



***PANEVĖŽIO KOLEGIJOS  
VEIKLOS VERTINIMO IŠVADOS***

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**INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW REPORT ON  
*PANEVĖŽYS COLLEGE***

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Vertinimo sekretorė: Review secretary:	Dr. Orla Hanratty
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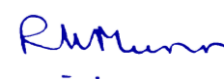
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I hereby certify that this is the final text of the institutional review report of Panevėžys College.



*Bob Munn*

## I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. The purpose of the external review is to determine the quality of the performance of a higher education institution based on the findings of the external review, to create prerequisites for improvement of the performance of a higher education institution, to promote a culture of quality, and to inform founders, academic community and the society about the quality of higher education institutions.
2. This review report is based on the evidence given in the self-evaluation report, additional evidence requested by the panel, information provided by the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education (hereinafter – Centre, SKVC) and a site visit, where meetings with a wide range of audiences were held.
3. The Panel was composed of the reviewers, following the Experts Selection Procedure approved by the Director of Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education on 31 December 2019 [Order No. V-149](#) and included the following members:

Professor Bob Munn (chair: Emeritus Professor of Chemical Physics; former Vice-President for Teaching and Learning, University of Manchester, U.K.);

Dr Orla Hanratty (secretary: Educational Developer / Technologist, University College Dublin, Ireland);

Dr Anneli Pirttilä (academic: Rector emerita of Saimaa University of Applied Sciences, Finland);

Dr Werner Inderbitzin (academic: Member of the Swiss Accreditation Council; former Rector of Zürich University of Applied Sciences);

Mrs Vilma Narkevičienė (social partner: IT Project Manager, Leader of E-commerce Development Team at [www.creation.lt](http://www.creation.lt); former Head of Panevėžys Development Agency);

Ms Martyna Virvilaitė (student: Klaipėda State College).

4. As a result of the external review **Panevėžys College** is given a **positive evaluation**.
5. Judgment by area:

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

\*5 points - **excellent** – the area is rated exceptionally well in the national context and internationally

4 points – **very good** – the area is rated very well in the national context and internationally, without any drawbacks

3 points – **good** – the area is being developed systematically, without any major drawbacks

2 points – **satisfactory** – the area meets the minimum requirements, and there are drawbacks that must be addressed

1 point - **unsatisfactory** – the area does not meet the minimum requirements, there are fundamental drawbacks

6. **Seven** examples of good practices were found; **twenty-five** recommendations are made.

## II. INTRODUCTION

### 2.1. Background of the review process

7. The external review of Panevėžys College (hereafter referred to as the College) was organised by the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education and carried out in 2021 by an Expert Panel of international experts (the Panel). It was conducted in accordance with the Procedure for the External Evaluation and Accreditation of Higher Education Institutions and Branches of Foreign Higher Education Institutions, Evaluation Areas and Indicators approved by the Minister of Education, Science and Sport of the Republic of Lithuania (hereinafter referred to as ‘the Procedure’) on 19 December 2019 [Order No. V-1529](#) and the Methodology for Conducting an Institutional Review in Higher Education approved by the Director of SKVC on 9 March 2020 [Order No V-32](#) (the Methodology).
8. According to the Procedure, external review consists of the following stages: submission of a self-evaluation report prepared by a higher education institution to the Centre; formation of an expert panel and analysis of the self-evaluation report; expert panel visit to the a higher education institution; preparation of the external review report, decision-making on the external review as well as accreditation and publication thereof; follow-up activities aimed at improving the performance of the higher education institution, taking into account the external review report.
9. At the preparatory stage of the external review, the Panel received the Self-Evaluation Report (SER) with annexes. The Panel requested additional information, such as the specification for a sample programme. SKVC provided to the Panel additional information about the College, as set in the Methodology (Chapter 26), including statistical data on students and staff; financial data; findings from the ex-ante and ex-post programme reviews, institutional reviews and evaluations of research (“*research*” comprises “*applied research*” and otherwise) and development activities; State-budget allocations for research activities; information on academic ethics from the Office of the Ombudsperson for Academic Ethics and Procedures of the Republic of Lithuania.
10. The site visit was undertaken after a training session organised by SKVC staff and preparatory Panel meetings. The Panel visited the university/college from 30 November to 2 December 2021 where it had meetings with 74 internal and external stakeholders; however, **because of the worldwide pandemic situation, the review visit was organised online using the video-conferencing tool Zoom** hosted by the Centre. The meetings were supported by simultaneous two-way translation between English and Lithuanian. Subsequently, the Panel met virtually to review and agree conclusions and recommendations. The review report was finalised by correspondence and submitted to the SKVC.
11. In line with the Procedure, the external review focused on four areas covered by the evaluation indicators and related criteria: **management, quality assurance, studies and research (art)** and **impact on regional and national development**. In analysing the evidence collected, the Panel also gave due consideration to the recommendations of the previous review in 2013.

12. The review of a higher education institution assesses each of the evaluation areas with one of five ratings: **excellent** – 5 points: the area is rated exceptionally well in the national context and internationally; **very good** – 4 points: the area is rated very well in the national context and internationally, without any drawbacks; **good** – 3 points: the area is being developed systematically, without any major drawbacks; **satisfactory** – 2 points: the area meets the minimum requirements, and there are drawbacks that must be addressed; **unsatisfactory** – 1 point: the area does not meet the minimum requirements, there are fundamental drawbacks.
  13. The decision on **positive** evaluation is made when none of the evaluation areas is evaluated unsatisfactorily (1 point). The decision on **negative** evaluation is made when at least one of the evaluation areas is evaluated unsatisfactory (1 point).
  14. In line with the Methodology, the review report, prepared by the Panel is reviewed by SKVC and sent to the higher education institution to comment on factual errors and the evaluations based thereon. The Panel revises the report in response to the comments from the higher education institution (if applicable) and submits it to SKVC.
  15. The Panel did not receive comments from Panevėžys College.
  16. After the Panel considers comments from the higher education institution (if applicable) and finalizes it, the report is being considered by the external Commission of the Higher Education Institutions' Review (the Commission), set up by SKVC. On the basis of the proposal, made by the Commission, provisioned in the Commissions regulations, approved by the order of the Director of SKVC on 8 January 2020 order No. V-5, SKVC takes one of the decisions:
    - to evaluate the performance of the higher education institution positively;
    - to evaluate the performance of the higher education institution negatively.
- The decisions of SKVC may be appealed to the Commission for Appeals, formed by SKVC. Subsequently, the decisions of SKVC and the Commission for Appeals may be appealed against in accordance with the procedure established by the Law on Administrative Proceedings of the Republic of Lithuania.
17. On the basis of the external review decision SKVC takes one of the following decisions on the **accreditation** of the higher education institution:
    - to **accredit for a period of seven years** if performance of the higher education institution is evaluated positively;
    - to **accredit for a period of three years** if performance of the higher education institution is evaluated negatively;
    - to **deny accreditation** if the repeated external review results of the higher education institution are negative.
  18. SKVC announces the decision on the external review together with the conclusions of the external review and the decision on the accreditation of the higher education institution on its website. The higher education institution correspondingly announces the decision on the evaluation of the higher education institution together with the external review report on its website and maintains it until the next external review.

## 2.2. Background information about the institution

19. Panevėžys College was established in 2002 from the merger of three higher schools, and in 2004 it absorbed the pedagogical division of Panevėžys Conservatory. Its current management and governance structures were adopted in 2016 and 2020. Its governing bodies are the Council and the Academic Board, with the Director the head of the management. There are three faculties, Biomedical Sciences, Social Sciences, and Technology Sciences, which between them deliver 20 study programmes across seven study fields. On 1 October 2020 there were 1330 students enrolled, with 200 staff employed, 121 of them teachers (full-time equivalent or FTE 54) and 18 administrators (all full-time). Over the last five years 1576 students have graduated.
20. The College was accredited by SKVC in 2013 for six years; the present reaccreditation is late because of changes in the review process (the development of new procedures and methodologies for institutional review). The College's quality management system was certified under ISO 9001:2008 and again under ISO 9001:2015. Following the previous accreditation by SKVC, the College developed its Strategic Action Plan for 2014–2020, which has now been updated for 2021–2026.
21. Like higher education institutions around the world, the College found its work affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. After initially suspending studies, it moved teaching, learning and assessment materials online, with strong support from its IT department. It replaced practical work with online alternatives where possible, and in cases where professional recognition required a physical presence (e.g. in healthcare), it extended and reorganised the programme until live practical work became possible. It was aware of the extra risk of cheating during online assessment and took steps to eliminate it by redesigning the tasks, restricting the time allowed, and in some cases interviewing students about their work. During the pandemic, healthcare students volunteered to work in the local hospital, which found their support invaluable. Other students helped schools to move their teaching online. Overall, the Panel considers that the College's response to the pandemic was appropriate and effective.

## III. ANALYSIS BY EVALUATION AREAS

### 3.1. Management

Management area is being analysed in accordance with the following indicators and criteria, set up in the Methodology.

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

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

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

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

22. The Vision of the College is to be “a modern, socially responsible institution that promotes student entrepreneurship and supports sustainable and stable development as an institution of higher education and studies – the centre of applied sciences in the region”. In support of that vision its Mission is “to carry out higher education studies based on scientific knowledge and practical skills, providing students with modern competencies that have added value in the smart society”. It seeks to “focus the region’s potential on the implementation of the lifelong learning principles and the development of scientific applied activities”. Mission and Vision are formulated in a short and concise form. They are comprehensible and can be easily communicated internally within the institution. The SER shows in the form of a detailed diagram how the strategic programmes in the Strategic Action Plan between them map onto the guidelines of the EHEA and the ERA. In meetings it became clear that lifelong learning means services in the area of non-formal continuous education, and that “development of science” means that the College will become a centre for applied research in the region to promote its attractiveness in a broader sense.
23. Internal and external stakeholders are involved in the development of the Strategic Action Plan: The Strategic Committee is a group of internal units that work with the Directorate (see below) in developing the strategy. Also involved in the process are social partners of the College. The strategic committee has the lead in the process.
24. The strategic action plan is based on a detailed SWOT analysis and risk analysis. Several risks are mentioned: insufficient number of students, non-accreditation of study programmes, R&D, student dissatisfaction, and unrealized two-way mobility. The strategic action plan 2021–2026 contains 3 strategic programmes, 7 objectives and 50 outcome criteria. The outcome criteria are operationalised as percentages, but it is sometimes not clear to which basic variables the percentages refer. Almost all objectives and outcome criteria are formulated quantitatively. The College should also consider defining qualitative objectives covering areas that are not easily taken into account by raw figures but nevertheless are very important. The college has set ambitious goals in regional and national impact in its strategic program, e.g. increasing economic and social value of students learning outcomes. Quantitative objectives or indicators do not provide enough information about whether this objective is achieved or not, a point also made later under 3.2 Quality Assurance. To make this point more understandable, examples from other higher education institutions could also be useful.
25. A lack of conciseness in documentation, discussed in more detail below under 3.2 Quality Assurance, makes important aspects of the College’s management more difficult to talk and think about. For example, the first strategic programme is “Development of Studies, Applied Research, Experimental and Non-formal Education Activities, Strengthening of Internationalisation”. This may be considered as one programme overall, but as written it reads as a set of five sub-programmes all of which could be summarized under an overall title such as ‘academic development’; similarly, the other two programmes could be summarized as ‘personnel development’ and ‘partnership development’. These then clearly cover what the College does, who does it, and with whom.
26. The final outcome of the strategic development process, the Strategic Action Plan, is presented by the Director to the College Council. The Council discusses the strategy and if there are no objections approves it. An extensive strategic review takes place every three years; the College also checks the fulfilment of targets annually. In this review numerous internal units are again involved. Important changes of the strategic plan have to be approved by the College Council.

27. The strategic action plan can be said to be adequate to the mission and vision of the College. However, the development, the monitoring and control of this detailed and very differentiated strategic plan is probably a big task for this rather small institution and the question arises whether somewhat leaner planning would probably be appropriate. Furthermore, for each objective in the strategic plan there is a need for resources – human resources, financial resources, infrastructures, or other things. So it would be highly desirable to complement the strategic plan with long-term resource planning, especially as it concerns financial means, and make this resource allocation transparent.

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

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

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

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

28. The management structure of the College is regulated in the Statute of the College. It consists of three bodies at the highest level of the organisation: the College Council, the Academic Council, and Student Representation. One level below is the director, to whom two deputy directors are assigned. In the councils all important stakeholders are represented. The institution itself is organised into three divisions: (i) studies, headed by the deputy director for studies, (ii) research and development, headed by the deputy director for R&D, and (iii) the Director's office, to which a number of units report (international relations and marketing, human resources and document management, accounting, office for quality management and legal affairs).
29. The College Council is the supreme body responsible for approving the strategy, the budget and the annual accounts, and the annual report. The College Council appoints or dismisses the Director. The College Council meets every two months. It gets the necessary information about the development of the College from the Director. The Director is a non-voting member of the College Council. Obviously there exists a dialogue between the Directorate and the College Council about strategic issues. Challenges for the College are to preserve the number of students and to serve the region as a centre of applied research.
30. The Academic Council is responsible for academic affairs, for the organisation and management of the study programmes, quality assurance in teaching and approving the study programmes, including the financial resources required. The Academic Council has the right to be consulted on important issues such as strategy, finances, the appointment of the Director and the reorganisation of the institution. The Academic Council approves study fees and determines the study places. There is an open dialogue between the Academic Council and the College Council.
31. The Director is a sole governing body: Reporting to the College Council, he proposes the strategy and is responsible for its implementation, he proposes the budget as well as changes in the organisation, he manages the approved financial resources, and he is responsible for hiring and dismissing staff.
32. Students and social partners are involved in College Council and Academic Council as important stakeholders. Students have in addition to that their own Students' Representation organisation.
33. The Director's powers extend to the management of the institution in the broadest sense. From the discussions in several sessions the Panel had with various groups it became clear that the director has a strong position in the College. He decides finally about important topics such as



the allocation of funds and the hiring of new staff. However, it became also clear that the director as well as the whole management has advisory groups (institutionalized as well as formed ad hoc) that help to collect information and get feedback out of the institution. Above all, the Director has an advisory board of directors or Directorate, which includes the two deputy directors, the deans, the head of studies, head of research and head of marketing and internationalisation, as well as representatives of the students and the trade unions. This board is evidently significant and seems to function well, but it is not evident in the official management structure that was presented in the SER.

34. As mentioned earlier, risk analysis features in the development of the Strategic Action Plan. The College operates a clear procedure for the identification, evaluation and management of risk, and maintains a risk register (published on the College intranet) with suitable mitigation strategies. The internal audits carried out as part of the College's quality management system also have regard to the identified risks.
35. The College has the advantage of being so small that all involved bodies and persons in charge are in close contact and clearly communicate easily with one another, which makes effective management easier. So, the official Management Structure appears very 'lean', to the extent that it is not totally clear who reports to whom (i.e. what the reporting lines are). Against that observation, the Statute of the College appears rather complex, with 138 paragraphs, many of them with subparagraphs, that make it hard to read and understand for social partners. It is obvious for the experts that the form of the Statute is a legal requirement, but the College may wish to explore whether a simplified version summarizing key features would be valuable for all involved parties. Furthermore, some clarifications could be considered. One of these concerns the initiation and launch of new study programmes, which are decided by the Academic Council having regard to the resources required, but – according to the Statute – without consideration of their funding. Furthermore, when new professors are appointed, it should be clarified who applies for these positions and who decides on appointments. (See also remarks below under 1.4). The management structure is defined and understood in the College, and it is operated effectively, but some more formal description is recommended to increase transparency and avoid potential misunderstandings.

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

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

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

36. The College collects and analyses a large amount of information across all its activities. The sources of information are not only internal but also include the College alumni, contacted through the Alumni Club. In addition to that, the College collects feedback from graduates in a systematic way one year after graduation. Extensive evidence of this is given in the SER by reference to detailed information in the relevant sections, where analyses of the data are also offered. The information is comprehensive and systematically covers a broad range of different topics. In particular, the specific information collected and analysed informs performance criteria

in the Strategic Plan concerning student admissions, support, progression and employment; academic staff; applied science; material resources; internationalisation; and social partners. All the results contribute to the College's annual activity report and associated improvement plans, which represent sound practice.

37. The College's website shows that various reports are published about the performance of education and research. This information is relevant and accessible to the College community and to the public. The public information is naturally available in Lithuanian, but not much is available in English. If the external College website was also available in English across all areas, that would contribute to the objective of internationalisation. Furthermore, modern social media channels are very important to approach young people, and for Instagram and Facebook the available posts are again mostly in Lithuanian. More English posts would increase the international reputation of the College and contribute to "internationalisation at home" for students. Developing attractive social media accounts and posts together with students who belong to the generation of "digital natives" could also be an excellent opportunity for collaboration between the College and its own student community. Altogether, the College provides adequate information about its activities to its own community and to the public, but could extend the reach of its publicity and increase its impact by making more use of English and social media.

#### *1.4. Effectiveness of human resource management:*

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

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

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

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

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

38. The Academic Council is involved in the selection and appointment of new lecturers and researchers. According to the information received by the Panel in meetings, these processes are appropriately documented. However, the documentation does not specify sufficiently clearly who may make proposals for new positions, how new vacancies are announced internally and externally, and which body or individual makes final decisions on appointments, and the Panel was unable to obtain definite answers about these matters in its meetings with College staff. Given the importance of academic staff to its teaching and applied research, the College would do well to specify the process of appointment fully.
39. The institution employs about 54 full time equivalent (FTE) academic and about 78 FTE non-academic staff, of which 34 FTE are support for teaching and research. Compared with similar higher education institutions this ratio is unusual in the sense that the proportion of non-academic staff is high, but the College stresses the importance to it of this non-academic support, which it plans to increase.
40. The number of FTE in the academic staff decreased between 2016 and 2020, though over that period the number of study programmes also decreased. Possible impacts on the quality of

teaching and research should be closely monitored by the College. The student:staff ratio ranges from 17 to 27 to 1 in different areas, averaging 25:1, which is readily manageable.

41. Out of 121 teachers, 40 indicate that their main job is at the institution, which means that about two-thirds work only part-time at the College, whereas the Panel understands that the Ministry recommends that about half the teaching staff should be full-time employees. The integration of part-time lecturers is primarily seen by the College as an organisational challenge and is met with very flexible working hours. However, the College should be aware that the integration of part-time staff also has something to do with knowing and embodying the culture and values of the institution, which may need more attention. The College may therefore wish to strengthen its efforts at integration and perhaps recruit more full-time teaching staff so that a higher proportion have their primary allegiance to the College and its norms.
42. Two thirds of the academic staff are 45 years and older, which the College recognizes as a major challenge in renewing staffing for the coming years. The College reports that staff have qualifications and experience necessary for their roles: teachers have at least a master's degree or equivalent, and student practice is supervised by teachers with at least a bachelor's degree or a professional bachelor's degree who work in a field related to the practice. Nearly three-quarters of the College teachers are also practitioners with at least 3 years of practical work experience in their field. In view of the strategic goal of increased internationalisation and promotion of student mobility, it should be examined whether visiting professorships for international staff could be established.
43. Among staff with administrative and academic support responsibilities, the Director, deputy directors and the management representative for quality all have doctorates, while the deans of the faculties and the heads of the practical training centre and the centre for studies, career and occupation all have least a master's degree or equivalent, and all the others have at least a professional bachelor's degree. The College's non-academic personnel (except the staff of the economy unit) have mastered information technology and are able to communicate in at least one foreign language. Administrative staff have relevant managerial and administrative experience.
44. The SER reports little about staff salaries and compensation. It is mentioned that financial incentives are possible. According to information given to the Panel in meetings salaries are competitive and the College is able to hire qualified staff. Opportunities to get bonuses in addition to basic salaries are rather extensive which means that transparency about the criteria to receive extra payment is very important.
45. The College has a specific strategic programme (renewed for 2021–23) to improve the competences of its whole community, including improving the qualifications of the academic staff, and provides financial resources for this purpose. Extensive information on how this is carried out is reported in the SER and was confirmed in the meetings during the site visit. The measures include participation in international mobility projects, practical internships, seminars, courses, and other in-service training events, organized either at College or Faculty level. Staff are expected to report each year on what development activities they have undertaken as part of their workload. Competencies developed may relate to professional knowledge and experience, teaching skills or applied research, as well as more general areas including language skills. A significant number of opportunities are offered for development in the area of teaching and learning and quality.

46. Development of non-academic personnel is necessarily more diverse and is targeted by managers towards individual staff. The forms of training include seminars, consultations, conferences, and so on, much as for academic staff, but also employee self-development by reading of targeted literature and analysis of good practice, practical examples and situations in other organizations. During their annual activity review interviews, staff report on the development activities they have undertaken.
47. The College has sufficient qualified academic staff for teaching and sufficient support staff, but is looking for more researchers to implement its vision of becoming a centre for applied research. Recruitment of academic staff is done increasingly through a competitive process and non-competitive recruitment is the exception. It places great emphasis on improving the qualifications of academic and non-academic staff through a variety of mechanisms, as outlined above.

*1.5. Efficiency of financial and learning resource management:*

- 1.5.1. Financial resources are planned, allocated and used rationally;*
- 1.5.2. Various financial resources for the implementation of higher education activities are attracted;*
- 1.5.3. Learning resources for provision of studies and research (art) activities are planned and used rationally;*
- 1.5.4. Learning resources for conducting studies and research (art) activities are appropriate, sufficient and available.*

48. The financial management of the institution is governed by external and internal regulations (Republic of Lithuania, Ministry of Education, Science and Sport; Statute of the College; and other internal regulations). The Ministry of Education approves that part of the programme costs which are financed by the state, while the College Council is responsible for the income and expenditure related to the study programmes and services.
49. Decisions within the approved budget are made by the board of directors, usually by majority vote. As the board of directors is an advisory board, the Director has the final decision-making authority. This strikes an appropriate balance between consultation and executive responsibility.
50. Allocation of funds for salaries is based on the approved list of posts. The calculation of expenditure on scholarships is based on internal regulations, and expenditure on goods and services, tangible and intangible assets is based on past expenditure. A report on the use of funds can be found in the Annual Activity Report.
51. The total expenditure amounts to around 3.5 million euros (2020) and has increased by around 0.5 million euros between 2016 and 2020. In the development of expenditure, the strong fluctuation of expenditure on fixed assets is striking, which decreases from 387,600 euros (2016) to 8,300 euros (2018) and increases to 999,800 euros (2020). According to the SER, these are investment projects, including renovating a dormitory and developing two study and innovation areas. There is also no breakdown of expenditure by areas such as education, research, administration, etc., or by faculties. This makes it somewhat difficult to assess whether the resources are sufficient. In the panel sessions, the experts did not hear any complaints about insufficient infrastructures. At the same time, it is obvious that the College is actively looking for additional funds. Overall, the Panel formed the view that the resources available to the College are sufficient and managed appropriately.

52. The total revenue of the institution amounts to 3.7 million euros (2020) and has increased by about 1.1 million euros between 2016 and 2020. Most of the financial resources are provided by the state: in 2020 it was around 60%, while self-generated funds (funds received for services provided) accounted for 28%. Revenue from targeted funds, financial means given by third parties, increased between 2016 and 2020 from 168,600 euros to 470,600 euros.
53. Securing the funding of the institution has a high priority for the management. The decline in the number of students and the related decisions of the Ministry of Education are presented in the SER as a challenge for the financial stability of the College, which raises the question as to whether the financial basis is sufficient for its further development. Measures have therefore been taken to increase revenues and cut costs. In particular, the College proposes acquisition of paid contracts for R&D projects and the sale of services as ways to raise more funds to help solve the problem. However, this should not become the sole purpose of these activities, which must also be judged in relation to the main mission of the College, which is to conduct scientifically based teaching and applied research.
54. According to the SER, the planning and allocation of material resources is done in line with the objectives as formulated in the Statute of the College and in the strategy. In fact, the allocation of financial means to individual strategic goals is not transparent in the documentation provided to the Panel. As already mentioned, the Strategic Action Plan should be complemented by long-term resource planning from which can be seen what resources are available for which strategic programme, and perhaps also for individual strategic objectives.
55. The SER describes in detail the renewal of the infrastructure in buildings, laboratories, specialised classrooms, etc., as in the examples given earlier. Considerable financial resources – in total as well as relative to the total volume – are invested in this renewal, which is important for the College’s future development.
56. The infrastructure seems to have multiple uses, i.e. for teaching and practical exercises for students as well as for applied research, which is an efficient use of resources in a small institution. Furthermore, it is evident that cooperation with companies (social partners) and other universities takes place, such as donated, subsidized or shared facilities and equipment. For the College as a small institution, such co-operations are particularly important and valuable.
57. **In summary**, the College has a detailed strategic plan based on a clear mission and vision, which is developed and regularly reviewed involving stakeholders. However, the plan is unduly complex, it needs qualitative as well as quantitative indicators, and the overall strategic planning needs to be more closely linked to strategic resource planning. In the meetings it became clear that the internal processes are well established among the staff and that communication works. The governance of the College is basically clear, but it is desirable to check and clarify the use made of the Statute of the College, which seems unduly complex to serve as a management tool; the reporting lines in the management structures (for example, who reports to whom); and where final decisions are made on matters such as funding new programmes and hiring new staff.
58. The College collects adequate information and makes it publicly available, although for the most part it is still only in Lithuanian, which restricts its accessibility and relevance to the College’s target of internationalization.
59. The College has qualified staff for teaching and is looking for more research staff. It can offer competitive salaries. New staff are usually recruited after a public application process. However, it was not sufficiently clear to the Panel how the appointment process works and who makes the final hiring decisions.

60. As the Panel saw from the SER and meetings, the financial resources are used adequately. In addition to the state funds, other sources of funding are attracted. However, careful consideration should be given to ensure that the acquisition of additional financial resources does not risk distorting the College mission to provide scientifically based teaching and applied research.
61. **Judgment:** the area meets the minimum requirements, but there are drawbacks which must be addressed, and is given 2 points.
62. **Recommendations for the area:**
- The College should simplify the Strategic Action Plan with respect to the most important objectives and targets which contribute to its long-term and successful development.
  - The College should consider adopting not only quantitative indicators but also a more qualitative approach in assessing the implementation of its strategy.
  - The College's Strategic Action Plan should be complemented by strategic resource planning.
  - The College should set out its management structure and clearly define all reporting lines.
  - The College may wish to explore whether a simplified version of the College Statute summarizing key features would be helpful for all involved parties.
  - The College should define clearly and transparently how new academic staff are appointed, including who takes the final decision to appoint a person.
  - The College may wish to strengthen its efforts at integration and perhaps recruit more full-time teaching staff so that a higher proportion have their primary allegiance to the College and its norms.
  - In addressing its target of internationalization of the College should make the information that it provides available not only in Lithuanian but also in English, internally as well as externally.

### 3.2. Quality assurance

*Quality assurance* area is being analysed in accordance with the following indicators and criteria, set up in the Methodology.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

63. The quality management system (QMS) of Panevėžys College has been designed to be consistent not only with the Standards and Guidelines of the European Higher Education Area (ESG), but also to meet the requirements of the ISO 9001 standard. The main document of quality assurance is the Quality Manual, where the Quality Management System (QMS) is described. The Quality Manual contains information on the quality assurance processes, organisation and the process owners responsible for each process and also on documentation and procedures describing and regulating various activities, resources and internal audits and management reviews of the suitability, adequacy and effectiveness of the QMS.
64. The College Internal Study Quality Assurance System (ISQAS) is part of the QMS containing the model and quality policy of the internal quality assurance system for studies, regulating the development, execution, monitoring, renewal and evaluation of study programmes, organizing student-centred teaching and learning, as well as the course of studies, study resources, requirements for the improvement of teachers' qualifications, information control and public information processes. The evaluation criteria are established and documented for all activities, which are also integrated into the College's Strategy and Strategic Action Plan. Documenting a sub-manual especially for the quality assurance of studies clearly indicates an effort to conform to and base quality assurance on the ESG standards and guidelines, as the focus of the ESG is on students, learning and teaching. The conformity of the ISQAS to ESG is detailed in the Quality Manual and links to different ESG standards and guidelines are indicated. Describing the QMS in two different manuals seemed unnecessarily complicated to the Panel, even if according to the information received in the interviews the ISQAS is part of the larger QMS. On the other hand, the College explained the division to two different documents by saying that the main quality manual defines the institutional level and the study manual, containing half of the monitored indicators, the study programme level. The QMS, consisting of two separate parts, both very detailed, complicates unnecessarily the functionality of the system to staff and external stakeholders. The QMS separating the institutional level from the institution's core area of studies indicates that the system is not actually a comprehensive whole.
65. The Quality Manual contains a comprehensive list of various types of documents defining and regulating the activities of the College extending from College studies and support to the students, management of the College study fields, staff-related issues, academic ethics and the procedure for appeals, to regulating the QMS. The Quality Manual contains a list of 23 procedure descriptions. Also, the College has distinguished 25 processes in its operations in the SER and the Quality Manual.
66. The documentation is very extensive and lists of different processes and procedures go to a very detailed level describing management, teaching and learning, research, support functions and quality assurance. All the available documents give accurate information of when, by what council or responsible person the documents have been approved by and also in most cases the history of modifications to the documents. Both Quality Manuals (QMS and ISQAS) and the SER provide, however, mainly catalogues of relevant documentation and links to these quality assurance documents. For example, the SER provides links to the 23 procedures, but the links lead to the intranet and thus the documentation is not publicly available. The 25 processes named

in the SER and Quality Manual are listed, but no links to the actual process descriptions are provided. During the online visit the Panel requested process descriptions of the 25 processes named by titles in the quality documentation and also asked for information on the linkages between the 25 processes and 23 procedures. The College provided on request a memorandum written especially for the Panel, with a document connecting processes to procedures. However, the document did not provide actual process descriptions. The 25 processes were briefly explained, but it remained unclear to the Panel how these processes are actually meant to function. For example, the process description of strategic management by defining “This process includes the development, implementation and publicity of the College’s strategy and strategic plan.” does not give the Panel or the stakeholders any information of what the process contains or how it functions. Also, the Quality Manual documentation does not contain process descriptions for the stakeholders. This leaves the Panel with the impression that the 25 processes are important issues identified by the College, but not actually part of the operational quality assurance system.

67. The Statute of the College and strategy documentation are published in English and activity reports from the last 10 years in Lithuanian. They are publicly available on the College internet, whereas the web site contains links to both Quality Manuals (QMS and ISQAS), but when the external review began the links led to internal intranet registration and were thus not available to the Panel or external stakeholders. The quality assurance documents concerning students, both regulatory documents and the study programme evaluations are published on the internet website; some of the documents are in English, some in Lithuanian. The College has set the internationalization of studies and research to be one of the six priorities in the performance strategy, not only focusing on the mobility of students and staff, but also aiming to attract foreign students to full-time studies. Considering this aim the College would benefit from publishing more quality assurance information in English on its website and also from publishing on the public website some of the internal quality documentation now available only on the intranet. The majority of the documents being available only in Lithuanian makes access more difficult e.g. for many international external stakeholders, and does not support the College’s claim to commit itself to internationalization and the principles of global quality management, but rather contradicts these efforts.
68. The internal quality assurance measures in the College are carried out mainly on an annual basis. Activities of the College are based on the College Performance Strategy and the Strategic Action Plan for 2014–2020 to implement the strategy with its mission and to achieve the goals defined in the strategy. The College Strategic Action Plan is based on the analysis of the College strengths, weaknesses, threats and opportunities, which is carried out annually when preparing and considering the College Annual Activity Report, monitoring documents that are publicly available on the College’s intranet covering the reports from the last eleven years.
69. Most of the reports are provided in Lithuanian and are not easily accessible for international stakeholders or evaluators, which the Panel considers to be a major flaw, given that external reviews in Lithuania are conducted using international reviewers. As the College’s QMS with its related monitoring documents is very large, translating them presents too laborious a task for international stakeholders or evaluators. The Panel is satisfied that the indicators are followed, but finds that they are not publicly available in a way that would be expected of an institution making efforts to foster internationalization and seeking international recognition of quality.



70. The evidence from the available documents and interviews during the online visit indicated that strategic planning is carried out very meticulously. For a relatively small institution with 132.7 FTE staff of which 54.2 are academic and 78.5 are non-academic staff in administration and supportive functions, the planning is very detailed and complex, including 3 strategic programmes with 7 key indicators to follow, extending to 58 different indicators in the last strategy period and 56 indicators in the coming strategy period in the strategic programmes to follow.
71. From the viewpoint of quality assurance, it is also worth noting that all the indicators followed up in the Action Plan and the quality management system are quantitative. If one of the strategic activities is the development of study and the defined goal is “ensuring innovative study process, content and environment”, it can be questioned whether achievement of this goal can be measured only with a set of quantitative indicators. Among the 58 indicators presented in the Action Plan 2014–2020 only one concerns quality experience, namely student satisfaction with studies in the faculty, which is measured on a scale from 1 to 5, but it is not a key indicator for the College. This appears rather peculiar, as the College claims the main priority to be the quality of studies. In the new Action Plan 2021–2026 an indicator of the level of employers’ satisfaction with trained professionals is added to the indicators. At least, the annual follow-up of quantitative indicators in action plans is an ex post way of tackling the improvement measures, whereas a more qualitative approach would bring an ex ante possibility to tackle improvement.
72. In quality assurance and in maintaining the quality management system the crucial question is whether the institution has enough resources to monitor and follow up all the indicators, whether they make a difference in taking corrective action in the everyday life of the College, and whether they lead to improvement in actual quality. Although the key requirement for the quality assurance system is to be effective, it is likewise imperative that it is also efficient, so that it achieves its goals with the optimal use of resources. The College’s second strategic programme “Strengthening the Competences of the College Community to Implement the College Strategy, Ensuring the Efficiency of Management” specifically mentions efficiency. For a college the size of Panevėžys the Panel questions whether operating such an elaborate quality system requires human resources that it could use better in teaching and applied research.
73. The Panel noted that the College has an ambitious approach to strategic planning and elaborate quality assurance follows as a consequence. However, it is clear to the Panel that the College should simplify its planning and monitoring of its performance by a more strategic choice of indicators and concentrate on a smaller set to follow in order to make its quality assurance and the quality management system more effective and efficient. Furthermore, the institution would certainly benefit from following some qualitative goals measured by internal evaluation rather than solely quantitative measuring.
74. The College evaluates annually the functionality and effectiveness of the whole Quality Management System at the meeting of the Directorate, presenting the Management Evaluative Analysis (MEA), which in the Quality Manual is called the management review analysis. According to the SER the MEA covers all processes of the institution, implementation of the resolutions of the previous MEA, the outcomes of the audits, estimation of the effectiveness, evaluation of the monitoring and measurement outcomes, the internal audits, the feedback from the parties concerned, risk management and improvement of activities, the condition of the adjustment actions, the progress of the problem-solving, and the provision of resources. The SER

claims that, being such a full analysis of the activities, the MEA reveals the effectiveness of the QMS, its conformity, and projects for possible improvement actions. The MEA is not publicly or even internally available on the internet or the intranet, and therefore the Panel asked for the latest MEA, which proved to be a large collection of slides presented annually to the Directorate. From the content in the documents, it can be deduced that a rigorous analysis of the above-mentioned issues is carried out.

75. The College uses annual internal audits to ensure the internal quality system and staff are involved in conducting these audits. The entire audit process is managed according to PA 17 Description of the Internal Audit Procedure of the Quality Management System (2020). The principal goal of the internal audit of the quality management system is to monitor the functioning of the quality system within the College and evaluate whether the system is being implemented and supervised effectively. Between 2016 and 2020, 31 audits were carried out. The audits detected 11 discrepancies, identified 57 potential problem areas and 35 options for the improvement in terms of capacity to meet the requirements, and improve the performance. Adjustment and corrective actions, responsible persons and the deadlines for the implementation were foreseen to deal with the problems. Evidence was gained during the online visit that both internal audits and monitoring of indicators lead to corrective action, but the fundamental principles of the QMS were not contemplated or questioned. The burden of the system on the organisation and its efficiency, i.e. the output gained in relation to the input allocated, have not been seriously analysed or evaluated.
76. The College emphasizes that each member of the institution, the social partners and other stakeholders are involved in the quality assurance process. The College has defined its social partners, which makes external stakeholder groups clearer and is helpful in quality assurance. Even if the QMS and ISQAS responsibilities are described in documentation, quality is considered to be the responsibility of the whole College community and its stakeholders. It is claimed that this ensures that the College is able to meet its objectives and the requirements for quality assurance to meet the requirements of the Lithuanian legislation, and also to comply with the provisions of the ESG and the ISO standards.
77. The College has a Quality Policy (2018), that defines and advances the quality culture within the College. Evidence gained in all the online visit interviews with management, teachers and staff, students and also the external stakeholders show that all groups are very much committed to Panevėžys College and its quality assurance. The sense of community appeared uniform throughout the College and its external stakeholders. This strong involvement gives an excellent basis for quality assurance.
78. All internal and external stakeholder groups are involved with quality assurance, as the College encourages them to respond to various survey questionnaires. It is noteworthy that in the SER the College recognizes as a weakness that the students are reluctant to respond to survey questionnaires and to provide the feedback on ongoing studies and are rather slow to get involved in the study improvement process. Another weakness is considered to be that participation rates of graduates and social partners in surveys are low. On the other hand, in the interviews with graduates and social partners several examples were given of how the College had made corrective action based on the feedback given. Ample evidence was also given of how the informal feedback functions in an excellent way between graduates, social partners and the

College. All external stakeholder groups appeared to be satisfied with their role and involvement in the quality assurance.

79. In its SER the College does not, however, pay any attention to the burden the surveys put on respondents and the measures it is taking appear to be activation of the stakeholder groups rather than considering the basic principles in stakeholder involvement. In the interviews the students suggested that feedback could be collected by a phone app, which would make it easier. Furthermore, they indicated that feedback collected after the study courses does not motivate all students to answer the questionnaires, as the impact to improved quality cannot be seen during the course.
80. In the Quality Manual the College has distinguished 25 processes and divided them into four groups: management processes, core processes, support processes and improvement processes. Management processes are those that include top-level management functions related to the strategic planning, definition of the authority and responsibility, quality assurance of activities and financial management. The main or core processes are the studies, science and non-formal education processes that create value for the internal and external stakeholders. Support processes are the processes to coordinate the activities of the College units and perform functions that add value to all the divisions. Improvement processes are designed to provide the feedback from the parties concerned, quality internal audits and the management of adjustment and corrective actions. The interaction of different processes is presented and explained in the quality documentation.
81. Responsible persons have been identified for all the processes, i.e. process hosts that are presented in the Quality Manual. These hosts are responsible for the effectiveness of processes and the achievement of goals. The goals are claimed to be consistent with the overall strategy and the quality policy of the College. The model of the QMS and the interaction of the processes are provided in an annex of the Quality Manual. However, neither the Quality Manual nor the SER provides a description or specification of the processes. As already mentioned, the Panel's interpretation is that the 25 processes appear merely as a list of titles with only inconsistent references to content in the quality manual.
82. Furthermore, the names of the 25 processes do not indicate how the Plan-Do-Check-Act (PDCA) cycle that the institution claims to follow is functioning in these processes or as a result of the combination of these processes. The PDCA cycle might be embedded in all or some of the listed processes or in the aggregate system, but as actual process descriptions were not available and not referred to in any of the documentation provided, it was not evident to the Panel that processes for planning, implementation, monitoring, periodic evaluation and development activities are actually specified. The Strategy and the Action Plan to implement the Strategy, with its many indicators, and evidence from the interviews indicate that the processes of planning, implementation, monitoring and corrective actions do actually exist along these lines on the operational level, but they are not evident in the listed processes or the quality documentation. The PDCA cycle thus obviously functions in practice, but is not specified in the QMS.
83. The 23 procedures that are described in the documentation guide and support the implementation process. These procedures quite obviously contain the backbone of the QMS and give the

necessary guidelines to teachers, staff and students of the operating mode of the institution. The College would benefit from clarifying its system of processes and procedures.

84. In the listed processes attention is drawn to the responsibilities, where the responsible persons, units or departments are process owners. The deans, who are highly relevant to the core processes of studies and research, are not identified as responsible persons or process owners. In the interviews the deans emphasized, however, their direct responsibilities and involvement in the management processes, even if they do not have responsibilities in the QMS processes. Furthermore, the Management Representative for Quality is process owner in all improvement processes but one (5 out of 6). To the Panel this appears as if improvement processes may be largely outsourced to separate quality staff instead of involving all the stakeholders in the college community.
85. The College would benefit from a simpler description of the QMS, as it would provide all stakeholders, especially those external to the College, with a clearer picture of the actual PDCA processes. In the Quality Manual and the SER the listed processes do not link sufficiently in the planning, implementation, monitoring and improvement activities.
86. The SER describes the academic, financial, adaptive and other support the students receive in their studies. Information about the student support is publicly available on the website. Academic support for students is provided at the institutional, academic unit, SPC and module levels. During the first days of the academic year, an information week is organised for first year students, during which the new students are introduced to the College; study structure; forms and methods of assessment of studies and study learning outcomes; the credit system, as well as the system for crediting partial study learning outcomes and recognition of competencies acquired in formal and informal ways; access to the resources needed for studies; opportunities for international mobility; extracurricular activities; and the activities of the Student Scientific Society. The tutorial system has been developed in the College: up to 10 percent of the hours projected in the module are allocated to student tutorials. Both individual and group tutorials are carried out, and teachers advise students through direct contact or mixed methods, using Moodle and the videoconferencing tools used in the College. To increase the number of graduates who complete their studies on time, interim defences of the final work are organised in SPCs, while the engineering and computer science studies appoint advisers for the final project.
87. Evidence from the visit indicated that the students appreciate the support they have been given in their studies, even in the difficult times of the pandemic. In particular, the direct communication and sense of community between students and teachers was evident in the interviews, and the teachers have been very flexible in providing support whenever needed. As the College is small and there is a small student to staff ratio, there are evidently opportunities for a lot of individual and small group attention. This is also evident in the 2020 module feedback, which indicates that respondents are appreciative of the teachers' patience and willingness to answer many questions.
88. According to the SER the College also provides financial support to students. The best-performing students in state-funded studies receive an incentive scholarship. The students actively participating in the performance of the College are encouraged by scholarships. To reduce the shortage of specialists in engineering, informatics and educational sciences, and to encourage school leavers to choose studies relevant to the development of the region, the Government of the Republic of Lithuania granted financial support to students in the fields of

pedagogy, computer engineering, information systems, electrical engineering and mechanical engineering. The Centre for Studies, Career and Occupation arranges for every student meeting the established criteria to receive financial support from the State Studies Foundation.

89. The College also provides adaptive support to students to get involved in the life of the College community. In order to allow first year students to adapt more quickly, the College focuses on the dissemination of information. The Chairman of the SPC provides students with detailed information on the content of the study programme and keeps them informed and advises students on relevant issues. Each academic group is assigned a group tutor, who also helps to tackle problems for students.
90. The College has provided suitable facilities for students with a limited level of work capacity. The Centre for Studies, Career and Occupation has employed a consultant, who encourages students with disabilities to actively express their needs and inform the College as early as possible. The aim is to take into account, listen to and understand the individual needs of students with disabilities, in order to create favourable learning, studies and living conditions for them within and outside the College and thereby enable them to participate appropriately.
91. In the SER when discussing the support to academic and non-academic staff the emphasis is clearly on payment, salary and bonus issues. Also, for the newly appointed academic and non-academic staff adaptation support is provided. Newly recruited teachers are mentored by the Dean of the Faculty and the Chairman of the SPC, while non-academic staff are supported by an assigned employee of the relevant unit. The aim is to help new employees to get familiarized with working conditions, procedures and all the necessary information more quickly, to master the information systems used in the College, and at the same time to shorten the adaptation period, helping new employees to integrate more quickly into the College community, make their work more efficient and reduce the turnover of staff. In the online visit interview with the teachers, it was evident that the staff mentoring system is good practice that is appreciated and functions well.
92. According to the SER the College aims not only to create an academic community based on academic freedom, of which both the College staff and students are equal members, but also to ensure the implementation of the principles of academic ethics in the process of science and studies. Applying ethics is sought with several codes and regulations that are approved and to which the College is committed to.
93. The Statute of the College states that the academic community enjoys academic freedom and follows the Code of Academic Ethics of the College, which is prepared and approved by the Academic Council in response to recommendations from the Controller of Academic Ethics and Procedures, and the Code of Ethics of the College, approved by the General Meeting of the personnel of the College. The Code of Academic Ethics of the College from the year 2021 defines the fundamental values of academic ethics, i.e. academic integrity, responsibility, equality, justice, non-discrimination, accountability, transparency, economical use of resources, academic freedom, impartiality of assessment of scientific and research study papers, trust, respect, the established general ethical norms, ethics of studies and applied scientific activities, implementation and supervision of the standards of the Code of Academic Ethics.
94. The College, the Lithuanian Student Representation and the College Student Representation have signed the Declaration of Fair Higher Education. To ensure the implementation of the

principles of academic ethics in the process of science and studies, students commit themselves to the principles of academic integrity when concluding study agreements. In the interviews the teachers and staff emphasized the significance of this signed agreement as a guarantee to commitment to academic ethics.

95. The rules specified in The College Studies Regulation and Regulations of the College Appeals ensure the possibility of appeals concerning the procedure for the assessment of the academic progress of modules, marketing, violation of the procedures for the assessment of the final project work and appeal procedures. The College ensures that students can question the assessment received and receive reasoned responses to their appeals. Therefore, students who do not agree with the assessment of the marking of the semester module studies, or who notice violations in the procedure of assessment of the academic progress of the semester module studies, as well as the final project assessment procedures, have the right to appeal, and the Panel saw a report of such an appeal.
96. The Description of the Procedure for the Prevention of Plagiarism in the Preparation of the Written Work of the College approved by the Academic Council, regulates the procedures for checking and detection of plagiarism, consideration of violations of academic ethics and imposition of sanctions. The study agreement contains a clause where the student undertakes to study honestly. The College Studies Regulation provides cases of how to behave if the student was dishonest. However, the College recognizes in its self-evaluation that there is a need to focus more on the prevention of plagiarism and the evaluation of the compliance of methodological material and applied research with the standards of academic ethics and the ethics of research.
97. The College also enhances equality and non-discrimination by adopting the College Rules on the Prevention of Harassment, Sexual Harassment or Stalking, which all members of the College community are required to comply with. The Description of the Implementing Measures for the Realization and Enforcement of the Equal Opportunities Policy in the College has also been approved, aiming to provide equal opportunities and ensure gender equality, both in the study process and in the College performance as a whole.
98. The College ensures the possibility to apply to the Ethics Commission, which supervises the Code of Academic Ethics. Meetings of the Ethics Commission are convened having received a report or information on possible violations of academic ethics and/or procedures, or with a view to initiating additions or adjustments to the Code. Upon receiving a report, the Ethics Commission analyses the validity of the report in accordance with the Rules of the Procedure of the College Ethics Commission (2015).
99. The College has specified and has sufficient mechanisms to tackle the issues in academic integrity, tolerance and non-discrimination, appeal and ethics. The Panel did not get any evidence that these provisions and procedures would not be applied effectively.
100. The College has a systematic approach to addressing the recommendations of the previous external review of the College in 2013. Recommendations, specified measures to tackle the problem or weakness detected, results sought, responsible persons, implementation deadline and also a section for follow-up of execution have been defined and presented to the Panel in the self-evaluation of the College. With this meticulous approach the College successfully expresses to its stakeholders and external auditors its commitment to quality assurance and continuous improvement.

101. Most measures and the subsequent follow-up in this improvement plan give a clear and concrete picture of what has been done. In the case of the Quality Management System itself, deeper self-reflection would have been appropriate. The previous review team appreciated the conceptual efforts as regards the establishment of an ambitious quality and quality assurance concept in principle but recommended that the College should consider the fitness for purpose of its approach as regards a due balance between what the previous review saw as “overburdening” quality processes in line with ISO and expected quality effects. The corresponding measures taken and the plan to improve the QMS in the improvement plan indicate to the Panel that a real consideration of ISO or other overburdening effects of the QMS has not been tackled at all.
102. In the management and quality department interviews the Panel discussed the previous recommendation and the workload brought by the ISO standard. The College had simplified the QMS and implementation of the standard in 2015 to better correspond to the needs of higher education and the College. The number of processes was reduced to 25 and responsibilities were given to personnel closer to the study programmes. The College has been reluctant to abandon the ISO 9001 standard, as it is internationally recognized and the College also gets consultancy support from the annual inspections. It is also considered to provide important reassurance to the College’s external partners.
103. It was noteworthy that in all the interviews with management, teachers and staff, all these internal stakeholders were uniform in their absolute reluctance to change anything in the existing QMS. When asked how they would improve the system, the answer was that nothing needs to be changed or improved. This was puzzling to the Panel as there was obviously no willingness to consider continuous improvement of the system itself, apparently because of the security it offers. This observation is congruent with the College’s decision not to implement fully the recommendation given by the previous review, as there is obviously no readiness to openly question the fundamental principles of the QMS. The Panel observed that the staff was not especially receptive to change, and capability for improvement was not evident. The College management should pay attention to creating an open atmosphere, where change, innovation and initiative are actively encouraged.
104. However, the Panel considers that streamlining and simplifying the QMS is imperative to the success of the College. For a relatively small institution the College has an unnecessarily elaborate and complicated quality management system with 25 processes and 23 procedures and a large amount of guiding documentation. It is questionable whether this is efficient. Although the Panel received evidence during the online visit that the QMS functions, the effectiveness of the system is put at risk by its complexity.
105. **In summary**, the quality management system of Panevėžys College is consistent with the Standards and Guidelines of the European Higher Education Area (ESG), and it also meets the requirements of the ISO 9001 standard. The institution has an ambitious approach to quality assurance and consequently the quality management system is very elaborate. Altogether 25 processes are identified, and 23 different procedures are defined. The quality documentation is very detailed and accurate and contains a large amount of material, giving as such ample support to staff and students in quality assurance. Even so, the evidence provided for the panel placed too little emphasis on the outputs from the system and hence on its effectiveness in achieving its goals. Most of the quality documentation is not available in English, which is not consistent with the College’s strategic target of internationalization. The College would benefit from publishing

the quality documents in English openly on the internet web site for external stakeholders. The College has succeeded in creating a strong quality culture that involves not only staff and students, but also graduates and social partners likewise. The sense of community is admirably solid in the College and gives excellent potential for continuous improvement of quality. However, it is imperative that the College should streamline its quality management system in order to avoid overburdening the organisation with an overcomplicated set of processes and procedures and an excessive number of indicators to monitor. The College should concentrate on a smaller set of key indicators to follow and also add some qualitative objectives in addition to the existing quantitative ones. The Panel considers that a simplified quality management system would be more efficient, as the College would thus be able to save human resources for academic activities, which are the core and mission of the whole institution.

106. **Judgment:** the area meets the minimum requirements, and there are drawbacks that must be addressed and is given 2 points.

107. **Recommendations for the area:**

- The College should reflect on the adequacy and applicability of its present ISO 9001 quality management system. Even though the College has taken measures to simplify the system by making incremental changes, it is still very large and complicated for a relatively small institution. The College has not fully implemented the recommendation of the previous external review in this respect.
- The College should evaluate critically the need for its Quality Management System to consist of two separate parts, both very detailed, rather than one comprehensive whole that would simplify the functionality of the system for staff and external stakeholders.
- The College should benchmark its quality assurance and quality system with another Lithuanian College, even better, a comparable foreign institution of higher education.
- The College should streamline its quality management system in order to avoid overburdening the organisation. It should carefully assess and improve the efficiency of its quality management system, evaluating the resources allocated in relation to the results achieved from the quality management system. An optimal balance between input and output of the system should be accomplished.
- The College has identified and named 25 different processes in management, studies and research, support and improvement activities. However, the College has not actually defined the content of these processes and could not provide adequate descriptions when requested by the Panel. The College should identify, define and describe its relevant and most important processes in the quality system.
- The College should concentrate on a realistic and balanced set of quantitative and qualitative performance indicators in its quality management system to follow. The current number of quantitative indicators is unnecessarily large, but on the other hand no qualitative indicators are defined, even if the College has set qualitative targets in its strategic programmes. If the College endeavours to achieve its own goals such as ensuring innovative study process, the achievement cannot be measured solely with quantitative indicators, as qualitative assessment is obviously needed also.
- The College should publish its quality assurance information in English and place the



relevant internal quality documentation, now only available on its intranet, on the public website. Publishing most of the documents only in Lithuanian makes them much less accessible for external stakeholders and the international academic community.

- The College management should pay attention to creating an open atmosphere and culture where change, innovation and initiative are encouraged. Continuous improvement should include also a willingness to improve the quality system itself. In all the interviews with management, teachers and staff, all these internal stakeholders uniformly rejected any suggestion that there might be any need to change anything or that there might be any scope for improvement in the existing quality management system.

108. **Good practice examples:**

- The whole organisation is strongly committed to the College community and to quality as part of its daily activities.
- The College collects both formal and informal feedback from internal and external stakeholders very actively and the Panel received convincing evidence that the feedback has an impact on improving the quality and performance of the College.
- The orientation mentoring and support for newly appointed academic and non-academic staff provides the entrants means to familiarize themselves to the College community and its processes and procedures.

### 3.3. Studies and research (art)

*Studies and research (art)* area is being analysed in accordance with the following indicators and criteria, set up in the Methodology.

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

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

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

*3.1.3. Studies are based on research (art);*

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

109. As discussed earlier, the mission of the College is to carry out higher education studies based on scientific knowledge and practical skills, providing students with modern competencies that have added value in the smart society; it focuses on the region's potential, on the implementation of lifelong learning, and on the development of scientific applied activities. Accordingly, it offers 20 programmes for the degree of professional bachelor that span 17 study fields across its three faculties. Over the review period, it has reorganised its portfolio by closing programmes across three study fields (so focusing its efforts better) and opening new ones, including electromechanics and emergency medical aid (so responding better to regional needs). Among indicators for study programmes in the College Performance Strategy (the Strategy), all programmes have been revised and all modules now use the Moodle VLE, while the great majority of teachers are reportedly using innovative approaches to teaching and learning, which

include reflective learning, for example during internships. As part of an ongoing scheme, several study programmes have now been transformed into a modern more flexible modular form, supported by training for teachers.

110. The College has fallen short of its ambitious target of recruiting 60% of all college entrants from the region. It has also seen its student numbers decline by 8% over the review period, (though graduate numbers have fallen by a third), but this needs to be set against a rapidly declining age cohort. The steadily declining population of Lithuania, especially among school leavers, presents an obvious threat to the College's recruitment.
111. Over the review period the minimum entry score for admission has risen on average, because the Ministry keeps raising the minimum score for entrants to receive state funding. Meanwhile, to help maintain recruitment, the College has accepted entrants with much lower entry scores who are not eligible for state funding. This presents the risk that more entrants will struggle with their programmes of study. The SER argues that the level of teaching in local high schools has not risen along with the increased minimum entry score, and that this endangers the supply of students to the College and hence the supply of graduate specialists needed for the engineering industry in the region. It has therefore joined local partners in setting up the Mathematics, Informatics and Physics Academy (MIFA) to offer tuition in mathematics, physics and informatics and an introduction to engineering and computer science to pupils of high schools in the region, in order to help increase their entry scores.
112. Further actions have sought to reduce student dropout and reduce completion times. For most of the period, first-year dropout rates have been about 15%, falling to 8% in 2020 when presumably Covid was a factor. Rather than being failed, most chose to drop out for a range of academic and personal reasons. Dropout rates are generally lowest in the areas of healthcare and pedagogy, where the College suggests students are better motivated. A group has been set up to analyse further the reasons for dropout and propose measures to reduce it, reporting by 1 November 2022. As described earlier, students are helped to settle in and prepare for their programmes and are supported in their learning by the tutorial system for individuals and groups, Students who met the Panel spoke positively about this system, for which teachers allocate 10% of their time. To help first-year students adapt and socialize in a new academic and social environment, new students now have senior students as mentors as well as teachers as tutors. The Panel regards this as a constructive response to meeting the needs of new students and helping them to remain in their programmes.
113. Over the period, 90% of completions were on time, with a variety of personal and some academic reasons for students delaying completion by suspending their studies. In order to foster timely completion, study programmes provide additional sessions to help students in preparing for the defence of their final project work, which is reducing both the number not defended and the number of appeals following the defence.
114. The SER says that in the review period it did not reach its target for 85% of its graduates to take employment in three specified target groups of occupations; the average value achieved was 50% and the average completion rate was 63%, but the employment rates were close to the average for Lithuanian college graduates across all fields of study. The College clearly strives to adjust its programmes to suit the needs of business and industry, and two of its programmes have won national awards that recognize the employability of its graduates. Overall employment rates are

monitored via the Career Management Information System, which shows that 12 months after graduation, rates typically reach just under 75%. To support employability, the College has increased external practice work, offered Career Management as an option in programmes, and organised more careers event for current students. The College keeps in touch with its graduates, for whom there is an alumni club, seeking their opinions and inviting them regularly to the College for networking events. They can also take professional development modules at the College.

115. The College cooperates extensively with social partners in a range of ways that benefit the study programmes, directly and through research collaboration. Partners include higher education institutions in Lithuania and beyond, and companies and other bodies, some of which provide materials and equipment as well as opportunities for placements. Professional bodies also assist in defining the proficiencies that their profession expects or requires the College's graduates to have. These activities help to ensure that the study programmes contribute fully to the College mission.
116. As one of the priorities in its Strategy, the College has also reviewed and revised its applied research areas, taking account of the changing external environment including national plans, seeking to remain competitive, and aiming to have more impact regionally and nationally. It has established eight research groups designed to facilitate interdisciplinary working while maintaining alignment with the programmes it offers. The groups each have a range of topics that they study, though some of these appear rather too general to provide focus (for example, in the research area Accounting only one research topic is given: *Research of accounting and financial management*, which also appears under the research area Business and public management, Law). The Panel also heard that sometimes research projects require cooperation across the groups.
117. Altogether, the College's programmes are fully consistent with its mission in providing qualifications that match regional employment needs. It pays attention to admitting and retaining students on its programmes, it monitors their progress into employment, and it cooperates with employers and other external bodies to keep its programmes relevant to them. Its applied research activities are similarly focused on regional needs, without ignoring wider national plans, assisted by a structure designed to foster interdisciplinary research.
118. The College's applied research is carried out by the faculties using equipment in the Practical Training Centre, and comes under the Deputy Director for Science and Development and the Department of Applied Research and Non-Formal Education. It is planned according to the Strategy, and is evaluated annually against indicators in the Strategy, in accordance with government regulations. The annual report, with outcomes classified under various headings, is presented to the Academic Council, part of the evaluation being to certify that the research conforms with the programmes of study. Academic staff report on the outcomes for which they are responsible, which are evaluated by a committee set up by their faculty dean, which provides input to staff appraisal. Research is stimulated by a system of annual financial incentives to staff for significant outcomes during the year, including additional salary payments calculated as 70% of the research income they generate; other incentives are applied following their appraisal, and if sustained for three or more years may lead to an increase of the staff member's basic salary at their five-yearly review.

119. Research activities also include commissioned projects and consultancy, which together yielded an income of €200k across 88 contracts over the review period, where there are some indications of an increasing trend. An Annex to the SER lists 51 pieces of investigative work, 10 consultancies, 27 commissioned projects, 3 monographs, 13 peer-reviewed articles in ISI-listed journals, and 71 articles “submitted to international or other databases”. It is not clear why these last items are called databases when most of them are in the College’s own journal, *Applied Research in Studies and Practice*), but the Panel learned that these are papers submitted to journals in databases that give ratings. Such papers may form the basis for further research or for papers in international journals. Most of these items are clearly related to regional development, with funding of €60k, around themes such as business and software development, building services, education, and health and social provision. The College is also engaged in a range of research activities with international partners using transnational funding of €140k, drawing especially on staff expertise in the digital sphere. The College further provides professional development and lifelong learning opportunities for organisations across its range of expertise, in many cases as non-formal but certificated education modules (see also under 3.4 Impact on Regional and National Development).
120. Research and related activities are evaluated according to the numbers of outputs that staff produce against performance indicators in the Strategy; these include the percentage of work done jointly with social partners, where 90% of the target was achieved. The outputs monitored include the monographs, peer-reviewed articles and the “database” articles described above, plus articles in proceedings of conferences held abroad and, separately, in Lithuania. Staff are also active in presenting reports of their work at conferences where proceedings are not published, in Lithuania and abroad, including one regular series organised with seven other higher education institutions, six of them outside Lithuania.
121. The College is clearly active in research and its applications, with particular reference to matters of importance in the region, and publishes extensively. It rewards staff for publications in peer-reviewed journals, though it is not clear what other mechanisms it uses to drive towards its target for more, and staff benefit directly from the research income they bring in. The topics of its research and development mostly relate directly to the fields of its study programmes, and indeed may be driven by them, and as such are entirely sufficient to support them.
122. The SER describes various ways in which students are exposed to research during their programme, principally through actually engaging in research activities. Often their final project work stems from the end of year papers they have written. A major contribution to research-informed learning comes from this final project, while others come through the student science society (SSS). Teachers incorporate the results of research in their modules, and other aspects of study programmes such as group projects involve investigative activities that help to train students in research methods before their own final project.
123. The SSS organizes a national Roots of Science conference each year at which student research papers are presented, with on average some 35 selected papers by College students published each year in the associated journal *Roots of Science*. Students also take part in national and international conferences, often those specifically for student presentations; the number of such presentations has averaged about 50 a year, apart from 2020 when the number was affected by Covid; the Roots of Science conference did not take place, either, but in 2021 an online version

was held. As already noted, students may be involved in research and development projects carried out under teaching staff supervision for partners or funders.

124. Overall, the level of applied research activity by students as part of their programmes is very high, considering that the student body numbers only about 1300. In addition, the Panel learned of examples where applied research by teachers had fed into courses on new topics such as the internet of things.
125. The SER argues that giving attention to the individual's background and academic journey is an aspect of student-centred learning. The College therefore offers full-time day or evening study, or full-time study in block sessions (which can be by distance learning), or part-time study (which takes an additional year, e.g. four years instead of three). Whatever the form of study, the programme offers the same intended learning outcomes, credit volume and contact hours. Students and graduates who met the Panel appreciated the flexibility available to them.
126. The College supports distance learning through its digital infrastructure and through training for teachers, which has recently been strengthened. This process naturally accelerated because of the Covid-19 pandemic, when all studies were transferred online, using the Moodle virtual learning environment and the Zoom videoconferencing application. Teachers are now expected to publish all their module materials in Moodle, and the College has started evaluating and certifying the materials so produced.
127. Students may also follow an individual schedule of studies, particularly to fit in with employment and for part-time study. They may be awarded module credits for prior formal or informal learning, for which the learning outcomes attained have to be assessed (see below), either by the College or by inspection of certificates for prior learning. This flexibility suits students who wish to acquire new competencies or extend existing ones, including foreign students.
128. Accreditation of prior learning acquired through the various routes is governed by regulation, and extends to studies at foreign higher education institutions. This process may also rely on agreements about recognition of credit for formal study at a partner institution, most importantly for exchanges under the Erasmus+ scheme, where over the review period 30 applications were made and 200 modules were credited, 63% for subject-specific modules, 24% for optional modules, and 13% for general studies. The College international relations unit develops close links with some partner institutions.
129. Recognition of learning acquired formally but without any prior credit recognition agreement is possible for studies completed in the last ten years for up to 75% of the total credit volume of the College programme for which credit is sought, which may not include the final project work or the final examination. Documented applications are submitted via the dean of the faculty for the chair of the relevant study programme committee to evaluate against the intended learning outcomes of the courses for which credit is sought. Successful award of credit is formally recorded on a card in the student's file, copied to the student. Most of the credit awarded by this route is for prior study at other Lithuanian higher education institutions, and over the review period more than 6000 courses were credited.
130. A comparable formal process under similar regulation is followed for the accreditation of learning and competencies acquired other than by formal academic study for applicants who have completed secondary education and have at least three years of relevant experience. The

dean of the faculty sets up a committee to evaluate a portfolio that the applicant submits. The evidence may lead to full accreditation or to accreditation subject to further assessment. Over the review period, 108 courses were accredited by this route for 49 applicants, mostly for practical learning in employment.

131. The College thus adopts a student-centred approach to study that allows students to have their own individual plans for study in a variety of forms (though this is distinct from any student-centred approach to learning as the process of study). It carefully distinguishes various sources of prior learning and applies appropriate mechanisms to assess and accredit them.

*3.2. Internationality of studies, research (art):*

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

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

132. Internationalization is one of the College's six priorities, which it evaluates against criteria including international mobility of staff and students, internationalization of study programmes, and international reputation. Over the review period it reached most of its targets except in outward and inward student mobility. To increase internationalization the College intends to offer more courses in English to support inward mobility, introduce double-degree programmes with international partners (for which the regulations are now approved and partners are being sought and promote international research projects.
133. In support of internationalization, during the review period the College increased its international cooperation agreements by 58 to reach 82 across 27 European countries plus Turkey. Funding for international mobility over the review period was €72k, and increased steadily until it was affected by Covid-19. Mobility is promoted by the International Relations Coordinator (IRC), who keeps deans and programme committee chairs informed about opportunities, which they then disseminate widely. Teachers propose academic mobility visits as part of their annual activity plan and submit applications to the IRC for selection by the Erasmus+ selection committee on the basis of the teacher's subject competence, foreign language ability, and the number of trips made in the year. Over the review period, there were 246 international mobility visits; just under half through Erasmus+, increasing steadily (along with the funding) until Covid-19 hit. The other half were funded by international projects or from College funds. From late 2020, some virtual mobility visits were made with foreign institutions, and teachers took part in some other international events online.
134. The SER describes the main benefits from staff outward international mobility as improving intercultural competences and language skills; importing teaching methods and materials and quality assurance experience; enhancing international teamwork, event planning and joint project work including publications; and disseminating research outcomes. It also gives some specific examples. These benefits are not only personal for the staff participating but also serve to enhance both teaching and research. Foreign teachers and researchers visiting the College deliver lectures, take part in conferences, and plan and carry out joint research. Over the review period,

56 foreign teachers from six different countries visited to give lectures to students, again with a dip in 2020, and the College seeks external funding to support such visits.

135. Although there are foreign partners to visit and funding to support visits, outward student mobility is low. Over the review period, 138 students completed some studies abroad, only half the College's target. Mobility was highest in healthcare, where there are perhaps fewer aspects specific to Lithuania compared with less mobile fields such as law, social work and pedagogy. When the College surveyed students about this low mobility, they said they were aware of the opportunities, and knew about credit for study abroad, but more than half were deterred by insufficient finance, over 40% by lack of foreign language skills, and a third or more by unwillingness to leave their jobs or a lack of self-confidence; the Panel was told that Lithuanians are generally modest. Trying to counter these barriers, the College offers an optional intercultural communication course to help students overcome their concerns about living and studying abroad. Students who met the Panel confirmed that the International Office publicizes opportunities for study abroad very effectively, but that work and family commitments are often too great a barrier.
136. Inward student mobility is lower, with 101 students arriving during the review period from five countries, with a high representation from Turkish higher education institutions, mostly to study electrical engineering, management, nursing and midwifery. This represents some 90% of the College's target, which is lower for inward than for outward mobility, but otherwise the SER does not comment on this. In the current year, problems with visas and continuing effects of Covid-19 have reduced the number of incoming students to three. Students coming from overseas can have their secondary education abroad recognized for entry to a study programme, but SKVC regulations do not accreditation of prior learning abroad. Foreign students may however benefit from following an individual study plan.
137. Apart from mobility, the College takes part in a small number of international organisations, networks and projects, achieving about 75% of its target. The SER recognizes that such activities should be used more effectively to strengthen internationalization at the College.
138. Overall, the College takes internationalization seriously, and works hard to develop partnerships to foster its ambitions to strengthen the international dimension of its teaching and research. Mobility remains low, particularly for students; it appears that the barriers are financial and social, with lack of language skills a deterrent. Very few of the staff or students who met the Panel chose to speak in English, preferring to use the simultaneous translation that was available, though two external members of the College Council did choose to speak in English. While it is understandable that participants would be anxious to give answers that were accurate and clear, their reluctance to use spoken English suggests that many College staff and students are not sufficiently well prepared and confident enough to work and study effectively in English.
139. The Panel heard that study programmes include courses in both general and professional use of a foreign language (as the College website confirms), where students are expected to reach level B1 (Intermediate) or B2 (Upper Intermediate) of the Common European Framework of Reference. Increasing outward and inward mobility is likely to require greater emphasis on home students and staff acquiring sufficient English language skills, probably at least level B2. Some students who met the Panel had travelled abroad under the Erasmus scheme, and spoke of needing to use English there, which ironically had improved their competences. This suggests

that the courses they took at the College had been a useful preparation but that they lacked sustained experience of using the language. Social partners confirmed that they need their employees to be competent in using English, and one suggested that students should be given the option of writing placement reports in English. It appears that the College would equip its students better to operate in technical environments, even in Lithuania, if it embedded the use of spoken and written professional English into all its programmes, as it does for incoming international students (see below). There would also be benefit in helping students to acquire competence in other languages widely understood in the region such as German, Swedish and Russian.

140. To help students feel more comfortable in foreign environments, study programmes emphasize the importance of intercultural competencies, drawing on international literature and fostering interdisciplinarity. Some require practice placements abroad; study programmes may also offer modules in English, on which visiting foreign students mix with home students, providing the home students with experience in using English for study and working in an international context. Visiting foreign lecturers contribute to some modules, and international mobility is promoted generally. Outward international mobility of teachers enables them to experience teaching and research methods from other countries and introduce them at home.
141. The SER says that international dimensions are introduced through renewing and updating teaching and research having regard to international standards and trends, especially within the European Research Area. These are all plausible approaches, but it is not clear whether the College's internationalization priority has an underlying internationalization strategy with indicators that measure its success in integrating aspects of internationalization into its teaching and research. It does however intend to conduct an annual discussion on internationalization that will report on outcomes.
142. **In summary**, the College's programmes are fully consistent with its mission in providing qualifications that match regional employment needs. It is clearly active in research and its applications, particularly on matters of importance in the region, and this is sufficient to support the study programmes. The level of research activity by students is very high, and research by teachers feeds into courses. The College allows students to have their own individual plans for study in a variety of forms, though student-centred approaches to the learning process other than research are less evident. It carefully distinguishes various sources of prior learning and applies appropriate mechanisms to assess and accredit them. Study programmes include courses in use of a foreign language, but to increase outward and inward mobility the College will need to place greater emphasis on home students and staff acquiring sufficient English language skills, which social partners would also welcome. The College would equip its students better to operate in technical environments by embedding the use of English into all its programmes. Teaching and research have regard to international standards and trends, but it is not clear whether the College has an internationalization strategy with performance indicators that measure its success in internationalizing its teaching and research.
143. **Judgment:** the area is being developed systematically, without any major drawbacks, and is given 3 points.
144. **Recommendations for the area:**



- The College should ensure that its study programmes not only meet today’s business and market needs but also foresee tomorrow’s needs in today’s changing world. This could include providing students with the skills that would enable them to build careers not only locally and nationally but also internationally.
- International mobility and employability are enhanced by competence in English, especially in technical fields. Hence to support its mission the College should embed the use of spoken and written professional English into all its programmes.
- It could also consider developing a plan to deliver some of its study programmes entirely in English, with appropriate support for staff as well as students.
- The College should develop an explicit internationalization strategy with indicators that measure its success in internationalizing its teaching and research.

145. **Good practice examples:**

- The academy set up with local partners that offers tuition to pupils of local high schools to help increase their entry scores and so improve their access to higher education and to the College.
- The mentoring system that provides students with a senior student mentor to help them settle in and support them through the first year alongside a staff tutor, who is allocated time for the duty.

### 3.4. Impact on regional and national development

*Impact on regional and national development* area is being analysed in accordance with the following indicators and criteria, set up in the Methodology.

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

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

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

146. The College argues that its aims are closely linked to regional and national development strategies, which cover topics such as sustainable development; lifelong learning; integration of education, research and business; and public services and social welfare. It says the relevant aims are covered in the 2017–2020 College Performance Strategy (the Strategy), where one main goal is “to increase the College’s competitive advantage and impact on regional and national development through innovation and quality standards in study, research activities and management”. In contributing to development, one of six priorities in the Strategy is “Formation of strategic partnership network with business and other sectors”. This priority leads to one of three strategic programmes, “Increase of impact to country and regional development expanding and enabling strategic partnership with business and public institutions”, recognizing in particular the value of inputs from partners who specialize in creating or applying innovative products and services. Collaboration with regional partners also greatly benefits the successful implementation of the College’s strategy and objectives, since the Head of the Regional

Development Team of “Invest Lithuania”, which plays a major role on forming regional educational policy alongside the Panevėžys City Development Strategy, is a member of Panevėžys City Industry 4.0 Development Advisory Council.

147. In the 2021–2026 Strategy the main goal is revised slightly, becoming “to increase the competitive advantage and impact of Panevėžys College on regional and national development through innovative and high-quality study and applied science activities”. The corresponding priority was revised to “Strengthening the regionalisation of studies and applied science through strategic partnerships with business and other sectors”, building on the network to be formed under the previous Strategy and continuing the previous strategic programme.
148. The analysis of regional and national demand is carried out through different means, from participation in the events held by Panevėžys Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Crafts, being a member of various international organisations and getting requests from the region, to discussions with social partners, study committees and marketing activities by disseminating information to the target audience. Measures are carried out at the Regional Development Council level: top managers of the College are also members of this Council where they represent the College, get feedback and contribute to the strategic issues as well as look at the demands of the region. Projects are being written to fund various study programmes relevant to the strategic municipality goals. A couple of successful projects were funded by the municipality – a guide programme for tourism, a programme for healthy lifestyle promotion, an art programme for decorative art to improve creativity, and a non-formal accounting programme.
149. Market surveys are carried out in order to get to know the regional demands, as well as meetings with regional representatives that help to evaluate the situation in the region. As an output of collaboration with the social partners, the road engineering programme was inspired by the partners. Those who met the Panel said that the PDCA cycle for continuous improvement of processes is used for strategic planning and monitoring of this area. What is more, information, annexes and indicators to the Strategic Plan together with the data from which they are calculated are provided for each academic unit annually in mid- December in order to evaluate whether the College achieves those indicators and is on the right track.
150. The measures in the College Performance Strategy and the Strategic Action Plan 2014–2020 that are intended to have an impact on regional and national development respond to national strategic aims that focus on building the smart society, reducing social exclusion, developing lifelong learning, and promoting effective interaction between science, studies and business. The priorities of the strategic goals are addressed through three strategic programmes, as mentioned earlier, of which the third is “Increasing the impact on regional and national development by expanding and empowering strategic partnerships with business and public institutions”. Impact on regional and national development is expected through equipping professionals for the labour market; carrying out scientific development; developing lifelong learning; fostering gifted students and reducing social exclusion; and staff undertaking activity in society. Their effectiveness is evaluated through relevant outcome criteria in the Strategy, which are discussed at the meetings of the Directorate, submitted to the College Council and published in the College Annual Activity Report.
151. The third strategic programme in turn has three objectives: strengthening the College operating partnership with business and the public sector; providing a favourable environment for society

in the region to satisfy its needs for cultural and self-education, studies and competence development; and increasing the social and economic value of students' learning outcomes. Criteria for evaluation of these objectives are given by four of six main indicators for the Strategic Plan. These are the percentage of the region's graduates who entered Panevėžys College from all the graduates in the region; the proportion of students who started running their own companies during their studies in the College; the revenue from regionally relevant commissioned applied research, experimental social and cultural development, consultancy and non-formal education; and the proportion of graduates working as managers, specialists, technicians and junior professionals.

152. Feedback on the development goals was obtained when the College Council (members of which represent different industry fields) reviewed the SER in a meeting where some figures were discussed, proposals were made on how the organisation may change for better, and different points of view were shared. Since the Chair of the Council is the president of Panevėžys Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Crafts, the meetings are organised every two months in different locations and companies in the region, and this helps the College to know more about the local industries and evaluate what kind of students or professions will be needed for the future.
153. Social partners participate in the process of strategic planning by organizing the meetings of different levels, science conferences, visiting different companies, even organizing international conferences and fairs by inviting, introducing and representing the College on an international level. Social partners and the College Council discuss together with members of parliament ways to establish relations with external organisations and institutions that increase competitiveness thus having some influence on the College Council activities.
154. In terms of equipping professionals for the national and regional labour market, the College points to its portfolio of vocationally oriented study programmes that focus on equipping high value-added professionals, and to the fact that 75% of its students come from the Panevėžys region. Graduate employment is routinely monitored using the Career Management Information System (CMIS) which shows that 12 months after graduation, employment rates typically approach 75%, and in due course almost all graduates successfully integrate into the labour market. The results are analysed by the Directorate and study programme committees and used to reorganize and renew programmes (for example, increasing the volume of external practice, including Career Management in the list of optional subjects, and increasing the number of career events organised for students) to respond to the needs of Industry 4.0, aiming at the development, implementation and application of advanced digital technologies. CMIS also allows students to develop and manage personal career plans, find information on possible career development paths, work and practice sites, register for career events, etc., thus helping to raise their economic and social value.
155. The College is highly focused on student practical training and possible practical placements that helps the College to stay competitive in the market in comparison with the local branch campus of Kaunas University of Technology. What is more, the College employs a large number of mentors working with students, programmes are in line with the needs of the modern labour market, and the newly launched electromechanics program is aligned with Industry 4.0. Quality of the programmes and the quality of professors as well as feedback from the companies indicates that students are well prepared by the College for careers in the region.

156. Social partners are highly involved in the College's activities, especially in terms of practical work and internships. Social partners participate in joint projects in developing the qualifications and mentorship, and in professional development. Healthcare is one of the main areas of partners where in some cases 50% of employees are College graduates. Social partners are satisfied with the quality of graduates and in addition to this most of them participate in students' competency development. The help of medical science students during the pandemic period coping with Covid was highly appreciated. Engineering is also a well-regarded programme where most students find employment with the social partners where they spent their internship.
157. As noted earlier, employment rates are close to the average for Lithuanian college graduates across all fields of study, and two of the College's programmes have won national awards from Investor's Spotlight that recognize the employability and excellent prospects of its graduates. The Investors' Spotlight quality labels, an annual project, are awarded to those study programmes that best meet the expectations of business. The graduates of these programmes are among the most sought-after in the job market. Many of the higher education study programmes that have received this quality label have attracted greater interest from graduates. In recent years, the increase in the number of applicants rose by up to 77 per cent.
158. The electromechanical study program was prepared in accordance with business needs, and equipment for the laboratory was purchased so that the demands would be met. The International Business programme was drafted together with strategic partners and with the help of a training centre, while the logistics programme is really focused on business demands as mentioned during the meetings. The College collaborates closely with the Municipality, while the ministries focus on NFE programs; for example, the Ministry of Health requested qualifications and study programmes in healthcare, as well as in social assistance for people with disabilities and physiotherapist programmes that need to meet certain licensing requirements.
159. Employers in the region rate graduates from the programmes 4.2 on a scale from 1 to 5, confirming that they value highly the professional knowledge, practical skills and general competencies that graduates acquire. This indicates that the College is playing a significant role in meeting the labour market needs of the region. Across the study programmes, the wide range of final project work focuses on national and regional needs, often directly related to subjects identified by external organisations. The College's analysis shows that over 85% of projects relate to the regional labour market and some 15% to the activities of regional enterprises. Companies in the region show that they value this activity by making awards for the best projects.
160. Practice placements also contribute to students' awareness of their intended profession and help to prepare them to enter it. These placements are supported by a sufficient number of agreements with 225 partners, some of them abroad, while in cooperation with Panevėžys Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Crafts, with EU funding, external placement supervisors and College staff have received training to enhance the quality of placements. The involvement of social partners in the higher education and research process is emphasized in the College Performance Strategy and Strategic Action Plan, and the groups cover Lithuanian and foreign HEIs (e.g. in Poland, Latvia and Turkey), local companies and institutions, and various associations of companies and institutions.

161. The main areas of the College cooperation with social partners include the development of new study programmes, transfer of practical experience to the study process, formulation of the subjects of the student final work (project), provision of practice places, supervision of student practice, implementation of joint expert and research activities, preparation and implementation of joint national and international projects, international exchange of students and teachers (international academic partners), preparation and publication of articles and other scientific publications, organisation of conferences, seminars and other educational events, development of information and other tangible bases. During the meeting with the social partners. It was evident that they work on different projects; constantly get students to do their practical work and internships, and some partners, especially in healthcare or engineering have strong and long-term relationships and students eventually become their employees.
162. It is important to mention the social partners contributing to the development of the material base of studies, e.g. one has installed the modern Construction Engineering Laboratory for the equipment of specialists in the field of construction engineering, another has donated training tools for the equipment of specialists in the fields of electrical, electronic and mechanical engineering studies, and a third has donated a modern 3D printer.
163. Graduate surveys are systematically carried out and the outcomes are used to elaborate, improve the quality of studies and develop new study programmes. Problems are solved and taken under consideration seriously to apply changes when needed after any feedback from the students is given. Student surveys are conducted once every semester (Spring and Autumn) and the results are shared on the College website. The development of student practical skills is also discussed in roundtable discussions among the College practice supervisors, teachers and practice mentors.
164. Panevėžys Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Crafts (Panevėžys Chamber) plays a very large role and is an important strategic social partner in the College's activities; for example, both the academic community and social partners were involved in the SWOT analysis meetings and the SER preparation process. Indicators and SWOT analysis results were discussed and presented to the Academic Council that usually involves business representatives. The Council is presented with the review of the College activities every year and the College staff listens to their views. Also, the College organizes forums together with social partners where they share their opinion, so this connection between the College and social business partners exists.
165. Panevėžys Chamber is confident that the College aims for high results despite the fact that the situation in the region is demanding, especially after Covid-19 struck. The students are employed and placed for practice work in the regional companies, ongoing relations for work and education show good trends and Panevėžys Chamber continuously works on different events, such as scientific conferences and student work together with the College that evidenced great results compared with other HEIs. College is an active member of Panevėžys Chamber and the only active HEI in the region with the intention to develop and nurture the interests of local companies and businesses in Lithuania.
166. The area of scientific development has been discussed earlier. Here the College measures its effectiveness by how much of its income it receives from relevant regional sources for research and consultancy (over 85%, above its target) and how many of its publications are joint with social partners (some 50%, also above its target). This is of course in addition to scientific work relevant to national and international projects and partners.

167. In relation to developing lifelong learning, the College offers a wide range of programmes for non-formal education (over 50 having run during the evaluation period), for example supporting employment through courses to improve general and professional competences, and other kinds of training and re-training for various target groups, as discussed in detail later. The number of non-formal education participants increased significantly from 380 in 2019 to 510 in 2020. College staff have also contributed free of charge to the Aukštaitija Academy of Non-Formal Education, established in 2010 to meet the needs of the elderly residents in the region. Over the evaluation period, over 300 seniors participated in training from the Academy involving 35 staff.
168. For fostering gifted students, the support received by the College was low, amounting to just over €600, less than 30% of the College's target. Social scholarships decreased during the evaluation period from 186 in 2016 to 104 in 2020, while an average of 9 students were studying at the College's expense during the evaluation period. The College faced steady decrease in the number of state-funded students, as well as minimized appropriations of the state budget by 4% compared with numbers in 2017, and the Ministry of Education, Science and Sports decided to provide additional funding for the increase of salaries of teachers and researchers according to the state-funded study places, all of which posed challenges to ensuring the College's financial stability during the evaluation period. As a consequence, although the programmes evidently meet regional needs and comply with its mission, it had a negative effect on the promotion of gifted students.
169. The Mathematics, Informatics and Physics Academy (MIFA), mentioned earlier, is a valuable initiative that encourages students to take an interest in engineering and computer science, which are highly relevant to robotics and automation, a main direction of specialization in the region. MIFA also helps the students to prepare for their school-leaving examinations in mathematics to increase their chances of entering the programme of their choice and increase enrolments at the College.
170. The College undertakes activities that specifically target groups that may be excluded from society. Its infrastructure is adapted to meet special needs of students; students on professional programmes such as Social Work and Physiotherapy offer their skills to benefit the community; and there are various external outreach and support activities where staff and students meet community groups, including blood donation sessions and actions to counter the Covid-19 virus. It also carries out a wide range of social events to enhance science, health and culture in the region, averaging 13 events a year during the evaluation period, more than double its target.
171. The academic and administrative personnel of the College are also actively involved in the work of external councils, committees, commissions, associations, societies, clubs, communities of organisations and institutions, as well as in political activities. The academic staff of the College, including the Director and a former Deputy Director, are members of a range of relevant professional associations and societies, where they can interact with other professionals outside the College. It has a target of 15 staff members to take part in such activities, but has been reaching less than three-quarters of that number. By participating in the activities of other organisations, the employees improve their professional competencies, project a positive image of the College in society and contribute to the development of social activities in the region. The public and political activities of the College representatives ensure close contacts with the general public and individual groups of society and with the public and business sectors; they

maintain and expand the system of partnerships relevant to the College, and its academic activities, help to ensure the feedback on the impact of the College on the region.

172. Five College representatives (against a target of three) have taken an active part in strategic planning for the Panevėžys region. In particular, the Panevėžys Regional Development Council is headed by a member of the College Council, while other members include the Chairman of the College Council, the Director of the College, and the Deputy Director for Science and Development. The Director is also a member of the Panevėžys City Industry 4.0 Development Advisory Council, already mentioned. This level of participation in local planning is not only a contribution to the region but also a valuable source of intelligence for the College in its own strategic planning.
173. The College also supports environmental campaigns for sustainable development, offering relevant option and speciality courses in some programmes. As a signatory of the United Nations Global Compact it includes environmental criteria in its procurement procedures, and takes measures to conserve and recycle energy and natural resources.

#### *4.2. Assurance of conditions for lifelong learning:*

- 4.2.1. The higher education institution monitors and analyses the need for lifelong learning;*  
*4.2.2. The higher education institution anticipates the diversity of forms and conditions of lifelong learning and ensures their implementation;*  
*4.2.3. The higher education institution performs the evaluation of assurance of conditions for lifelong learning.*

174. The College mission seeks to “focus the region’s potential on the implementation of the lifelong learning principles and the development of scientific applied activities”, which falls within the third programmes of the College Strategic Plan already noted. Accordingly, provision for lifelong learning starts in first-cycle studies, and then in non-formal education programmes that improve general competencies or provide additional professional competencies and retraining, as well as other events such as forums, seminars and projects. The College systematically monitors and analyses the need for lifelong learning through its efforts to ensure that its formal study programmes meet the needs of society and the labour market (already described), monitoring competencies relevant to the labour market, maintaining close contacts with social partners and employers, and organizing new and revised study programmes. The main areas that the College focuses on for lifelong learning conditions are rather diverse, despite the fact that the College invites guest lecturers, and provides re-qualification programmes and programmes for professional development. On the other hand, lifelong learning is evident since the long-term relationship mentioned by the students is very popular among graduates – if they need internships the students come back, and graduates return to the College for non-formal education. The Mathematics, Informatics and Physics Academy (MIFA) mentioned earlier runs projects aimed at improving school pupils’ knowledge, and the College organises additional Mathematics, Informatics and Physics classes to students of the Panevėžys region gymnasiums in the College auditoriums and laboratories. During the MIFA classes, College teachers develop students’ practical skills in mathematics, informatics and physics sciences, educate young people’s engineering thinking, introduce them to engineering and informatics science studies in higher education, and motivate students to choose engineering and computer study programmes. MIFA) organises various events such as cooperation with gymnasiums, assistance to school

leavers preparing for the state examinations and on-site visits for other HEIs, and students come from secondary schools all over Lithuania to visit the College where they can get acquainted with the laboratories, be introduced to study programmes, or participate in advertising events.

175. The administration, monitoring, evaluation and organisation of non-formal education (NFE) programmes are carried out and coordinated by the Unit of Applied Research and Non-Formal Education in cooperation with the Deans of the Faculties and the Chairs of the SPCs. The International Relations, Marketing and Project Unit and the Faculties plan and organize conferences and other various events every year. The plans are discussed by the Directorate and approved by the Director. To ensure the effective dissemination of information about the plans, details of the ongoing NFE programmes and other events are published on the College website, through social networks, in regional media, and in newsletters sent to social partners.
176. A specific recent example of the College helping to equip professionals for the labour market is its acquisition of modern robot machinery on favourable terms offered by a social partner. The machines will be used in various technological study programmes for students to learn what industrial robots can do and how they can work together, including imaging systems and use of a 3D printer donated by another partner. As a result, students will enter the labour market having already learned to handle some of the latest technical equipment. The equipment will also be available for NFE programmes and for collaborative projects with businesses.
177. The College makes its first-cycle study programmes accessible for lifelong learning by offering flexible forms of learning. As discussed earlier under Studies and Research, learners may study in full-time, evening, sessional and part-time modes. Students may also attend lectures on an individual schedule and study according to an individual study plan, while distance study is being steadily developed and strengthened. The College is also developing its system for recognition and assessment of partial study learning outcomes and formally and informally acquired competencies.
178. Similarly, NFE programmes are provided at times to suit learners, such as evenings and weekends, and were offered remotely when Covid-19 struck. Programmes and courses differ in length from a four-hour seminar to 90 credit courses. In 2013, having evaluated the shortage of pre-school and pre-primary education teachers in Panevėžys region, and the need for teachers (primary school, music, art, ethics, etc.) and social pedagogues, a 90-credit retraining programme for educators “Pre-school and Pre-Primary Education” was organised by the College. In the period 2016–2020, 164 teachers of various professions graduated from this programme throughout the country. As noted above, over the evaluation period the number of NFE programmes has increased to 28 in 2020, with 510 participants, and 67 College staff have been involved, together with 12 guest teachers.
179. NFE programmes are very diverse, with a strong focus on retraining and practical internships. They cover all faculties, with examples including early-years pedagogy, various health sciences topics, accounting, informatics and engineering. More widely, programmes have included mediator training (specifically requested by social partners), training for city guides (with partial financial support from Panevėžys City) and art. For College staff, first aid, English language and didactics training have been provided. Each year the College runs several conferences and other events on topical areas and developments in different study fields, which between them have attracted a total of 300 to 600 participants. As already noted, the College provides programmes



for both elderly residents and school leavers, for example information technology, languages, public speaking, health, artistic self-expression (art, singing, music), and cultural subjects. In 2018, the application of the ASA programme "Healthy Ageing" (40 hours) was submitted to the competition of non-formal adult education and lifelong learning programmes, its implementation was provided by Panevėžys City Municipality with partial funding. In total these forms of lifelong learning have led the College to issue over 3500 certificates of professional development and nearly 200 study certificates over the evaluation period.

180. Deans of the faculties acknowledged that conditions to ensure the lifelong learning required by the College are an area to improve where the social partners' needs are evaluated, and the College continuously reviews the supply of activities. Nevertheless, study programmes are monitored, lecturers are engaged in consultations and collaboration with local businesses, have training on strategic issues, various teamwork and roundtable discussions.
181. Regarding the financial aspect of the lifelong learning programmes, the deans agree that the College funding is sufficient and taking into consideration that the College has won a municipal project leading to a unique tour guide study programme partly funded by the municipality, it seems that the activities are quantitative enough. Although the SER indicates that finding alternative sources of funding for the implementation of lifelong learning measures is a weakness of the area, and the College is submitting applications for funding of lifelong learning measures from the EU Structural Funds, the municipal budget and other sources could be an opportunity to diversify and strengthen funding.
182. During the pandemic, College students, especially from the healthcare programs helped and volunteered professionally when Covid-19 patient numbers increased significantly in the local hospital. Their input was very substantial and helped the institution to cope with the pandemic situation in the region, displaying the high culture, values and maturity of the College community. In regard to lifelong learning, one graduate is co-operating as a lecturer at the College, which ensures a cycle of continuous education and shows social partnership where effective mutual co-operation can take new forms and shapes.
183. The College evaluates its performance in the area of lifelong learning against several indicators in its Strategic Plan. In terms of the number of participants in NFE programmes (346), the number of promotional events (13), and the income from NFE programmes and consultancy (€1462), all targets were exceeded by a factor of 1½ to 2½, which the SER convincingly cites as confirmation that the conditions for lifelong learning are appropriate. This evaluation would be slightly more precise if in the third indicator the income from NFE was separated from that for consultancy, which is for a different kind of external activity.
184. The College uses surveys as an important source of data for evaluating the quality of lifelong learning conditions. Formal studies are evaluated as described earlier under Studies and Research, while NFE programme and event coordinators periodically conduct quality evaluation surveys of their programmes and events in cooperation with the Unit of Applied Research and Non-Formal Education, and the College Management representative for quality. Although surveys are normally conducted using the College's electronic system, when there is only a small number of participants in specific groups, data are collected through interviews, roundtables, printed questionnaires and other ways.

185. The outcomes of the surveys are used to improve NFE programmes, as well as how they are organised, taught and supported. For example, three new programmes were introduced in accountancy and one in fine arts. A re-training programme for educators was updated and reorganised, and following comments from participants, the training for city guides has been enhanced by engaging well-known professionals as presenters. Clients thus contribute to the process of improving the quality of NFE programmes by organizing and renewing them to meet their specific requirements and their needs for improved qualifications.
186. A partnership on lifelong learning among five HEIs is a good example of lifelong education that allows the most talented students of the College to continue their studies on a Master's degree programme without losing additional years to equalize study programmes. This technology and engineering cluster was established in 2017 in order to meet business and regional needs. The aim is to tackle regional issues and achieve quality in studies and research by collaboration among the HEIs so that the competition between the regional colleges and universities in a restricted market is exchanged for effective and constructive collaboration.
187. Consistent with its strategic priorities, the College understands lifelong learning broadly and provides a great variety of opportunities to the community (including its own employees), before, during and after their working life. These opportunities are informed by the College's interactions with its social partners, and are offered in a range of formats that make them as accessible as possible for their target audiences. Overall, the College ensures a variety of forms and conditions for lifelong learning, taking into account regional and national needs, but it has identified a need to pay greater attention to finding a range of alternative sources of funding for its lifelong learning activities.
188. **In summary**, social partners are highly involved in regional and national development by strengthening the direction of the regional policies (IT, Engineering and Automation) in regard to Industry 4.0. Social partners help in solving problems and developing the smart specialization direction of the region by having a long term, and in some cases even daily, contact with the College and having a systematic way of collaboration and exchanging the feedback both ways through student internships. Feedback to and from the social partners works: partners speak warmly of it, and it makes an impact on improvements in the College. Effective lifelong learning programmes are in place that work, though greater staff and student mobility could benefit the College in achieving its objectives set in the Strategy for 2021-2026. Internationalization by improvement of foreign language skills, open mindedness and versatility of skills used not only locally but internationally could create more value for the College and foster a stronger culture of change and willingness to cross local boundaries. More focus on R&D and strengthening of funding for Applied Research in becoming the Centre of Applied Science in the region and greater collaboration with regional agencies in making the region more attractive could attract more international partners, students and lecturers.
189. **Judgment:** the area is being developed systematically, without any major drawbacks, and is given 3 points.
190. **Recommendations for the area:**
- Since the College aims to become the centre of applied sciences in the region and in the SER acknowledges R&D as an area to improve, it should allocate some of its funds to strengthen the basis of R&D.

- Applied sciences and R&D will be difficult for the College to handle if it relies solely on project revenue. Therefore in addition to the base of funds allocated by the College itself, other sources of funding should be sought, such as EU Structural Funds and local and regional funds.
- As the College itself mentions in the SER as an area for improvement, it could publicize more widely information about the research teams and available packages it can offer by way of R&D services.
- The performance of R&D services and non-formal education should be evaluated by separate KPIs so that their individual achievements can be recognized.
- By helping students to acquire competence in other languages widely understood in the region, as mentioned earlier under 3.3. Studies and research (art), the College could support local industries and business needs focused in the free economic zone, where mostly international companies are being developed and where foreign investors are highly interested.

191. **Good practice examples:**

- The wide-ranging, strong and mutually beneficial interactions between the College and social partners that clearly support regional and national development while also helping the College.
- The great variety of non-formal education programmes that are well adapted to local business needs, equipping local employees with the skills they require and deepen their knowledge in various study areas.

## IV. EXAMPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE

The Panel identifies as examples of good practice the following:

### Quality assurance:

- The whole organisation is strongly committed to the College community and to quality as part of its daily activities.
- The College collects both formal and informal feedback from internal and external stakeholders very actively and the Panel received convincing evidence that the feedback has an impact on improving the quality and performance of the College.
- The orientation mentoring and support for newly appointed academic and non-academic staff provides the entrants means to familiarize themselves to the College community and its processes and procedures.

### Studies and research (art):

- The academy set up with local partners that offers tuition to pupils of local high schools to help increase their entry scores and so improve their access to higher education and to the College.
- The mentoring system that provides students with a senior student mentor to help them settle in and support them through the first year alongside a staff tutor, who is allocated time for the duty.

### **Impact on regional and national development:**

- The wide-ranging, strong and mutually beneficial interactions between the College and social partners that clearly support regional and national development while also helping the College.
- The great variety of non-formal education programmes that are well adapted to local business needs, equipping local employees with the skills they require and deepen their knowledge in various study areas.

## **V. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ENHANCEMENT**

The Panel's recommendations for further enhancement are:

### **Management:**

- The College should simplify the Strategic Action Plan with respect to the most important objectives and targets which contribute to its long-term and successful development.
- The College should consider adopting not only quantitative indicators but also a more qualitative approach in assessing the implementation of its strategy.
- The College's Strategic Action Plan should be complemented by strategic resource planning
- The College should set out its management structure and clearly define all reporting lines.
- The College should define clearly and transparently how new academic staff are appointed, including who takes the final decision to appoint a person.
- The College may wish to strengthen its efforts at integration and perhaps recruit more full-time teaching staff so that a higher proportion have their primary allegiance to the College and its norms.
- In addressing its target of internationalization of the College should make the information that it provides available not only in Lithuanian but also in English, internally as well as externally.

### **Quality assurance:**

- The College should reflect on the adequacy and applicability of its present ISO 9001 quality management system. Even though the College has taken measures to simplify the system by making incremental changes, it is still very large and complicated for a relatively small institution. The College has not fully implemented the recommendation of the previous external review in this respect.
- The College should evaluate critically the need for its Quality Management System to consist of two separate parts, both very detailed, rather than one comprehensive whole that would simplify the functionality of the system for staff and external stakeholders.
- The College should benchmark its quality assurance and quality system with another Lithuanian College, even better, a comparable foreign institution of higher education.
- The College should streamline its quality management system in order to avoid overburdening the organisation. It should carefully assess and improve the efficiency of its

quality management system, evaluating the resources allocated in relation to the results achieved from the quality management system. An optimal balance between input and output of the system should be accomplished.

- The College has identified and named 25 different processes in management, studies and research, support and improvement activities. However, the College has not actually defined the content of these processes and could not provide adequate descriptions when requested by the Panel. The College should identify, define and describe its relevant and most important processes in the quality system.
- The College should concentrate on a realistic and balanced set of quantitative and qualitative performance indicators in its quality management system to follow. The current number of quantitative indicators is unnecessarily large, but on the other hand no qualitative indicators are defined, even if the College has set qualitative targets in its strategic programmes. If the College endeavours to achieve its own goals such as ensuring innovative study process, the achievement cannot be measured solely with quantitative indicators, as qualitative assessment is obviously needed also.
- The College should publish its quality assurance information in English and place the relevant internal quality documentation, now only available on its intranet, on the public website. The majority of the documents being available only in Lithuanian makes them much less accessible for external stakeholders and the international academic community.
- The College management should pay attention to creating an open atmosphere and culture where change, innovation and initiative are encouraged. Continuous improvement should include also a willingness to improve the quality system itself. In all the interviews with management, teachers and staff, all these internal stakeholders uniformly rejected any suggestion that there might be any need to change anything or that there might be any scope for improvement in the existing quality management system.

#### **Studies and research (art):**

- The College should ensure that its study programmes not only meet today's business and market needs but also foresee tomorrow's needs in today's changing world. This could include providing students with the skills that would enable them to build careers not only locally and nationally but also internationally.
- International mobility and employability are enhanced by competence in English, especially in technical fields. Hence to support its mission the College should embed the use of spoken and written professional English into all its programmes.
- It could also consider developing a plan to deliver some of its study programmes entirely in English, with appropriate support for staff as well as students.
- The College should develop an explicit internationalization strategy with indicators that measure its success in internationalizing its teaching and research.

#### **Impact on regional and national development:**

- Since the College aims to become the centre of applied sciences in the region and in the SER acknowledges R&D as an area to improve, it should allocate some of its funds to strengthen the basis of R&D.

- Applied sciences and R&D will be difficult for the College to handle if it relies solely on project revenue. Therefore in addition to the base of funds allocated by the College itself, other sources of funding should be sought, such as EU Structural Funds and local and regional funds.
- As mentioned in the SER as an area for improvement, the College could publicize more widely information about the research teams and available packages it can offer by way of R&D services.
- The performance of R&D services and non-formal education should be evaluated by separate KPIs so that their individual achievements can be recognized.
- By helping students to acquire competence in other languages widely understood in the region, as mentioned earlier under 3.3. Studies and research (art), the College could support local industries and business needs focused in the free economic zone, where mostly international companies are being developed and where foreign investors are highly interested.

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