recommendation would be to update information to social partners about the improvement that college has done after round table discussions, study committee meetings, etc.

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

According to SER „The Dean annually collects information about the material provision of the Programme, the need for funds for the purchase or update of the software is considered“. The facilities and resources are sufficient to achieve study results and ensure the quality of studies. The main concern is that during the site-visit students said that they prefer online studies and not all facilities and resources like on-sites visits to companies, business simulations, and in class collaboration with teaching staff could be implemented.

According to SER „Information on changes in the quality of the Programme, its evaluation and results are made public at the meetings of the Department, the Deanery, the Faculty Council, at the Committee's meetings, on the Institution's website and at organised round-table discussions. This information is available to teachers, students, Faculty administration, and social partners“. Student survey reports are added publicly in the HEI website but other stakeholders (social partners, alumni) have no ability to review the reports in a publicly accessible manner. Optional solution the latter problem is to inform all stakeholders with quality improvement and this would be greatly suggested.

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

According to SER „The implementation of quality assurance in studies is monitored through periodic surveys: after each semester, formal student surveys on subjects studied and the quality of teaching are organised. The survey data is published on Institution's Website (<https://svako.lt/lt/studentams/studijos/studiju-kokybe>). “This is a great advantage that surveys are publicly available (as mentioned in the 3.7.3) and students can express their opinion, suggestions on current time. During the site-visit, it was observed that students are satisfied with the study quality of ŠVAKO. Students participate in surveys after each semester. However, the rate of participation should be improved (2021-2022 just 33% of students answered the survey, 2020-2021 - 40.5% (<https://svako.lt/lt/studentams/studijos/studiju-kokybe>)).

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. Student surveys are publicly available and students can express their opinion, suggestions in a real time format;

2. Strong collaboration with social partners is noticeable seeking to improve internal quality assurance.

(2) Weaknesses:

1. Exclusion of Alumni from Study Committee activities;
2. Lack of general feedback about study quality improvement to social partners;
3. Regular Department meetings with teachers do not guarantee continuous quality improvement;
4. Low percentage of student survey responses.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

Evaluation Area	Recommendations for the Evaluation Area (study cycle)
Intended and achieved learning outcomes and curriculum	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Implement contemporary student oriented learning methods like choice boards, flipped classrooms etc. which encourage students to seek for information and share it with teachers and classmates. 2. More tight cooperation with alumni and their involvement in the study process. 3. Introduce curriculum mapping to evaluate the skills developed throughout the course both hard and soft, including digital ones. 4. Sharing modules with HEIs from Baltic and Scandinavian countries to boost the number of students and the added value of the study programme. 5. Identify truly unique things about the study programme.
Links between science (art) and studies	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Involve alumni practitioners in the teaching process. 2. Encourage cooperation of academic staff with social partners in terms of research and scientific projects. 3. To encourage cooperation between students and teachers in the field of science.
Student admission and support	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Pay more attention to marketing of the study programme, identify target groups and develop a clear strategy in targeting foreign students. 2. Attract students more actively to cooperate with teaching staff in the field of research.
Teaching and learning, student performance and graduate employment	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Since there are currently only a limited number of graduates, the Expert panel urges the Institution to strengthen the relationship between the graduates through an alumni network to better promote the programme and attract future applicants. 2. Measures should be taken to limit the number of students withdrawing from the programme.

Teaching staff	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Encourage teachers to publish articles in peer-reviewed journals.
Learning facilities and resources	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Attention should be paid to having more flexible and networked spaces that allow a seamless integration between the informal and the formal and allow learning to take place any time in physical or virtual environments. 2. The use of Microsoft 365 and increased attention to the development of digital competency among staff and students.
Study quality management and public information	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Invite Alumni as guest lecturers to share experience, involvement in committee activity would bring additional value to internal quality assurance. 2. Constantly update social partners with the information on the improvement that college was done after round table discussions, study committee meetings etc.

VI. SUMMARY

Main positive and negative quality aspects of each evaluation area of the study field of *Business* at Šiaulių valstybinė kolegija:

The evaluated study programme is developed and regularly updated in accordance with the requirements of labour market, society and legal requirements. Programme has a well-balanced module structure and all modules are compatible with each other. The aims, objectives and programme Learning Outcomes reflect the labour market and have an ESG impact by introducing courses related to ethics and CSR. However, it would be useful to identify really unique features of the programme and to develop a clear market strategy in targeting potential students. It would also make sense to share modules with HEIs from Baltic and Scandinavian countries to boost the number of students and the added value of the study programme.

There exists a strong link between study process and science with final theses aiming to provide solutions to real life problems. Teachers are participating in projects, present the results of their research at various conferences. However, the level of cooperation of academic staff with social partners in terms of research and scientific projects could be beneficial for both sides as well as the publication activity of the teaching staff in international peer-reviewed journals with high impact factor.

Student support and admission process is well-organised and transparent. After the admission students are provided with consultations from teaching staff and administration. Students get all kinds of support including personal and psychological. There is also offered financial support in the form of scholarships and state-subsidised loans. Additional support is also available for students with special needs. However, more actions should be taken in regard to attracting students and choosing a clear marketing strategy.

Study programme operates in a teaching and learning environment that is responsive and supportive to student needs. Various teaching methods used by teaching staff ensure the achievement of Learning Outcomes. However, more attention should be paid to the development of digital competency among academic staff and students. Internships implemented into the study process give students a valuable experience to get a good understanding of the real business environment. Strong practical aspect adds value to the study programmes.

The programme is delivered by an experienced and enthusiastic group of teachers. However, more teachers from social partners and alumni should be attracted to the programme to make a greater focus on the implementation of student-centred learning principles in their courses. Teachers are actively taking part in mobility projects like Erasmus+ and share their experience with colleagues. They also attend conferences, workshops seminars and seminars to keep up to date with their subject. However, publication activity in peer-reviewed journals remains low.

Learning resources and facilities are at a good level, all auditoriums and laboratories in general and computer and ŠVAKO Entrepreneurship Laboratory in particular have the necessary equipment. Students have access to scientific databases like EBSCO, e-books, and scientific journals. All student papers are checked for plagiarism.

Management and Quality Assurance functions are in place and well managed, existing academic regulations are comprehensive and transparent. implements various measures to ensure internal quality by involving all stakeholders in the form of roundtables. However, it would be beneficial to constantly update social partners with the information about the improvement that college has done after round table discussions, study committee meetings etc. Feedback with a high rate of response from students and social partners would be beneficial.

Expert panel chairperson signature: