



STUDIJŲ KOKYBĖS VERTINIMO CENTRAS
CENTRE FOR QUALITY ASSESSMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION

INFORMATICS ENGINEERING FIELD OF STUDY

at Utenos kolegija

EXTERNAL EVALUATION REPORT

Expert panel:

1. Panel chair: Prof. (FH) Dr. Johannes Lüthi (signature)
2. Academic member: Prof. Dr. Bojan Dolšek
3. Academic member: Prof. Dr. Mimoza Ibrani
4. Social partner representative: Tomas Urbonas
5. Student representative: Matas Zaloga

SKVC coordinator: Greta Misevičiūtė

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I. INTRODUCTION

1.1. OUTLINE OF THE EVALUATION PROCESS

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

1.2. REVIEW PANEL

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

The composition of the review panel was as follows:

1. Panel chair: Prof. (FH) Dr. Johannes Lüthi
2. Academic member: Prof. Dr. Bojan Dolšak
3. Academic member: Prof. Dr. Mimoza Ibrani
4. Social partner representative: Tomas Urbonas
5. Student representative: Matas Zaloga

1.3. SITE VISIT

The site visit was organised on 30 October 2025 onsite.

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

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

Some of the above meetings have been supported using a translational service.

1.4. BACKGROUND OF THE REVIEW

Overview of the HEI

Utenos Kolegija (UK), in the sequel also referred to as the Higher Education Institution (HEI), is a public higher education institution offering practice-oriented first-cycle studies. It was established in 2000 through the reorganisation of Utena Further Education Medical and Business Schools and operates as a public institution. The HEI is governed by a Rector alongside the Board and Academic Board, with student interests being taken care of by the Students' Representation. Its academic structure comprises two faculties — Medicine and Business & Technology — housing five faculty departments. Institution-wide units include six administrative departments, and among others, an E-Study Centre, and a Library. As of 1 January 2025, Utena HEI delivers 18 study programmes across 16 study fields, including six programmes within the Department of Engineering and Technology.

Overview of the study field

The Informatics Engineering study field is positioned as a strategically important, practice-oriented area at the HEI that directly supports regional and national demand for IT and informatics engineering specialists. The programme Information Systems Engineering has been systematically developed and regularly updated (2015, 2016, 2018, 2021, 2023) in line with Lithuanian legal requirements and national descriptors for engineering and computing, as well as international curriculum guidelines issued by ACM (association of computing machinery) and the IEEE Computer Society. Its content, aims, and learning outcomes are continuously refined based on consultations with employers, social partners, and graduates, ensuring close alignment with current and emerging IT trends. Through this ongoing renewal and its anchoring in the Department of Engineering and Technology, the study field is clearly integrated into the institution's broader strategy for applied studies, stakeholder partnerships, and labour-market-oriented programme development.

Previous external evaluations

The Information Systems Engineering study programme has not yet been evaluated by external experts, so there are no expert recommendations in the area under evaluation.

Documents and information used in the review

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

- Self-evaluation report and its annexes
- Final theses

Additional sources of information used by the review panel:

The following additional sources of information have been used by the review panel:

- Lithuanian Progress Strategy "Lithuania 2030";
- Study "From Graduate's Desk to a Career in ICT Professions", conducted by Invest Lithuania and InfoBalt Lithuania (Invest Lithuania <https://investlithuania.com/>)
- HEI's web pages at <https://www.utenos-kolegija.lt/en>

II. STUDY PROGRAMMES IN THE FIELD

First cycle/LTQF 6

Title of the study programme	Information Systems Engineering
State code	6531BX020
Type of study (college/university)	College
Study cycle	First cycle
Mode of study (full time/part time) and nominal duration (in years)	Full-time (3 years) Part-time (4 years)
Workload in ECTS	180
Award (degree and/or professional qualification)	Professional Bachelor of Computer Sciences
Language of instruction	Lithuanian, English
Admission requirements	Secondary Education
First registration date	2015
Comments (including remarks on joint or interdisciplinary nature of the programme, mode of provision)	-

III. ASSESSMENT IN POINTS BY CYCLE AND EVALUATION AREAS

The **first cycle** of the Informatics Engineering field of study is given a **positive** evaluation.

No.	Evaluation Area	Evaluation points ^{1*}
1.	Study aims, learning outcomes and curriculum	3
2.	Links between scientific (or artistic) research and higher education	4
3.	Student admission and support	3
4.	Teaching and learning, student assessment, and graduate employment	3
5.	Teaching staff	3
6.	Learning facilities and resources	3
7.	Quality assurance and public information	3
Total:		22

^{1*}

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

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

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

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

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

IV. STUDY FIELD ANALYSIS

AREA 1: STUDY AIMS, LEARNING OUTCOMES AND CURRICULUM

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

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

The rationale for the Information Systems Engineering study programme (ISESP) is clearly anchored in the needs of society and the labour market at European, national, and regional levels. At the macro level, the programme directly responds to strategic documents such as the EU Digital Agenda and Lithuania's National Progress Plan 2021–2030, which emphasize digitalization, innovation, and the development of a high value-added, knowledge-based economy. These strategies call for strengthening technology and engineering skills, enhancing digital competence across sectors, and attracting and retaining highly skilled professionals. The ISESP, with its focus on developing specialists who can design, implement, and maintain information systems, fits into this policy framework and contributes to national goals related to competitiveness, productivity, and sustainable development.

At the national labour-market level, the programme addresses a clearly identified shortage of ICT professionals and engineers. Policy documents explicitly state that Lithuania lacks highly qualified workers in high-skill sectors such as information technology, and that this shortage is felt not only in major cities but particularly in the regions. The introduction of targeted state scholarships for STEM students at regional higher education institutions demonstrates both the urgency and the political commitment to increasing the supply of such professionals. By being a STEM programme at a regional HEI, ISESP is aligned with, and supported by, these national incentives, which aim to retain students in the region and encourage them to build their careers locally.

Regionally, the programme is closely matched to the specific needs of Utena, a developed industrial area that is actively pursuing digital transformation in business and public administration. Municipal strategies call for improving IT infrastructure, cyber security, e-services, and the digital skills of employees in public institutions. The call to modernize hardware and software, expand electronic services, strengthen network security, and ensure widespread internet access creates a concrete and ongoing demand for well-trained IT specialists. Graduates of ISESP, who are capable of maintaining computer systems, managing internet projects, and supporting complex information infrastructures, are therefore directly relevant to these regional development priorities and can contribute to improving the effectiveness of public governance and business competitiveness.

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

The Information Systems Engineering study programme (ISESP) aims to develop ethically responsible, communicative, creative and entrepreneurial graduates who are capable of continuous self-improvement, teamwork, initiative and responsibility, and who can competently apply informatics and electronics methods and engineering principles to secure information

systems in diverse application fields. This profile fits well with the HEI's mission to train specialists with higher college education who contribute value regionally, nationally and internationally through applied research and lifelong learning.

Strategically, the HEI prioritizes innovation, academic professionalism, and strong partnerships between science and business, as well as the development of socially responsible graduates who support sustainable regional and national development. ISESP's focus on secure information systems, problem-solving in real-life contexts, and readiness to compete in a rapidly changing technological environment clearly reflects these priorities. The learning outcomes, which emphasize both technical competences and broader contextual understanding (ethics, legal aspects, business and social environment), reinforce the institution's goals of high-quality, innovation-based studies and knowledge transfer to society and the economy. Furthermore, the programme's orientation towards continuous self-improvement and adaptability aligns with the HEI's emphasis on lifelong learning and effective, forward-looking management. Overall, there is strong constructive alignment: the programme's aims and outcomes operationalize the HEI's mission and 2025–2030 strategic objectives within the specific context of informatics engineering.

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 1.1.)

The Informatics Engineering study field with the Information Systems Engineering study programme is strongly grounded in the needs of Lithuania's and also regional economy and society and is closely aligned with the HEI's strategy. National and EU policy documents emphasize digitalization, high-level ICT skills and a high value-added economy. The programme directly addresses priorities published in national and EU policy documents by preparing specialists who can design, implement, maintain and secure information systems and understand their business, social, legal and ethical context. Regionally, in the industrial Utena district, the programme supports municipal goals to modernize IT infrastructure, e-services and cyber security, thereby contributing to more efficient public governance and competitive enterprises.

Institutionally, the programme aims to develop ethically responsible, communicative, creative and entrepreneurial graduates mirrors Utena HEI's mission to provide applied higher education, foster lifelong learning and generate value at regional, national and international levels. The intended learning outcomes operationalize the HEI's strategic priorities, particularly high-quality, innovation-based studies, strong cooperation with business, and social responsibility.

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

1.2.1. Programmes comply with legal requirements

The first-cycle programme Information Systems Engineering complies with the legal requirements: it provides 180 ECTS of which 160 ECTS are dedicated to content of the study field (minimum 120 ECTS). As required, the programme includes 9 ECTS for the final thesis. An internship of 33 ECTS (minimum 30 ECTS) is included in the programme. 32 ECTS can be chosen by the student (maximum 90 ECTS). Practical training accounts for more than 33%, the number of contact hours is far above the required 20%, and the student's level of self-study is above 30%.

The programme's aims, intended learning outcomes and curriculum structure appear well aligned with the first-cycle college type, relevant Lithuanian descriptors and the 180-ECTS volume, with a strong emphasis on field studies, practice and the final thesis. The length of both full-time (3 years) and part-time (4 years) modes, together with the high share of field-related credits, is sufficient to

ensure the achievement of the intended learning outcomes. The principles of credit composition are clearly operationalised by the distribution of ECTS across subjects, practices, final thesis, forms of study, contact hours and self-study, reflecting a workload-based approach.

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

The learning outcomes of the field's study programme describe graduates who can understand and apply core informatics engineering concepts, including mathematics, physics, programming, computer architecture, networks, operating systems, databases and information security. They can analyse, design, implement, maintain and further develop computer systems, and prepare the necessary technical documentation for IT products and services. Depending on the chosen specialisation, graduates can manage computerised systems, plan and implement internet projects, or design and develop mobile applications. In addition, they are able to communicate professionally in Lithuanian and at least one foreign language and work effectively in teams, respecting professional ethics and responsibilities.

The intended learning outcomes of the programme explicitly form the basis for the learning outcomes and content of the individual subjects. Their links are systematically documented in programme and subject descriptions. These descriptions relate subject topics and results to programme outcomes and indicate appropriate assessment methods, supporting a gradual and integrated development of knowledge and skills. A wide range of teaching/learning methods is used, from academic and interactive lectures, discussions and analysis of authentic materials to practical and laboratory work, problem-based learning, simulations, visits to companies and project work. This mix appropriately reflects the applied, practice-oriented aims of the study field and enables students to apply informatics and engineering concepts in realistic contexts.

Assessment methods are diverse and well matched to the targeted competences: Students' knowledge and skills are assessed through a wide range of methods, including exams, tests, project and course work, practice and lab work defences, reports, interviews, surveys and demonstrations, while critical thinking and argumentation are evaluated via debates, problem-based interviews, seminars and group work. Problem-solving abilities are assessed using problem-based learning, case and situation analysis and project work, with specific study and assessment methods selected and coordinated by the subject teacher according to the subject's content, scope and intended learning outcomes.

The fact that teachers regularly participate in structured training on programme design, constructive alignment, digital tools, inclusive learning, virtual learning environments and academic mentoring further strengthens this coherence, as it helps ensure that methods and assessment practices are continuously updated in line with programme aims and outcomes. Overall, there is clear constructive alignment between the field's aims, programme learning outcomes, subject-level outcomes, study methods and assessment, which supports a consistent and competence-based learning trajectory for students.

1.2.3. Curriculum ensures consistent development of student competences

The programme's curriculum clearly demonstrates internal coherence and a clear competency-building trajectory from fundamentals to specialization. The overall design balances theoretical foundations with practical application, ensuring that students progressively integrate knowledge and skills. Year 1 establishes general college competences alongside core scientific and disciplinary foundations. These are immediately reinforced through two structured practical experiences (an internship in a company; programming practice in the college), which anchor motivation and contextualize learning outcomes in real settings. Year 2 advances discipline depth and engineering practice through a logically sequenced set of subjects: computer architecture,

operating systems, HCI, internet technologies, formal languages/automata, and computer networks. This alignment effectively cultivates analytical thinking, method selection, and the competent use of hardware/software to solve engineering problems. Year 3 consolidates field mastery via the Information Systems Engineering Fundamentals module and offers coherent specialization pathways (Computer Systems Management, Internet Project Management, Programming for Mobile Devices). These modules deepen competence with specialized tools and methods for authentic problem-solving and culminate in a final internship and thesis. Elective alternatives (Philosophy, Psychology of Communication, Sociology) appropriately broaden general education. Part-time studies mirror the same logical structure over four years, maintaining equivalence of outcomes.

Overall, the set of subjects/modules is well-constructed to support consistent competence development – practice-oriented, and outcome-aligned – fostering independence, analytical rigor, and professional responsibility throughout the cycle. Minor opportunities include periodically reviewing elective breadth and ensuring continuous calibration of internship tasks to emerging industry needs.

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

The study programme offers a framework for individualizing studies. Students can request an individual study plan, timetable, or distance-learning arrangements, enabling flexible sequencing of modules and assessment dates when justified. Mobility is well supported: students may choose internship placements (with faculty approval) and study at partner institutions via academic exchange. In addition, BIPs (blended intensive programmes) add to the opportunities for individualization. Within the curriculum, personalization is further enabled through two optional subjects and alternative subject choices (e.g., Object-Oriented Programming in C++ or Python; Philosophy, Communication Psychology, or Sociology). Overall, these mechanisms create meaningful pathways for students to tailor their learning trajectory while preserving programme coherence and standards.

That said, the breadth and feasibility of electives merit attention. While OSs and alternatives exist on paper, small cohort sizes sometimes mean all students must take the same elective because parallel groups cannot be run. This constrains genuine choice and can weaken motivation or individual skill-profiling. Also, the still rather small number of partner universities limits the potential for more individual choices.

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

Principles for final thesis preparation, review, and defense in ISESP are clearly defined and made public through the HEI's Procedure for Preparation, Submission, Defence and Evaluation of the Final Examinations and Final Theses and programme-specific methodological requirements for each specialization. Theses are independent applied or research works developed under a supervisor with departmental interim reviews. During the assessment period, 28 theses were defended, their content demonstrably met field and cycle requirements. Notably, 79% of the theses were commissioned by social partners, including local municipality, and solved real problems.

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 1.2.)

The Information Systems Engineering programme fully meets the corresponding legal requirements.

Programme aims and intended learning outcomes are systematically mapped to subject-level outcomes, study content, and assessment. Descriptions specify how topics and assessment modes evidence the targeted competences, including problem-solving and critical thinking. A broad palette of methods support applied learning. Ongoing staff development strengthens consistency and refreshes practice.

The sequence of courses and content builds from general college competences and scientific fundamentals (year 1) through core engineering subjects (year 2) to specialization modules (year 3), culminating in a final internship and thesis. Early and recurrent practice (two year-1 practices plus advanced internships) anchors theory in authentic contexts. Part-time study mirrors the same logic over four years. Overall, the design is scaffolded, practice-oriented, and outcome-aligned. Individual study plans and timetables, distance-learning options, free electives, alternative subjects, mobility (exchanges, BIPs), and student-selected internships allow meaningful tailoring. However, small cohorts sometimes force a single “elective” choice for all, constraining the breadth of options. The still limited partner-university network likewise narrows mobility options.

Well-codified procedures govern preparation, review, and defence of final theses. Across 28 theses in the review period, content clearly met field/cycle requirements; notably, 79% were commissioned by social partners (including municipal bodies), solving authentic problems and evidencing strong labour-market relevance.

AREA 1: CONCLUSIONS

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

COMMENDATIONS

1. Individualization options that support students personally seem to be very strong. The HEI seems to treasure every student in the sense that individual solutions are found in terms of time management (courses as well as assessment) and organizational flexibility.
2. The high rate of company commissioned theses (79%) demonstrates the strong connections to local and regional industry and businesses.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To address shortcomings

1. The elective as well as specialization system should be improved in a way that actually allows students more individual choices instead of group choices. E.g., the introduction of industry-led micro-modules or short, credit-bearing options that can run with smaller numbers, could be considered.
2. Efforts in the direction of increasing the number of partner universities and offered BIPs should be taken in order to strengthen options for individualization and internationalization at the same time.

For further improvement

1. The study programme requires ongoing updates to reflect the fast-changing economic and societal demands of the IT sector.
2. Continue regularly updating the study programme to keep pace with fast developments in the IT sector.
3. Further broaden and strengthen personalisation options (e.g., elective modules) so students can tailor their studies more flexibly.

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

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

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

Utena Higher education institution has an active applied research program linked to Informatics Engineering. The SER reports robust strategic planning for research (e.g. applied scientific research and experimental development plans 2022–2029) and regular R&D funding (e.g. EUR 26.700 in 2021, EUR 270.000 in 2022 from the Ministry). The Research Council of Lithuania (RCL) formally evaluated the HEI's research from 2020–23, with weighted scores rising from 29.6 (2020) to 91.72 (2023), unlocking incentive funding. Workload regulations require that teachers with scientific degrees devote $\geq 33\%$ of their time to R&D. Informatics Engineering students are taught by faculty active in science: 77.8% of staff have >3 years industry experience, and 27.8% hold PhD degree. Research groups exist in related fields (two in Informatics, one in Informatics Engineering) and research topics (e.g. image recognition, IoT, AI) align with taught subjects.

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

The programme content is regularly updated to reflect advances in computing. New subjects and topics (e.g. Embedded Systems, AI tools in programming, Web 3.0, smart technologies) have been introduced in response to industry trends and social partner input. The SER notes that AI and machine learning are integrated across many courses (Data Structures, Programming, Web Development, Multimedia, etc.). Faculty research directly informs teaching: recent R&D on image recognition, IoT, and programming is used as practical material in classes. Teachers engage in professional associations and networks (e.g. mathematics, optimization, e-learning societies) to ensure curricula keep pace with innovation. Industry partners contribute by guest lecturing (e.g. a senior IT engineer teaching infrastructure management, a data center manager teaching security) and by involving faculty and students in real projects.

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

The HEI actively encourages students to participate in research. Coursework and final projects emphasize methodology and use of scientific literature, and every student completes projects, papers, and a research-oriented thesis during their studies. Students are invited to assist faculty's applied research and to co-author publications: during 2021–24 three students published papers in the HEI's peer-reviewed journal. HEI hosts biennial student research conferences. At these, students have presented software prototypes and applied studies (e.g. mobile app prototype, data analysis projects) to an audience of peers and academics. All study programmes (including Informatics Engineering) include research methodology training in Year 1 to build skills for student research.

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 2.1.)

The evidence shows a strong alignment of Informatics Engineering studies with the HEI's research activity. HEI has formal structures and strategies ensuring that faculty time is allocated to R&D and that research findings feed back into teaching. The rapidly increasing RCL scores and dedicated funding demonstrate the programme's growing research output, which is leveraged in classrooms (e.g. current topics like IoT and AI appear in teaching materials). Curricula are updated both through internal initiatives and through social partner input (e.g. adding an "Embedded Systems" course after consultation with an industry partner). This keeps course content relevant to technological trends. Student research involvement is well supported: the existing conferences and journal provide clear

pathways for student engagement with applied science, and students are regularly exposed to research methods.

On the other hand, the SER itself identifies opportunities for further internationalisation and deeper industry-research linkages (e.g. more co-funded projects with companies). No major gaps were noted in evidence. Systems are in place, though the HEI could further quantify student participation (e.g. percentage of students involved in research) and plan for expanded collaboration. Given that this is a small HEI with small number of students situated in a relatively small region, where there are not so many social partners (which are all, including the municipality, very open for various forms of cooperation), it seems that there are not many opportunities for significant improvements in this respect, except for greater openness to the outside world (internationalisation).

Taking this into account it can be concluded, the Informatics Engineering programme demonstrates very good alignment between science and study activities. Applied research is deliberately integrated into teaching and student work, curricula reflect current technology, and students are consistently involved in practical research tasks.

AREA 2: CONCLUSIONS

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

COMMENDATIONS

1. The programme is backed by structured R&D strategies and increasing external evaluation scores, showing sustained growth in applied research output.
2. Faculty research topics closely mirror taught content (e.g. AI, IoT), and new technologies (AI tools, embedded systems) are promptly added to the curriculum based on industry needs.
3. A strong culture of student research is evident: students publish and present their projects in organized forums, reflecting a proactive research-learning integration.
4. Active involvement of social partners (guest lecturers, company visits) brings real-world technological insights into teaching, enhancing the linkage between education and sector innovation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

For further improvement

1. Encourage greater international research collaboration: Facilitate joint R&D projects or publications with foreign institutions to raise research profile and bring broader perspectives (addressing the noted need for internationalisation).
2. Strengthen industry-research partnerships: Expand mechanisms for companies to participate in applied projects (e.g. co-supervise theses, fund student research labs) so that research outcomes can directly serve business needs. This builds on current social partner engagement.

3. Quantify and monitor student research participation: Track metrics (e.g. % of students in research projects, papers authored) to ensure broad access and to identify gaps. Consider formalizing incentives or credit for student research contributions.
4. Continue updating curriculum in emerging areas: Regularly scan tech trends to add new elective modules (e.g. cybersecurity, data analytics) or expand research topics, keeping pace with rapid developments in computing.

AREA 3: STUDENT ADMISSION AND SUPPORT

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

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

Admission to the Information Systems Engineering Study Programme (ISESP) at Utena HEI is conducted in accordance with national General Admission Regulations and institutional Student Admission Regulations. The minimum competitive score requirement for state-funded (sf) places was set at 4.3 from 2021 to 2023, while for state non-funded (snf) places it was 2.5. In 2024, the requirement was standardized to 2.5 for both place types.

Data on applicant numbers shows fluctuation over the period. First-priority applications ranged from 17 (2022) to 41 (2023), while applications on remaining priorities ranged from 98 (2022) to 117 (2023). The total number of admitted students (sf/snf) varied from 17 (2024) to 27 (2022, 2023).

An analysis of relative admission results indicates mixed trends in programme interest within the field. The peak in first-priority applications (41) and the highest average competitive score (5.51) in 2023 suggest a year of notably stronger demand and applicant quality, followed by a decline in both metrics in 2024.

The competitive scores of admitted students over the last three years (2022-2024) are as follows: The maximum score ranged from 5.69 (2024) to 8.38 (2023), the minimum from 2.53 (2024) to 2.64 (2023), and the average from 4.11 (2024) to 5.51 (2023). This reveals a positive trend in average applicant quality culminating in 2023, though the actual minimum scores admitted were consistently below the official 4.3 sf requirement for 2021-2023, indicating that sf places were not always filled by applicants meeting the formal threshold.

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

The recognition of prior learning outcomes is systematically managed at Utena HEI, governed by institutional procedures and international conventions. During the evaluation period, a small but consistent proportion of students submitted applications for credit transfer: 1.5% (1 student) in 2021-2022, 3.7% (3 students) in 2022-2023, and 1.2% (1 student) in 2023-2024, with an average of 2.2% of students across all years. These transfers resulted in 82, 106, and 27 credits being recognized, respectively (Table 7). Learning outcomes from mobility or previous studies are acknowledged without restrictions if agreements are adhered to, though credits may be denied due to incomplete documentation, insufficient subject scope, or outdated content.

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 3.1.)

The student admission process is structured and transparent, adhering to national regulations. The adjustment of the minimum competitive score in 2024 to a standardized 2.5 for all study places demonstrates a responsive approach to applicant pools, though the impact of this change on the quality of admitted students should be monitored.

Similarly, the framework for recognizing prior learning is well-established, governed by clear institutional procedures. The consistent, though low, number of credit transfer applications (averaging 2.2% of students) and the significant number of credits successfully recognized indicate that the system is functional and accessible to those who need it. The specified reasons for non-recognition provide clear guidelines and maintain academic standards.

In conclusion, the established criteria and procedures for both student admission and recognition of prior learning are fit for purpose. The systems operate as intended, ensuring transparency and upholding academic integrity.

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

3.2.1. Opportunities for student academic mobility are ensured

International academic mobility at Utena HEI is actively promoted through an Internationalisation Development Strategy for 2021-2027, with student exchanges facilitated by 24 Erasmus+ partner institutions. As shown in Table 8, outgoing mobility for IEFS students varied: 3 students (15% of total outgoing) went to Latvia in 2021-2022, no students in 2022-2023, and 9 students (28.1% of total outgoing) to Poland, France, and Latvia in 2023-2024. Incoming mobility included 3 students from Turkey (13% of total incoming) in 2021-2022, 1 from Jordan (2.4%) in 2022-2023, and 4 from Turkey and Poland (5.4%) in 2023-2024. Additionally, IEFS students participated in five Blended Intensive Programmes (BIPs) on topics such as AI, cybersecurity, and sustainability in Poland, Latvia, France, and Croatia. Information on mobility opportunities is disseminated through the International Relations Department, annual Erasmus+ Weeks, and online platforms like the HEI website, Moodle, and Facebook.

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

A comprehensive system of academic, financial, and psychosocial support is established for students, which operates effectively despite the college's modest facilities being housed in a converted residential building. Academic support includes subject counselling, guidance for final theses and internships, and methodological seminars on preparing written assignments and presentations, with all materials available in Moodle. Teachers provide consultations according to a published schedule via various channels. Financial support is extensive, with data from Table 9 showing that incentive scholarships from the institution were the most common form of support (e.g., 42 students in 2023-2024), followed by targeted scholarships from the Ministry of Economy and Innovation (27 students in 2023-2024). Social scholarships, tuition compensation, and one-time scholarships are also available. Psychological support is provided through seminars on topics like exam stress and public speaking, and individual counselling is available. Accommodation is offered in three student homes with internet access. All support information is detailed on the Utena HEI website, and student interests are represented by a Student Representation body. This robust framework ensures that the academic, financial, social, psychological, and personal support provided to students is relevant, adequate, and effective.

3.2.3. Higher education information and student counselling are sufficient

Based on the information provided in the SER, the orientation and ongoing academic support for students are structured and comprehensive. Prospective applicants receive consultations from the Document Admission Service via a dedicated email and the institutional website. Upon admission, each academic group is assigned a teacher as a group tutor who provides continuous support and helps students adapt. The formal onboarding process begins with an "Introduction to Studies," which familiarizes students with the organisational structure, key study regulations, their rights and responsibilities, the Academic Ethics Code, and the study programme. This introduction also provides practical training on using library resources, databases, the Electronic Learning Centre, and the Moodle platform. The Academic Information System (AIS) serves as a central hub for students to access their subjects, grades, and other essential information. For ongoing academic support, teachers provide consultations according to a schedule approved by the Faculty Dean and published in the Moodle, with dedicated hours for difficult topics and guidance on assignments and theses, available both in person and remotely via email and phone.

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 3.2.)

The institution has established a robust framework for international academic mobility, driven by a dedicated strategy and a wide network of partner institutions. While outgoing mobility participation has fluctuated, the clear upward trend in 2023-2024 and active engagement in multiple Blended

Intensive Programmes (BIPs) demonstrate that meaningful opportunities are being created and utilized by students.

The system of student support is a particular strength. It is multi-faceted, addressing academic, financial, and psychosocial needs through a coherent combination of advisory services, substantial financial aid schemes with incentives and targeted scholarships being widely accessible and proactive psychological care. This holistic approach, observed during the site visit to be effectively delivered even within the context of a college operating from a converted residential building, is effectively underpinned by a strong initial orientation and continuous information flow, ensuring students are well-informed about their studies, rights, and the support available to them through various accessible channels.

In conclusion, the opportunities for mobility are ensured and the academic, financial, social, psychological, and personal support provided to students is not only relevant and adequate but also effectively delivered, contributing significantly to the student experience and their academic progression.

AREA 3: CONCLUSIONS

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

COMMENDATIONS

1. The institution's provision for students to request individualized assignment schedules demonstrates exceptional flexibility and a genuine commitment to supporting work-study balance.
2. The significant role played by staff curators in student integration and support is commendable, creating a strong foundation for student success and belonging.
3. The noteworthy support provided for international mobility opportunities, particularly for Blended Intensive Programmes and Erasmus+ studies, effectively enables students to gain valuable global experience.
4. The frequent and positive informal communication between students and staff fosters a collaborative and supportive academic culture that significantly enhances the learning environment.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To address shortcomings

1. To enhance the learning environment and institutional image, more strategic investments should be made to modernize the faculty's physical infrastructure, addressing the challenges of operating from a converted residential building to ensure student support.

For further improvement

1. To broaden educational pathways, the institution should actively promote and streamline the process for recognition of non-formal and informal learning, making this valuable mechanism more accessible and visible to potential students.
2. To ensure long-term programme sustainability, a comprehensive student recruitment and retention strategy should be developed to address fluctuating enrollment patterns and enhance the appeal of all study modes.
3. To strengthen the connection between academia and industry, the institution should continue establishing efficient and responsive processes for collaboration with social partners, facilitating the timely integration of real-world projects into the curriculum.

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

4.1.	Students are prepared for independent professional activity
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FACTUAL SITUATION

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

Based on the SER, the organization and delivery of studies in the Informatics Engineering study field (IEFS) are structured and flexible. Studies are conducted in equivalent full-time and part-time modes, with the latter organized in sessions. The study process is strongly supported by digital tools, primarily the VLE Moodle and an Electronic Learning Centre, which host course materials and facilitate online lectures and interaction. Teaching methods combine traditional lectures with non-traditional approaches, such as interdisciplinary lectures and sessions led by company representatives. A significant part of the programme is dedicated to internships, which are regulated by a formal procedure involving tripartite agreements, supervision, and a public defence of the internship report. Student performance is assessed through a cumulative system based on interim and final evaluations, with clear criteria outlined at the start of each subject. The programme culminates in the defence of a final thesis, evaluated by a commission that includes external members. Graduates who obtain a professional bachelor's degree have the opportunity to continue their studies at universities in Lithuania and abroad.

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

Utena HEI ensures inclusive and accessible studies for students with disabilities and those from socially sensitive groups. The institution provides financial support, including exemptions or reductions in registration fees for applicants with a recognized level of working capacity, and targeted benefits from the State Studies Foundation for students with disabilities. Social scholarships are administered for those in material need. The study process is adapted to individual needs, allowing for distance learning via Moodle, alternative assessment methods, and individual study schedules. Teachers provide tailored support, such as extra time for tasks and modified instructions, to foster inclusion. Furthermore, teaching staff have participated in specialized training on inclusive education, covering topics like visual and hearing impairments, psychosocial disabilities, and universal design. Additional financial support is also available for less privileged individuals participating in the Erasmus+ mobility programme. During the site visit several student areas were shown, however a lack of private rooms for study purposes was observed during the facility tour.

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 4.1.)

The study process is robustly designed to meet student needs and achieve learning outcomes. The combination of flexible study modes, a strong digital learning infrastructure, and a blend of traditional and innovative teaching methods creates a dynamic and adaptable learning environment. The curriculum is clearly oriented towards practical competence, exemplified by the well-structured internship programme which features real-world engagement, close supervision, and a formal defense. The cumulative assessment system, with its transparent criteria communicated upfront, provides a fair and consistent framework for evaluating student progress.

Furthermore, the institution demonstrates a strong commitment to inclusion. It has established a comprehensive system to ensure access for socially vulnerable groups and students with individual needs. This is evidenced by substantial financial aid mechanisms, adaptable study processes allowing for distance learning and alternative assessments, and—crucially—the investment in specialized training for staff on inclusive education principles. This proactive approach creates a supportive environment for a diverse student body.

A minor area for attention, noted during the site visit, is the lack of private study rooms, which could enhance the learning environment for all students.

In conclusion, the teaching and learning strategies are well-aligned with the programme's goals, and the policies for ensuring access are thorough and thoughtfully applied, effectively supporting the achievement of intended learning outcomes across the student population.

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

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

The average dropout rate for students in ISESP over the period 2021-2025 is 14%, with annual rates fluctuating: 12.3% in 2021-2022, 16% in 2022-2023, 18% in 2023-2024, and 9.5% in the autumn of 2024-2025. The primary reason for dropout is voluntary termination due to personal reasons, such as insufficient motivation or a reassessment of their capabilities, with the majority occurring in the first year of studies.

To address this, the institution systematically monitors student progress twice yearly and implements targeted support measures. These include monitoring lecture attendance, active involvement of academic group tutors, and reminders from department staff about consultations and flexible tuition payment options. At-risk students are interviewed individually to clarify reasons and explore alternatives, such as individual study schedules or temporary suspension. Strategic institutional plans, like the Utena HEI Strategic Activity Plan 2022-2024, aim to reduce dropout rates below 11% through a dedicated system for student retention, focusing on academic and psychological counselling, individualised study processes, and teacher competence improvement.

4.2.2. Graduate employability and career are monitored

Based on the data presented in Table 11 and the accompanying reports, graduate employability is strong. Monitoring conducted via the Education Management Information System (EMIS) shows that 80% of the 2022 graduates and 94% of the 2023 graduates were employed within 12 months of graduation. Notably, a significant proportion of these employed graduates work in high qualification jobs - 50% for the 2022 cohort and 60% for the 2023 cohort. Employer feedback, gathered through surveys and participation in programme committee meetings, is very positive; employers report that graduates are well-prepared, good team workers, motivated, and responsible. This tracking is facilitated by the Career and Communication Department using multiple data sources, and the results are made public on the institution's website and in activity reports.

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

The principles of academic ethics are present. The rules of ethical academic behaviour are defined by the Code of Academic Ethics, supported by the Students' Internal Order Regulations and an Equal Opportunities Policy. Their implementation is overseen by an Academic Ethics Committee. As a preventive measure, students sign a Declaration of Integrity before commencing their studies and are introduced to the relevant legislation during the introductory period. During the analysed period, no cases of violation of the principles of academic integrity, tolerance, and non-discrimination were recorded in the Informatics Engineering study field.

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

Formal procedure for submitting and examining student appeals is established at Utena HEI and is regulated by several institutional documents. Students have the right to appeal knowledge assessment scores, procedural violations, and decisions regarding the recognition of prior learning

outcomes. However, during the analysed period, no appeals or complaints were submitted by students in the Informatics Engineering study field.

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 4.2.)

The monitoring of student learning progress is comprehensive and proactive. The institution not only tracks progress and dropout rates systematically but has also developed a multi-faceted retention strategy to address the identified issue of first-year motivation. This includes early intervention, individualized support, and strategic institutional targets, indicating a mature and reflective approach to student success.

Graduate employability is monitored through reliable data sources, and the results are outstanding. The high employment rates, coupled with the significant and growing proportion of graduates in high-qualification jobs and positive employer feedback, provide strong evidence that the programme successfully prepares students for the labour market.

The framework for ensuring academic integrity and a respectful environment is robust. It is prevention-oriented, combining clear regulatory documents with proactive socialization during student orientation. The absence of recorded violations or appeals during the analysis period is a strong indicator of the effectiveness of these measures and a generally healthy academic culture. While the lack of appeals could also suggest a need to ensure students are fully aware of and comfortable using these mechanisms, the overall evidence points to successful implementation.

In conclusion, the processes for monitoring learning and employability, ensuring academic integrity, and handling grievances are not only in place but are functioning effectively to support students and maintain the quality of the academic environment.

AREA 4: CONCLUSIONS

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

COMMENDATIONS

1. The strong emphasis on real practical projects in the curriculum provides students with valuable hands-on experience that directly enhances their employability and professional readiness.
2. Local social partners demonstrate exceptional commitment to the programme by providing significant equipment support, creating a robust industry-academy collaboration that greatly benefits student learning.
3. The strategic sequencing of final practice before the thesis project is commendable, allowing students to focus intensively on a single major assignment and thereby improving the quality of final thesis outcomes.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To address shortcomings

1. To support concentrated academic work, a private study area should be designated for students who require uninterrupted study environments.
2. Targeted renovation of specific faculty building areas should be undertaken to improve the overall learning environment and institutional infrastructure.

For further improvement

1. To enhance practical learning outcomes, the institution should continue developing more streamlined processes for integrating real industry projects into the curriculum, ensuring timely implementation and maximum relevance.
2. To better understand long-term graduate success, the institution should implement a systematic approach for tracking graduate career progression beyond initial employment, focusing on professional advancement and skill utilization.
3. To strengthen the ethical academic environment, comprehensive guidelines and training on the ethical use of artificial intelligence should be developed and implemented for both students and staff.

AREA 5: TEACHING STAFF

5.1.	Teaching staff is adequate to achieve learning outcomes
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FACTUAL SITUATION

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

The teaching process at Informatics Engineering study field is supported by 20 teaching staff, 10 full-time teachers delivering core and compulsory subjects, 3 full-time delivering general subjects of college studies, 5 part-time teaching core and compulsory subjects and 2 visiting teachers. 14 teachers work not less than 0.5 of full time equivalent and 77.8% are with more than 3 years of practical work experience. Over the four-year period, the student population grew consistently from 65 to 84, while the number of teachers increased from 17 to 20, ensuring that the teacher–student ratio remained stable. Overall, the average ratio was maintained at 1:4, with only a temporary shift to 1:5 in the 2022–2023 academic year.

All teaching staff hold either a Master's degree or an equivalent qualification, while 27.8% of the teaching staff are Doctors of Science actively engaged in the study programme. When selecting teachers for general and theoretical college subjects, priority is given to candidates holding a Master's degree (or equivalent) and a research qualification. For practical courses, a minimum of three years of relevant professional experience is required. The annual workload for one full-time teaching post is set at 1,500 hours. Within this framework, the pedagogical allocation varies by academic position: Professors – 680 hours, Associate Professors – 720 hours, Assistants – 750 hours, Junior Assistants – 780 hours, Senior Lecturers – 810 hours, Lecturers – 850 hours, and Lecturer Practitioners – 900 hours.

The self-evaluation report includes some information on staff turnover and lecturer-practitioner dynamics, but the level of detail provided is insufficient.

The self-evaluation report (SER, pg. 32) elaborates on how the HEI supports novice teachers through training opportunities, access to educational platforms, and mentorship provided by senior faculty and other institutional structures.

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 5.1.)

The institution demonstrates a strong student-centred approach. The staff–student ratio of 1:4 is considered highly favourable for achieving the intended learning outcomes of the study field, enabling personalized instruction, active student engagement, and enhanced academic support. This was confirmed during meetings with both students and teaching staff. The procedures for teaching staff recruitment are described.

The available evidence confirms that the teaching staff is adequate to achieve the intended learning outcomes of the study field. While core qualifications and staff–student ratios are favourable, further data on turnover and practitioner involvement would strengthen the overall assessment.

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

5.2.1. Opportunities for academic mobility of teaching staff are ensured

International experience and mobility of teaching staff is supported through strategic planning documents and in-service training programmes. The main opportunities mentioned in the Self evaluation report are from Erasmus+ programme. The number of incoming and outgoing teaching staff at the institutional level, as well as for the Informatics Engineering study field, indicating and mobility countries, is presented in tabular format for the period 2021–2024. (SER, Table 13, pg.33). Between 2021 and 2024, staff mobility at HEI showed a steady increase in outgoing participation, with the number of teachers abroad rising from 67 to 45 and Informatics Engineering representation growing from 7.46% to 15.56%, while incoming mobility ranged from 44 to 50 teachers overall and only 2–9% from Informatics Engineering. Partner countries were diverse, with Latvia, Poland, and Turkey considered as consistent partner countries. The hERI informs teaching staff for mobility opportunities via email and Moodle platform.

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

Utena HEI provides structured opportunities for academic staff to enhance qualifications through training, internships, research, and international exchange. The qualification improvement process is regulated by institutional procedures and national legislation, with planning aligned to strategic goals. Teachers regularly participate in pedagogical and professional development, including English language training and digital competence programmes. Annual assessments and five-year certification cycles ensure accountability. Since 2024, performance-based salary components have been introduced.

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 5.2.)

The evidence indicates that the institution offers appropriate and periodically reviewed conditions for the development of teaching staff competences and some opportunities for academic mobility. Between 2021 and 2024, HEI demonstrated a consistent commitment to enhancing the qualifications of its teaching staff. In terms of pedagogical development, 9 teachers improved their qualifications in 2021–2022, with 6 participating more than twice. The following year, 8 teachers engaged in pedagogical training, again with 6 attending multiple sessions. In 2023–2024, the number rose to 10, with 9 teachers participating more than twice, indicating growing engagement. Professional qualification improvement also remained active. In 2021–2022, 7 teachers participated, all more than twice. In 2022–2023, 12 teachers engaged, 8 of whom did so multiple times. In 2023–2024, 6 teachers improved their professional skills, with 4 attending more than twice. This pattern reflects an effort to a culture of continuous professional development.

AREA 5: CONCLUSIONS

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

COMMENDATIONS

1. The student-centered approach for achieving learning outcomes

RECOMMENDATIONS

To address shortcomings

1. Increase the number of lecture-practioners in Informatics Engineering study field
2. Prepare report with SWOT analysis and dynamics of teaching staff turnover in the field and accordingly teaching staff development plan
3. Enhance international exposure by increasing the number of teaching staff participating in Erasmus+ and other academic exchange programmes within the Informatics Engineering study field.

For further improvement

1. Sustain and expand internationalization efforts within the study field by initiating joint study programmes, summer/winter schools, conferences, and seminars in collaboration with foreign institutions.
2. Provide targeted training opportunities to teaching staff aimed at strengthening and advancing their applied research competencies.
3. Actively promote and support teaching staff participation in continuous professional development across pedagogical, disciplinary, research, and general competence areas.

AREA 6: LEARNING FACILITIES AND RESOURCES

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

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

Teaching, practical, and laboratory activities are delivered in dedicated facilities which are equipped with the necessary computer hardware, software and methodological materials to support lectures, practical sessions and laboratory work. The College operates several specialised laboratories relevant to Informatics Engineering, including physics, programming, applied solutions, computer systems and electronics laboratories, each designed to develop discipline-specific competencies and furnished with appropriate technologies. Laboratories and classrooms contain the required IT infrastructure, including computers, digital tools and software used in coursework. Students also have access to online platforms and other digital learning resources. Physical accessibility is ensured through ramps and elevators in the buildings used for Informatics Engineering studies, allowing students with mobility impairments to access teaching spaces.

6.1.2. There is continuous planning for and upgrading of resources

The College undertakes ongoing planning and renewal of facilities and resources used in Informatics Engineering studies. Infrastructure updates and equipment upgrades are implemented on a continuous basis to ensure laboratories, classrooms and digital tools remain aligned with teaching needs and technological developments.

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 6.1.)

The available facilities and resources sufficiently support the implementation of the study programme. Teaching and laboratory spaces are equipped with the necessary hardware, software, and methodological materials to enable students to achieve the intended learning outcomes. Laboratories provide appropriate conditions for practical tasks, and workspaces are accessible and adequately maintained.

At the same time, some areas for further development remain. As technologies evolve rapidly, continued modernisation of laboratory equipment is needed to ensure compatibility with contemporary software and development environments. Additionally centralised coordination of digital resources - such as software updates, licence monitoring, and access management - would strengthen reliability and ensure smoother integration of digital systems. Expansion type of software suitable for working from home is also preferable.

The area meets the requirements, but improvements in technological modernisation and the centralised management of digital resources are needed to enhance alignment with current and emerging study needs.

AREA 6: CONCLUSIONS

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

COMMENDATIONS

1. Well-organised learning environment - teaching and laboratory spaces are tidy, functional, and appropriately equipped to support practical and theoretical study activities.
2. Continuous planning and improvement of resources - annual procurement planning, involving departments and programme committees, ensures that resource renewal is coordinated, transparent, and aligned with study needs and institutional strategy.
3. Robust and consistently used digital learning ecosystem - College effectively integrates Moodle, BigBlueButton and other digital tools into teaching and learning, resulting in nearly full coverage of subjects with remote or blended learning resources.

RECOMMENDATIONS

For further improvement

1. Strengthen the centralised management of digital resources.
Improve coordination of software licences, updates, and access management to ensure consistent availability and enhance the reliability of digital learning tools.
2. Continue modernising laboratory equipment and high-load workstations.
Replace ageing hardware and expand capacity in areas where programme needs and software requirements are increasing.
3. Expand technological infrastructure for emerging study areas
Increase resources for cloud environments, cyber-physical systems, cybersecurity tools, and AI/ML practice to better align with current and future labour-market expectations.
4. Enhance long-term planning of material resources involving external partners.
Engage employers more systematically in resource-planning discussions to ensure equipment and software investments follow industry developments.
5. Further strengthen digital learning facilities and remote study tools.
Continue expanding and updating the E-Learning Centre and remote-learning technologies to maintain high-quality blended and distance learning opportunities.

AREA 7: QUALITY ASSURANCE AND PUBLIC INFORMATION

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

7.1.1. Internal quality assurance system for the programmes is effective

Utena higher education institution operates a comprehensive Study Quality Management System (SQMS) aligned with ISO 9001 and European ESG standards. A formal Study Quality Committee (13 members, including administration and student representatives from each faculty) oversees SQMS implementation. This Committee designs and administers regular surveys of students, graduates, employers, and internship mentors, and publishes the summarized results on the HEI's website. The SER notes that student feedback is also collected via anonymous Moodle questionnaires for lecturer evaluation. Key quality documents (policies, processes, strategic plans) are documented and accessible to staff, ensuring transparency. Responsibilities for study program quality are defined in multiple official documents (statute, strategic plan, operating procedures, job descriptions). Decision-making and responsibilities are distributed across governance levels: from the Rector and Dean down through committees (Study Quality, Academic, Faculty councils) to the Study Programme Committee. At the site visit it became obvious, that due to the small size of the HEI, having only one study programme in the evaluated Informatics Engineering field, most of the quality related measures (planning, control, monitoring and acting accordingly) are performed by the Study Programme Committee, which largely overlaps with the quality committee as the human resources are limited.

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

Stakeholders participate extensively in QA. Social partners (alumni, employers, parents) are involved at institutional (College Council), faculty, and process levels (Study Quality and Programme Committees). The SER lists numerous partner companies (industrial, IT, manufacturing) that contributed to programme review via surveys or committee roles. Employers also enhance quality by hosting internships, giving guest lectures, advising on curriculum changes, and serving on final-thesis panels and committees. The interview with the social partners clearly confirmed their honest willingness to engage in various forms of cooperation with the HEI as they want young students to stay in the region during studies and after their graduation. Student internships in industry serve as an employer feedback mechanism. Internship reports and informal feedback assess student preparedness, often confirming employer satisfaction with the programme's outcomes. Students and alumni are integrated into governance. Regular student surveys are conducted every semester (first-year and graduating cohorts) to monitor educational quality. Alumni surveys collect opinions on study organization, staff performance, and employability. For additional anonymous feedback complaint records and suggestion boxes are on disposal. The institution also holds joint events (lecturer-student-alumni meetings, employer panels, educational trips) that generate qualitative feedback on programme relevance.

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

Responsibilities for data collection are well-defined. The Study Department tracks student progress and admission data; faculties handle enrolment accounting; the Career Center collects graduate employment stats and employer survey results; the International Relations office tracks mobility; and other departments collect project and e-learning data. Evaluation outcomes and decisions are disseminated broadly mainly on the HEI's website and in Lithuania's AIKOS database. Summarized survey findings are publicly posted on the HEI's quality page. The Programme information (curricula, subjects, admission requirements) appears on both Lithuanian and English web pages (and on studyin.lt for internationals). Past accreditation results and improvement measures are maintained

on the site for transparency. Outreach extends to social media: Utena College, the Faculty, and the Informatics Engineering programme maintain active Facebook pages where academic activities and student achievements are shared. Information for prospective students and partners is pushed through career fairs, school competitions (e.g. programming contest Bebras), and targeted events, with the HEI analysing reach metrics (audience size, engagement) to optimize communication channels. Feedback loops are established. For instance, student survey input led the HEI to post detailed exam schedules on Moodle, and alumni suggestions prompted the furnishing of rest areas with donated sofas.

7.1.4. Student feedback is collected and analysed

Systematic student surveys indicate high satisfaction. Surveys are administered to all undergraduates at semester's end (and to graduates in summer). According to SER data, Information Systems Engineering students rate their programme positively: they praise the professionalism of lecturers, quality of Moodle-based materials, effective teaching methods, and well-organized schedules, that can also be adjusted to the special needs of the individual students. They highlight faculty supportiveness, respectful teacher–student relations, helpful consultations, and personalized attention as strengths. Almost all surveyed students said they would recommend the programme to peers. Graduate surveys similarly show confidence in the education received. The Study Quality Committee then analyses survey results and issues recommendations to relevant units (faculties, departments, library, etc.) for continuous improvement.

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 7.1.)

Utena College quality assurance structures and processes are thorough and transparent. The SQMS framework is clearly defined and broadly implemented across the institution, with active committees and committees involving all stakeholder groups. The SER evidence shows that feedback (from students, alumni, employers) is systematically collected and acted upon (e.g. curriculum adjustments, facility improvements). Information flows through appropriate channels. Progress and outcomes are monitored centrally, and critical information is regularly published online. The involvement of social partners and students in governance and reviews ensures that external perspectives shape programme quality. The HEI's communication strategy appears responsive, as it leverages modern media and events to reach audiences, and it adapts based on feedback (as seen with Moodle posting and lounge furnishing).

Minor areas for further enhancement emerge from the SER where the HEI recognises that the student survey participation could be boosted to capture more feedback, and social partners could play a larger role in recruitment and programme promotion. The SER strengths highlight strong management and culture of quality. The finding based on the site visit is that the QA is in place, but the responsibilities on the level of the study field are not always clear. The actions are fast, without too many formalities and hierarchy, which is functioning well in a small team of mostly enthusiastic individuals.

To conclude, the Informatics Engineering programme's quality management and publicity system is good. The institution meets all QA requirements with an effective, stakeholder-engaged system and transparent information dissemination. There are only moderate suggestions for improvement (formalizing procedures, increasing feedback participation and social partner involvement), but overall the QA system functions well.

AREA 7: CONCLUSIONS

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

First cycle			X		
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COMMENDATIONS

1. Utena College maintains a comprehensive SQMS with clear governance and processes. The Study Quality Committee actively oversees surveys and ensures results and improvement plans are publicly shared.
2. Stakeholders are deeply involved: students and employers participate in councils and committees, internships serve as feedback mechanisms, and alumni input informs programme development.
3. The institution provides broad information access: all relevant programme information, evaluation results, and strategic documents are published on the website (in Lithuanian and English) and through media channels, fostering transparency.
4. The College demonstrates responsiveness to feedback: it has implemented tangible changes based on surveys (e.g. posting exam schedules on Moodle) and even addressed student comfort issues through alumni-supported initiatives.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To address shortcomings

1. Clarify and formalize QA responsibilities at the study field level to ensure continuity and consistency, while maintaining the current efficiency and team spirit.

For further improvement

1. Boost survey engagement: Implement measures (e.g. reminders, incentives, or integrating surveys into coursework) to increase student and graduate response rates, ensuring more representative feedback for continuous QA.
2. Enhance social partner roles: Formalize alumni and employer roles in student recruitment and programme promotion (for instance, hosting joint information events or mentoring programmes). This could leverage their positive experiences to attract new students.
3. Refine KPI tracking: Update the strategic plan's indicators (2024–27) to include clear quantitative and qualitative targets for areas like stakeholder involvement and survey participation, ensuring progress can be measured over time.
4. Continuous communication strategy: Continue evaluating and adapting communication channels (website, social media, local events) based on audience analytics to maintain high visibility of programme quality and opportunities.

V. SUMMARY

The members of the evaluation panel would like to express gratitude to the staff, students, alumni, and social partner representatives who prepared the SER as a basis for this evaluation, and all persons who spent their time with us in several very constructive and self-reflective interview and discussion sessions.

Utena Higher Education Institution presents a distinct and largely positive profile: a relatively young, relatively small college situated in a smaller city. This setting creates a student-centered environment with close relationships, strong ties to the local economy and municipality, and a clear applied mission. Students and graduates consistently report feeling well prepared for employment, having trained on real-world problems, a perception echoed by employers and social partners. At the same time, small scale brings structural vulnerabilities (e.g., elective choice, cohort stability, research opportunities, and international reach) that require careful, proactive management. The College demonstrates an operational quality culture (regular feedback cycles with students and social partners, and an ongoing improvement ethos) that positions it well to address these challenges.

The College's size enables small groups, high teacher–student ratios, direct support, and an “open door” culture. These characteristics translate into smooth study experiences, high satisfaction, and visible student loyalty. The institution is strongly connected to local government and companies, which enhances relevance and facilitates practice-based learning. However, smallness also limits elective breadth, can complicate cohort formation (notably in the full-time mode with currently only six students), and increases exposure to year-to-year fluctuations in demand. These constraints sometimes force pragmatic compromises (e.g., group votes on programming language instead of personal choice, or “split” delivery), and may cap the number and diversity of projects and industry collaborations that can be offered concurrently.

Laboratories and teaching spaces are fit for purpose, digital tools are widely used, and accessibility measures are quite well developed. Nonetheless, further modernisation in areas such as cloud technologies, AI tools, and cybersecurity environments would strengthen alignment with emerging industry expectations.

The study field and its programme reflect a clear constructive alignment and an applied focus. Students engage with authentic tasks, internships, and commissioned projects; they receive substantial supervision and benefit from responsive academic support. Feedback loops are established: regular surveys, consultations with social partners, and iterative updates to curricula and delivery. Graduates' positive outcomes and partner feedback indicate that competence development is consistent and labor-market relevant.

Internationalization is a strategic challenge and opportunity. The current partner-university pool appears limited, constraining inbound/outbound mobility and the diversity of learning experiences. Attracting foreign students will require purposeful programme packaging (e.g., English-taught modules, short intensive formats), stronger visibility, and scalable partnership models (virtual exchange, blended intensive programmes, joint project courses). International project participation is likewise tied to expanding partner networks and staff capacity.

The applied research agenda is emerging but would benefit from a clearer pathway for recruiting and retaining staff with research backgrounds, as well as structured incentives for project acquisition.

The College exhibits a functioning operational quality culture, but some role definitions (e.g., programme committee vs. self-evaluation committee) appear blurred. Clarifying mandates, decision rights, and interfaces would reduce duplication, speed decisions, and make improvement cycles more predictable, important in a resource-constrained environment.

Strengths

Small cohorts, high contact with staff, and an approachable “open door” ethos can be observed, a smooth study progression and strong perceived support rounds up the student-centred atmosphere. Systematic engagement with authentic tasks support applied relevance and high employability. Internships and commissioned projects add to that approach, employer and graduate feedback confirms work readiness. Strong links with municipality and regional industry, translating into real projects and integration of social partners in curriculum adaptation confirm local embeddedness and its importance to the HEI.

Areas for Development

In some domains, opportunities for improvement can be detected: Very small full-time cohorts jeopardize elective feasibility, specialization depth, and project variety. Targeted marketing in regional schools or deploying alumni ambassadors might for example be considered. Limited choice for electives and specializations sometimes reduces the “choice” to a single “elective” for all due to group viability; workarounds (e.g., group votes on languages) may dilute personalization. It is recommended to expand the partner-university pool, attract foreign students, and scale international learning experiences (e.g. offer more BIPs, or virtual exchange options).

Recruitment/retention of research-active staff and systematic participation in international applied research projects remain underdeveloped. Committee roles and interfaces need sharper definition to streamline processes and accountability.

All in all, Utena College is a good place to study: student-centered, supportive, and tightly connected to its regional context. The study field demonstrates clear alignment between aims, learning outcomes, and applied delivery, and it produces graduates who are well prepared for the labor market. The same features that make the College distinctive, its size and local embeddedness, also create exposure to volatility, especially in electives, internationalization, and project capacity. With focused action on cohort development, elective feasibility, partner expansion, research staffing, the college can convert its quality culture and community trust into even more resilient and internationally connected provision, while preserving the close-knit strengths that students and employers value.

VI. EXAMPLES OF EXCELLENCE

The panel highlights as an example of excellence the HEI's strong cooperation with the municipality and regional industry, which results in real applied projects and active involvement of social partners in curriculum updates. This close collaboration ensures that studies remain aligned with regional needs and demonstrates meaningful local embeddedness benefiting both the institution and the wider community.

The implementation and orientation of a student-centered approach within the HEI demonstrates a strong commitment to positioning learners as the focal point of academic planning, instructional delivery, and support services, ensuring that practices align with the diverse needs and aspirations of students.