

STUDIJŲ KOKYBĖS VERTINIMO CENTRAS

**KLAIPĖDOS VALSTYBĖS KOLEGIJOS
VEIKLOS VERTINIMO IŠVADOS**

**INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW REPORT OF
KLAIPEDA STATE UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES**

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ABBREVIATIONS

BFUG	Bologna Follow-Up Group
CPD	Continuous Professional Development
EDS	European Diploma Supplement
EHEA	European Higher Education Area
ERA	European Research Area
ESG	<i>Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area, (2015)</i>
EQF	European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning
ET 2020	Strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training
EU	European Union
FTE	Full Time Equivalent
HE	Higher Education
HEI	Higher Education Institution
ISO	International Organization for Standardization
LQF	Lithuanian Qualifications Framework
LLL	Lifelong Learning
MOA	Memorandum of Agreement
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
PhD	Doctor of Philosophy
QA	Quality Assurance
SER	Self-Evaluation Report
SKVC	Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education
TQM	Total Quality Management

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The review of Klaipėdos Valstybinė Kolegija, or Klaipeda State University of Applied Science, referred to below as “KSUAS” or “the College”, was organised by the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education (SKVC), Lithuania, in its role as the Authorized Agency prescribed by Lithuanian law. The review was conducted in accordance with the methodology set out in the Procedure for the External Review in Higher Education approved by Government Resolution No. 1317 on 22nd September, 2010. A previous review of KSUAS had taken place in 2013 accrediting the College for a three-year period and making a series of recommendations for the continuing improvement of the College, particularly in the area of Research.
2. The College submitted a Self-Evaluation Report (SER) of 56 pages with 24 Annexes. References to this documentation are made in this report. The review team visited the College from 18th – 20th October 2016 and conducted meetings with representatives of all relevant bodies of the College, including students, alumni and external stakeholders. During the visit the review team sought to triangulate information provided in the documentation at the meetings with the different College bodies and constituencies. Information referred to herein has been verified.
3. The review team explored the four principal areas of the College’s activity as set out in the “Methodology for Conducting an Institutional Review in Higher Education” (referred to below as “the Methodology”): strategic management; academic studies and life-long learning; research and/or art activities; and impact on regional and national development. Within each area of activity, the review team referred to the criteria set out in the Methodology and took due account of the associated sub-criteria in reaching a decision.
4. The review team consisted of team leader *Professor Dr Don McQuillan*, Professor Emeritus, University College, Dublin, Ireland and former Chief Executive Irish Universities Quality Board; and members *Ms Laura Jonušaitė*, Student, Mykolas Romeris University, Lithuania; *Mr Stasys Švagždys*, Manager, JSC “Eduko LT” and Representative for Lithuanian social partners; *Professor Dr Lukas Scherer*, Head of the Institute of Quality Management, St Gallen University, Switzerland; *Dr Fredy Sidler*, former President of Bern University of Applied Sciences, former President of the Swiss Rectors Conference, and former Secretary General of the Conference of Rectors of Swiss Universities of Applied Sciences, Switzerland; and review secretary *Dr Tara Ryan*, Registrar, Hibernia College, Ireland.
5. The review team made a number of general and overarching observations:
 - a. Staff members participating in the various meetings were evidently very committed to the College, and were intelligent, articulate and enthusiastic about their respective roles and responsibilities
 - b. The KSUAS Council was clearly well informed, and providing clear leadership with effective participation from all parties
 - c. Students were very happy with their respective learning experiences, drawing attention in particular to the excellence of the practice-based elements of the programmes, and the competency of academic staff in supporting the professional bachelor suite of programmes
 - d. The College’s social partners (strategic partners) were very enthusiastic and happy with the interaction with the College and open to deepening their participation

- e. The College has good links to the local community and a significant number of students and staff are actively engaged in both voluntary work and professional networks contributing to the local community
- f. The College is clearly an important part of the region and is a significant contributor to both the social and professional environment of the region
- g. The College's appreciation of the needs of students with disabilities and commitment to their support was commendable

However:

- a) The strategic plan of the College, whilst known and seemingly understood by the staff, needs to be more accessible to the public in the manner in which it is presented. Future plans may benefit from a more top down approach to make it clearer and assist in more effectively communicating its purposes.
- b) In addition, a greater emphasis on the 2015 *European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance of Higher Education* (ESG) may assist the College not just in its effectiveness, but in the development of peer relationships with Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) of standing within the European Higher Education Area (EHEA).

II. BACKGROUND INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSTITUTION

6. Klaipeda State University of Applied Science is a state higher education institution which is focussed on the provision of professional education at Bachelor level in a selection of curriculum areas. It came into being in 2000 following the merger of two schools of advanced education in Klaipeda, the School of Technology and the School of Economics. It was accredited as a non-university higher education institution in 2005.
7. In November 2011, the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania approved a new Statute of Klaipeda State University of Applied Science - Resolution No.1000, and as amended by Resolution 949 of July 2012. The collegial governance structure of a College Council, an Academic Council and a Director are set out in the Resolution. Also included are the rights, duties and responsibilities of both staff and students.
8. At the time of the Self-Evaluation Report KSUAS had 3,349 students: 2,467 in full-time studies and 882 in part-time studies distributed across three faculties and one outreach campus in Rietavas. The Faculties are those of Health Science, Social Science and Technology.
9. The College offers thirty first cycle professional bachelor degrees and the study of each of these programmes leads to an award at level 6 of the Lithuanian Qualifications Framework (LQF) for Bachelor Programmes. The Lithuanian Framework was referenced in 2012 to the overarching European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning (EQF) and also to the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) Bologna Framework, during the same process. Under current legislation, the College may not provide Master or Doctoral programmes.
10. There is a total of 447 staff employed at KSUAS with a full time equivalent (FTE) of 368. 171 FTEs are administrative and support roles and 197 are academic posts (see section 1.2.3 of SER).
11. In 2015 a different college, Zemaitija College was closed, and following a request from the Ministry of Education the Rietavas Faculty of Zemaitija College became the Rietavas Study Centre at KSUAS. This involved the transfer of just under 200 students to the KSUAS as well as all staff.
12. The KSUAS vision as articulated in *Strategic Plan of Action of Klaipeda State University of Applied Sciences for 2016 – 2018* is to be *A modern, dynamic higher education institution implementing internationally recognised studies, developing applied research activities, continuously learning, open to the public and cherishing the country's culture.*
13. Its mission is *to educate an individual for meaningful activities by preparing highly qualified professionals capable of successful adaptation in the changing regional, national and European labour market, socially responsible citizens.*

III. STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT

Some Strengths

- The College is committed to sound strategic management
- There is good infrastructure and it is being effectively managed
- There is effective financial management with wise use of reserves
- There is a commitment to a model of quality assurance, evidenced in the establishment of a Centre for Quality Management, with a dedicated senior member of staff
- There is a good model for promotion to associate professor with clear and appropriate criteria
- The requirement for academic staff to attend a course on education theory and practice
- The growth in number of PhD holders and the encouragement, support and incentivisation being given to young academics

Some Areas for Improvement

- The Strategic Action Plan needs to be expressed more simply and clearly, with the articulation of a more top-down direction
- If properly used the ISO system may be of assistance in ensuring and demonstrating good practice, but greater use should be made of the ESG
- The Council should have an annual formal schedule of meetings

Governance

14. As with other Lithuanian Colleges, the Statute of the College establishes three main bodies of governance; two are collegial, the Council and the Academic Council, and one is an executive power, the Director. All the powers exercised by the Director form the basis for the strategic management of the College. The current Council has been in post formally since 2012, but commenced work over five and a half years ago. It includes both student representation and also representation of employers and social partners.
15. Following the 2013 Report the Council considered and made proposals to the College on how to respond. Prior to the 2013 Report, the Council had commenced work on addressing key institutional challenges, and they viewed the 2013 Report as complementary. The Council had directed key changes in respect of both financial management and senior management, resulting in the closure of various facilities, the redundancy of some staff and the appointment of a new Director. Following these high level structural changes, focus then moved to the findings of the 2013 Report. Two critical actions were taken, a Quality Centre and an Applied Research Centre were established.
16. Due to the significant challenges during the period of the last institutional review of the College, the Council met 7-9 times a year. The review panel noted the current practice of the Council to meet only where issues arise, as College business has somewhat regularised, as discussed during the site visit. Notwithstanding the greater normality of business functioning, it is **recommended** that there be an annual schedule of formal meetings at which the Council discharges its governance responsibilities.

Strategic Management

17. In considering the strategic management of the College, the panel members were satisfied that there was an effective strategic plan in place – *Strategic Plan of Action of Klaipeda State University of Applied Sciences for 2016 – 2018 (SAP)*. Staff were clear on their respective roles and responsibilities within the plan, and annual work plans were in place with designated actors and timelines. The role of the Director, who is the accountable person for the strategic management of the College, was clear and lines of responsibility were assigned in a coherent manner. There were however some challenges in interpreting the layers of documents, and how different historical plans or projects were inter-related. For example, the Integrated Development Strategy for 2011–2021, which arose from a project with Vilnius Art and Technical College, uses different language around priorities and objectives. This led to confusion.
18. Another challenge related to the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) in the annual plans. During the site visit, staff demonstrated confidence in the ownership and coherency of KPIs, and there were clear mechanisms for the monitoring and tracking of activities and of individual responsibility through local departmental line management responsibilities. Notwithstanding this, the term KPI was not actually used in the annual plans, though in other documents the annual plan objectives were referred to as KPIs, e.g. Annex 3 Implementation of the Plan on Improvement of Activities. In addition, while the panel members acknowledge the work done since 2013 in reducing the number of KPIs, further work is **required** on their rationalisation and simplification; there are still too many.
19. Responding to the question, what is a good HEI, students offered the following responses which may influence how the College develops future KPIs
 - a. Work placement opportunities
 - b. Good learning resources – equipment, library resources
 - c. Reputation and public confidence
 - d. Expertise of the lecturers – both academic and professional, real-life work
 - e. International visitors, and international exchange programmes

Accessibility and Future Strategic Planning

20. The availability of the Strategic Plan for KSUAS on the website of the College was noted and confirmed. The review panel recommends that a summary version of the plan be prepared and made publicly available to complement the full document. The detailed document is not necessarily accessible or comprehensible to an ordinary reader, and to assist in ease of understanding an overarching summary document should be developed.
21. The panel was impressed with the level of knowledge of and engagement with the Strategic Plan across the Faculties and various Centres of the College as evidenced during the site visit. However, the ease with which a plan can be communicated to external constituencies is also important – whether they be academic institution peers or potential social partners. It should also be easily understood by changing cohorts of students. As indicated the strategy was not perceived to be easily accessible, and one of the reasons for this may be the strong bottom up approach, which led to confidence at unit level, but a seeming lack of a distinct vision at a senior level. In future planning exercise, it is **recommended** that the College adopt a more top down approach, leading from the vision, mission and succinct organisation goals, whose purpose are easily evident. All of the College’s priorities should be reflected in the goals.

Risk Management

22. The College has a developed risk register and it is a good instrument (see paragraph 70 of the SER and Annex 3). During the meetings with staff it was advised that a marketing strategy had been developed and documented in response to the risk of dropping numbers, and this had led to an increase in funds for marketing and for promotion of the College.
23. The Strategic Plan of an organisation should address the main risks. The risk register should be aligned to the plan, which should be based on the strategic objectives set. A SWOT analysis can contribute to the identification of risks as well as measures to address them. During discussions with KSUAS staff, the panel members noted that the College in monitoring its achievement or non-achievement of goals or actions has a current practice of placing unachieved goals/actions on the risk register. The panel advises that it is more appropriate to consider the reasons why they were not achieved and any interventions required to remedy the situation.
24. The panel members also noted that the main risk for the College, as evidenced in paragraphs 120-123 of the SER, is the loss of student numbers due to the national demographic fall, but that KSUAS is in a good position to meet this risk due to the responsiveness and agility of the College in working with the regional stakeholders.

Financial Management

25. As indicated in paragraph 15, since 2013 a major financial restructuring of the College has occurred. The review panel commends work done on rebalancing the College's finances as discussed during the meetings and reflected in Annex 9 of the SER. The requirement from the Ministry of Education to absorb the Rietavas Faculty from Zemaitija College into KSUAS was academically challenging due to the work involved in aligning the Rietavas students' learning with the KSUAS programmes and granting appropriate exemptions. It did however provide additional students, limiting the impact of the national demographic drop on the College. Monies were raised through the provision of training courses and rental of facilities. The panel acknowledged that there had been some brave, but effective cost-cutting decisions when it came to infrastructure and facilities management and encouraged the financial directorate in its work. During the meetings the College senior staff members were very clear that their motivation was to reduce expenditure on anything that does not impact on student learning environment, and to accumulate funds to protect the educational mission of the College.
26. During these discussions, it was also noted that in response to the 2013 review recommendations, and the identification of objectives in the SAP, appropriate resources have been allocated to various departments and units. It was particularly acknowledged that investment into staff development has come from the accumulated financial reserves of the College.

Quality Assurance

27. As part of the restructuring, which was undertaken in response to the 2013 Report, the College developed a Quality Centre and appointed a Deputy Director to lead it (see paragraph 11 of SER). This is *commendable* and should assist in the ongoing development of helpful quality assurance mechanisms ensuring high standards and good practices across the College.
28. A complex model of quality assurance drawing primarily on International Standards Organisation - ISO 9001 has been developed (see Annex 7 of SER), and as advised during the meeting with the head of the Quality Centre it incorporates elements of Total Quality Management (TQM). The panel was also advised that it includes a formal monitoring

- mechanism involving process owners and a ten person team of auditors which includes heads of department and Vice Deans.
29. The review panel engaged in a positive and robust dialogue with various representatives of the College on the efficacy of these models of quality assurance within a higher education institution. Whilst accepting that a deep and thoughtful implementation of ISO can be an effective tool to support, ensure and evidence good practices in higher education, the panel is nevertheless of the view that greater use of the ESG would benefit the College.
 30. The ESG can provide specific guidance on matters pertaining to a higher education institution. For example, of the ten elements for internal quality assurance established in the 2015 edition, element two relates to the Design and Approval of Programmes and element three to Student-Centred Teaching Learning and Assessment. These guidelines may assist the College in articulating its understanding of and implementation of these activities.
 31. It is also of critical importance that the College be aware of the extent to which higher education is its own community of practice, and that within the European Higher Education Area many institutions are both formally and culturally committed to the implementation of the ESG. Many institutions would view alternative models of quality assurance with scepticism or disdain, whether or not such views are warranted. As a small regional institution with aspirations towards consolidation and development, both in terms of local programme provision, research and international engagement, it is essential that the College be able to engage with its peers on equal terms, drawing on all aspects of the Bologna Process including the ESG as being most appropriate to its context. Using the ESG is of particular relevance to the following institutional objectives articulated in the SAP “[t]o form the attractive image of the University of Applied Sciences” and “[t]o develop international cooperation”.

National and International Priorities

32. The themes of international cooperation resonate with various national and European policy documents that the College has taken as part of its policy environment scan, e.g. *Yerevan Ministers of Education Communiqué, 2015*; *Europe 2020: a Strategy for Smart, Sustainable and Inclusive Growth*; *Lithuanian National Education Strategy for 2013-2022*. The College has identified a need to deepen its cooperation with its social partners reflecting the guidance of Lithuania's Progress Strategy *Lithuania 2030*, elements of which KSUAS has incorporated into their Strategic Plan, e.g. A knowledge-based economy remains the priority objective and to increase entrepreneurship there is a requirement to develop cooperation between the institutions of higher education and research and business institutions.
33. The review panel observed that there was an awareness of the Lithuanian Qualifications Framework, and the College appropriately referenced the Level 6 standard on Diploma Supplements, and in the development of programme learning outcomes. This was viewed on programme documentation during the site visit, and was reflected in discussions with academic staff...

Staff Planning and Management

34. As indicated in the section on strategic planning, each staff member has goals and objectives set out in an annual plan established at the Department level. This plan is used in the management of the five-yearly accreditation process, which is formally documented. There is regular assessment and certification of all staff, and since the recommendations of the 2013 Report, there has been a greater emphasis on activities to be undertaken in respect of research during the accreditation process. Specific supports include

- a. Payment of publication fees
- b. Funding for staff going to conferences abroad.

The Dean of the Faculty is responsible for the distribution of support. Decisions are made on a case by case basis, sometimes allocating funding to a lead researcher, and other times supporting a person or team at the beginning stages of developing a research profile. (See paragraph 166 of the SER.)

- 35. During the meetings at the site visit, the College also articulated a *commendable* approach to focus on science, and providing support to young staff who want to do a PhD. The College aims to identify these potential candidates early and to encourage and support them in pursuing doctoral studies.
- 36. Dialogue with the head of the Applied Research Centre revealed that on appointment of a new member of staff, there is discussion with the Centre about their professional trajectory and which research groups they can join. College activities are planned at various levels, College, Faculty, Department and each person has to contribute to these activities. From the faculty or department there are research groups created, and laboratory and technical assistants contribute. During the first year of a person's lecturing role, they teach only, and subsequently they are required to become involved in research and/or outreach activities with the local community and businesses.
- 37. All academic staff who do not have pedagogical training must undertake a 4 ECTS course on teaching, learning and assessment in higher education. This is a *commendable* practice. This was referred to paragraph 59 of the SER and discussed during the meetings in KSUAS.
- 38. Further matters discussed with College staff included how an academic's time is distributed. The panel noted that 35% of an associate professor's time can be given to research, and 15% of a lecturer's time. To become an associate professor, there is an assessment and certification procedure for current PhD holders. It is intended that 10% of staff should be associate professors, 80% lecturers and 10% assistant lecturers. There are rules for each role. Promotion to associate professor is available for PhD holders who are actively engaged in applied research over a minimum of a three-year period. The setting of clear and appropriate standards is *commendable*.

Learning Resources

- 39. The College has a number of campuses – three in Klaipeda and also a centre in Rietavas, and a number of buildings which have undergone significant refurbishment. They make very pleasant learning spaces for students, and many are fully accessible for persons with disabilities. The panel encourages the College in ensuring all of their campus spaces are fully accessible.
- 40. The assistive technologies available in the library for persons with different disabilities are state of the art, and would be of great support to students with particular needs. The College deploys Moodle, and according to the mode of study – full-time or part-time - the student can make greater use of the virtual learning environment to support their studies, which was recognised by students during the site visit as very helpful. Specialised software is available across programmes; an excellent clinical skills laboratory is in the Faculty of Health Sciences and the Social Work programme has a range of training rooms designed to support and assist students in the communication and personal development learning required for their future profession.
- 41. The Studies and Careers Centre performs an outreach function for schools and interested persons prior to entry to the College. It also supports students in seeking work placements and

employment during their time of studies. Its activities were recognised and praised by a number of parties during the review.

42. During dialogue at the review the panel also noted the increase in the number of English language texts in the Library which will assist the College in executing its plans around greater internationalisation. The additional access to various journals is also positive and should assist in the deepening of KSUAS's research activities. (see section 1,1,1,8 of Annex 6, Action Plan for KSUAS for 2016)

Code of Ethics

43. The panel affirmed that a Code of Ethics is in place and is available on the KSUAS website. Students make a formal declaration on submission of each piece of work that it is an original and their own. Students are also members of the Ethics Committee of the College.

Judgement on the area: Strategic Management is given a positive evaluation.

IV. ACADEMIC STUDIES AND LIFE-LONG LEARNING

Some Strengths

- The high calibre of academic staff, committed and knowledgeable
- The very positive students who love their College, are delighted they chose it
- The social partners were full of praise for what they perceive to be the excellent preparation of the students: students are very well prepared for work and self-confident in their knowledge
- Student-Centred Learning was well understood and being implemented
- The Careers Centre is an excellent facility and seems very effective in its work in ensure the employability of graduates

Some Areas for Improvement

- International mobility is an area which needs to be focussed upon, and developed
- There are too many study programmes: energy may be better focussed if there were fewer programmes, releasing staff for deeper engagement with students and research
- Dedicated due diligence processes for the establishment of joint programmes are required if this is to be a future area of development
- KSUAS could seek new ways to cooperate with businesses, having more confidence in the commitment and interest of their strategic partners

Programmes, Institutional Strategy and the National Environment

44. Students indicated that they chose the College because of the practice-based nature of programmes provided by KSUAS, the good equipment, and the very professionally competent staff. A consistent theme among students and graduates was an appreciation of the practice-based element of the programmes and the excellence of the lecturers.
45. KSUAS offers thirty professional bachelor programmes in a range of areas across the three faculties of Social Science, Health Science and Technology. (See Annex 10 of the SER.) The courses, in keeping with the nature of the College, the needs of the region and national policy, are in disciplines many of which require significant work practice and professional skills acquisition. Business programmes address accounting, finance, company administration, tourism, business management, spa management, etc.. Health programmes include dietetics, physiotherapy, general nursing, social work, and oral hygiene. Technology programmes cover areas such as logistics management, geology, food technology, informatics, computing, mechanical engineering, etc.. During the meetings some of the social partners asserted that nine out of ten workplaces have a requirement for staff at the level of qualification provided by the College, and specific examples of future needs for KSUAS graduates were given.
46. As indicated in paragraph 24, due the College's responsiveness and agility in working with the regional stakeholders by developing new programmes and revising current programmes, KSUAS is in a good position to meet the risks arising from falling student numbers. From the meetings with students, employers and staff it was evident that there is a very clear strength in the applied and practical nature of the programmes and that they are relevant to regional needs. All of the College's programmes lead to the award of a professional bachelor degree at Level 6 on the Lithuanian Qualifications Framework. As the KSUAS staff is aware these courses require a high level of conceptual and theoretical knowledge to meet the national standard. This curricular content contributes to students attaining the generic knowledge and

skills to ensure that they can adapt to various future employment and life situations. The panel is conscious there is a delicate balance required in pedagogical and curriculum design to ensure that programmes are consistently at Level 6, and also professionally focussed responding to real, regional needs which is an imperative for the College in the context of the falling demographic. The panel *recommends* that the College pay close attention to the natural tension between establishing broad theoretical learning outcomes and specialised learning outcomes ensuring that institutional strengths in practice-based education are maximised.

In reflecting on this challenge in programme design, there may be opportunities to merge some existing study programmes creating a number of more broadly defined programmes, with specialisations provided as minors. Perhaps this would allow even greater flexibility in responding to various market or scientific changes, e.g. minors would be altered, not whole programmes. However, the panel is cognisant that any changes of this nature need to be considered carefully and only implemented where there is confidence that College's current strengths, and the effectiveness of its current programmes would not be undermined.

47. The panel noted that the senior staff stated that the number and type of programmes is a constant live issue, and a key focus of the Academic Council, where there is annual monitoring of the patterns of student application and completion. A criterion for sustainability of a programme has been set at fifteen per group and where this is not reached, the programme is closed.
48. The review panel also noted the College's aspiration to increase student numbers and to develop twelve new English language programmes and seven Russian language programmes (see section 1.1.5.7 and 1.1.5.8 of Annex 6 of the SER). Whilst this is an ambitious target, and one which staff assert is readily achievable, the panel recommends that work be undertaken on improving staff language skills. From meetings with staff, and feedback from students, it was evident that there is not currently a high English language skill level. To ensure that standards are both appropriately set and achieved this objective will require careful monitoring.

Rietavas Study Centre at KSUAS

49. As noted in paragraph 11, the College incorporated the students and staff from Rietavas College into KSUAS. This followed the closure of the Zemaitija College by the Ministry for Education, and its instruction to transfer the Rietavas students to KSUAS. The head of the centre in Rietavas now reports to Deputy of Academic Activity and all the management and quality assurances process of KSUAS have been adopted.
50. In the amalgamation the College staff advised that there was an attempt to generate synergy between the programmes. When the Ministry proposed the arrangement the College focussed on the alignment of programmes, looking at the gaps between the respective suites and building paths by which the Rietavas students could transfer as seamlessly as possible to the KSUAS programmes. 194 students at Rietavas, transferred to KSUAS programmes, with exemptions granted in the fields of Geology, Accounting and Management.
51. Current students have the option to complete their studies at the campus in Rietavas or to travel to the Klaipeda campus, which many have chosen to do. KSUAS staff travel to Rietavas to provide lectures ensuring students have this flexibility and option.
52. Due to the nature of the programmes the Faculty of Technology has the greatest engagement with the Rietavas site. The new relationship with Rietavas may be another opportunity to

think about programme specialisations in a more conceptual way. As suggested above, perhaps the current programmes are too specialised.

Joint Programmes

53. A different initiative to develop new and attractive programmes has been the development of a joint programme with Latvia. Initially the programme which was designed within the framework of an EU-funded project, was with a Polish partner. Following their withdrawal an arrangement was made with a Latvian institution.
54. During meetings the College stated that this type of provision may offer the institution a model for diversification. In the Lithuanian Ministry of Education and Science's *Action Plan for Promoting the International Dimension in Higher Education for 2013-16*, the development of Joint Programmes was stated as a national target. A similar target is also identified as a European priority, e.g. under the European Research Area (ERA), as well as in the EHEA Bologna Follow-Up Group (BFUG) Work Plan 2012-2015.
55. Arising from an EU-funded project the joint programme/joint degree with Latvia is an exciting venture which may assist the College in attracting students. Nevertheless the review panel noted that in meetings with the Director of Quality, with students, and with the Dean of the Faculty and the Programme Director, there were different understandings about the nature of the award and the programme. Joint programmes are complex, particularly those involving transnational partnerships, where there is a greater risk of misunderstanding and inadvertent breaches of differing legislation. If the development of joint programmes is to be a future strategic objective of the College, it is **recommended** that the College develop tailored, due diligence processes to assist in the effective establishment of these types of relationships. With regard to the current joint programme with the Latvian college, it is **recommended** that KSUAS consult directly with both national authorities, Augstakas Izglitibas Kvalitates Agentura in Latvia and Studiju Kokybes Vertinimo Centras, Lithuania, to ensure that students have access to a fully accredited and recognised qualification¹. It is also important that prospective students have access to full and accurate information on the programme prior to their enrolment. A model for a Diploma Supplement for a joint degree has been established and may be one which the College wishes to consult².

Practice-based learning/Work Placements/Internships

56. Both students and employers identified as strengths the level and breadth of work practice that students undertake during their study programmes, resulting in their work-readiness. The review panel **commends** the College on its execution of the model of professional, skills-based education, including its use of company simulations through the Practice Enterprise Network (PEN). Students have access to skills laboratories, group rooms, computer laboratories. Practical simulations and participation in work placement have a strong impact on student confidence assisting them in successfully commencing work on graduation. It is a clear **strength** of KSUAS.
57. It was noted that the simulation companies are supported through the European Practice Enterprises Network (PEN) and during the site visit some members of the panel had the

¹ Some useful documents to consult include: *OECD/UNESCO Guidelines for Quality Provision in Cross-Border Higher Education (2005)*; and the *UNESCO/COUNCIL OF EUROPE Code of Good Practice in the Provision of Transnational Education (2007)*; *The European Recognition Manual for Higher Education Institutions Practical guidelines for credential evaluators and admissions officers to provide fair and flexible recognition of foreign qualifications and periods of study abroad*, pp.117-120, Nuffic (2014).

² http://ecahe.eu/w/index.php/Practical_Guidelines_for_Joint_Programmes_on_the_Diploma_Supplement

- opportunity to view the simulation facilities. There are 8,000 simulation firms across 42 countries and they enable students such as those in KSUAS to develop entrepreneurial skills in a safe environment. The panel *commends* the College's involvement in the European PEN.
58. The panel noted in dialogue with academic staff that modules relating to practical work have established learning outcomes with credit assigned and that assessment processes in which work mentors participate are under the supervision of the KSUAS academic staff. Typically there are three parts to the assessment process in the workplace, feedback of the supervisor, a written report by the student, and finally an oral defence of the report.
 59. A tripartite agreement which includes a practice plan is established for each student work placement. The practice plan is a key document which defines what kinds of skills are expected and the plan is discussed with the company. All students receive a briefing on how to approach work placement and how to manage the associated documentation. There is both an internship coordinator and a work mentor.
 60. Social partners, which include government and private organisations, offer work placement opportunities to students. College departments facilitate the allocation of students to particular work placement employers. They also provide lists of employers to students, who choose to source their own placement. Both students and academic staff verified this approach during discussions.

Lifelong Learning

61. KSUAS has a dedicated unit to coordinate lifelong learning activities. The Training and Service Centre is responsible for adult training and at the time of the review staff stated that there had been 1,479 trainees to date in 2016, an increase on the 2015 number of 1255. There are four staff in the Centre.
62. The quality of courses is monitored through the conduct of surveys and in obtaining learner feedback. The Director of the Centre provides the results to the various institutional units.
63. Centre staff advised that lifelong learners are very clear on their wants and needs, and represent a varied age cohort. They need a distinct teaching and learning environment which is appropriate to the adult learner who has particular professional development needs. The panel acknowledged the staff's approach to teaching which they, the staff said needed to be very practical and utilising inclusive methodologies, and agreed that this was an appropriate perspective.
64. The work of the Training and Services Centre has been given additional focus since the findings of the 2013 Report (see paragraph 11 of the SER). Work in the Centre is now more coordinated and managed. The development of new courses arises from both the engagement of the Centre with local employers, and also from academic departments where an idea from a staff member is first discussed at departmental level. If a proposal is accepted there, and deemed viable, there will be liaison with the training and service centre on its provision. It was noted during discussions with staff that some of the courses offered are profitable, but also some lifelong learning activities are free. Where formal training is provided, the course is formally approved and ECTS are given. All courses now have module descriptors which is a noteworthy improvement.
65. A worthwhile initiative of the Centre has been the establishment of a hospitality consultancy team – which has visited regional hotels and spas providing advice, and offering the provision of training. The panel was briefed on this during the meeting with staff who work in the Training and Services Centre.
66. It was evident that the strategic social partners were aware of the continuous professional development programmes offered by the College, and that the College is open to requests for

training. Some of partners with whom the panel members met have participated in some short programmes. It was also noted that lecturing staff visit other towns and areas to provide specific professional courses. The panel *commends* the College on the useful distinction being made between partners and strategic partners and the objective to deepen the relationship with the latter group. It is evident that this is working well. It is *recommended* that KSUAS seek new ways to cooperate with businesses, having more confidence in the commitment and interest of the strategic partners.

67. The College has a flexible approach to the mode in which a student can engage in a professional bachelor programme. For example, some students are able to reduce their contact time and increase their independent study time, based on their use of the virtual learning environment, Moodle. This was described by both staff and students during the meetings.

Learning Outcomes and Transparency Tools

68. During the meetings it was confirmed the tools of the European Higher Education Area are being implemented, such as the European Diploma Supplement, the use of ECTS, learning outcomes and the formal accreditation of programmes. In paragraphs 79-87, the review panel has made some specific comments on the ESG Element of internal quality assurance, 1.3, on Student Centred Learning.
69. As discussed in paragraph 46, staff members are aware that there are legal documents such as the Lithuanian Qualifications Framework which guide them in the development of programmes. The review panel noted each module and course is assigned a LQF level, and suggest that it may be useful to record this on the programme descriptions. The College also advised that they follow European regulatory conditions such as the EC Directive on Nursing.
70. Given the practice-based nature of the intended learning outcomes of the programmes (a strength discussed earlier) a balance between theoretical and practical elements is stipulated for all College programmes. It is 50/50 for the nursing and social work programmes and there is a requirement for a minimum of 30% practice on other programmes.
71. It was noted during dialogue with staff that graduates have access to Master's programmes in other higher education institutions, though depending on the programme on which they seek to enrol they may be required to undertake a bridging course.
72. It was also noted that a formal policy exists for the Recognition of Prior Learning, and that this is often used where students enter KSUAS having spent a period of time in another higher education institution and are given exemptions based on previous study (see paragraph 118 of the SER). A model for the recognition of uncertified, informal learning is also in place, but is utilised less often.

Stakeholder Involvement: Cooperation with Academic, Social and Business Partners

73. As discussed in section VI, there is significant involvement from the various social partners in programme provision. In particular, given the practice-based nature of the suite of professional programmes, local employers, both from the city and the region, provide student placements. There is no shortage of placement opportunities.
74. Following the 2013 Report, the College informed the panel that the range of partners was reviewed and KSUAS tried to establish what would be mutually beneficial for the partnerships. The College concluded that relationships overall were strong, but that improvement were required in the areas of applied research, consultation, services adult teaching. The panel found that the engagement of social partners in the College is very significant. Having decided which partnerships were most desirable and potentially effective,

the College established a distinction between strategic partners and others. As stated in 66, this is a useful approach.

75. It was noted that representatives of social partners such as Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), government, professional associations, etc. participate in various committees of the College: a member of the Klaipeda State Assembly sits on the thesis defence committee; social partners are members of programme committees, and submit suggestions for new subjects; social partners give guest lectures to students on occasion (see paragraph 105 of the SER).
76. The majority of strategic partnerships are with local businesses, representatives of whom the panel met during their visit. The commitment to the College and involvement of these partners in the College is *commendable*.
77. The College has asserted that it has many partners with whom strong relationships exist, but there is a desire to manage the relationships more effectively. The marketing strategy is where the important ideas and proposed actions have been captured. The review panel *commends* this, and notes that the SAP may need adjustment to take account of these targets.
78. Regarding academic partnerships, the panel noted the College's commitment to synergistic approach with local higher education institutions as expressed during meetings: HEIs offering postgraduate programmes are interested in KSUAS graduates, and KSUAS is interested in developing research alliances with more research-intensive universities. This is a good approach and merits development.

Student Centred-Learning; Enhancing Teaching and Learning

79. The review panel discussed the College's use of Student-Centred Learning (SCL) with academic staff. SCL is one of the elements of internal quality assurance for which a standard is provided in the ESG. It is a way to help ensure that learners learn, in an environment where there are both many learners and diverse learners in the classroom. For example, the panel noted the decreasing student entrance scores and the associated challenges in working with students of mixed ability. Staff agreed that there are challenges, citing Mathematics and Statistics as examples. In this context staff use group work complemented with one to one consultations.
80. The academic staff advised that in the review of their programmes they paid particular attention to student workload, realising that they needed to increase to ensure students had sufficient time to achieve the intended learning outcomes. In the allocation of credit, a greater amount of credit was allocated to practical work. Where students are required to have achieved certain skills greater time was allocated to this and also credit. In looking at programmes as a whole there was consideration of different modes of learning and assessment, focussing on methodologies which would help students achieve the learning outcomes.
81. Furthermore, it was noted that staff advised that significant attention is given to the individual learning of a student – the number of hours required for individual study has been increased, and this is complemented by the staff consultation hours. Workload of lecturers is divided into contact and non-contact. Non-contact time is deemed to include staff-student consultation times. Academic staff believe there is a planned and balanced approach to these sessions.
82. The College's students have the option to have an individualised or flexible schedule for studies. The review panel were briefed on this by both academic staff and students. They can enrol on a bespoke programme which includes several exemptions. When students commence studying they can choose a part-time individualised schedule which is agreed at the outset.

Students undertake more independent study in this mode, and there is greater reliance on tools such as Moodle as well as the conduct of independent research using online databases. Students are supported to achieve learning outcomes. Moodle is a useful tool and it complements face-to-face work. It is used significantly in IT programmes for the submission of tasks and in practical subjects for provision of more theoretical material. The panel *cautions* the College about excessively increasing independent learning hours, particularly for weaker students or for highly practical elements of a programme. It is not clear that all types of learners will benefit from this model. There may also be challenges of sustainability if the College were to significantly increase one-to-one consultations with students.

83. Staff also advised that developing teaching methodologies for student-centred learning require a significant quantity of work and that they are supported in this development work through training. There are training events provided by the College on these areas, and there is an ongoing process of staff development, and qualification improvement that all staff appeared to understand. These plans are identified at department level and then a department plan is made which includes the requirement for staff to complete theoretical courses or work placements.
84. Programmes include electives and options, to ensure students have some element of choice. There are options to specialise, as well as to take specific electives. And where a student takes a module which is not from their core programme they receive additional independent certification.
85. Specific tasks mentioned by academic staff included group work with teams, and the lecturer acting as a guide; problem-based learning; students assessing students; students setting assessment criteria; and giving students a role in deciding on research activities.
86. Staff advised that student feedback is a critical component of student-centred learning, which was acknowledged by the review panel.
87. Students reported their experience of the teaching environment as one of cooperation and dialogue. It was noted that there was a perception that some staff delay in issuing assessment results; this merits investigation and if relevant improvement.

Student Support and Guidance

88. KSUAS participated in a State project to increase physical accessibility for students with disabilities to higher education. As a result, there are significant supports for these students and these are also available to adults who participate in lifelong learning programmes as well as for members of the public who attend the silk therapy and dance therapy courses. Prior to entry students are advised of the various supports available.
89. Challenges identified relate to the flexibility of the programme scheduling for some students. Students also stated that where staff are also working in professional practice, their availability can be limited.
90. There are financial scholarships for students who are academically successful. Grants are available for socio-economically disadvantaged students.
91. The panel confirmed during the review in meetings with the academic staff that there are repeat opportunities, for both academic subjects and practical ones.
92. Students indicated that it is easy to obtain part-time work, and there are good opportunities to get employment in the place where work placement is undertaken. The Careers Centre is also an important support that students value and it provides an important service to them.

Student Participation

93. Students stated that their views matter in the College and that when feedback is given, either via surveys or directly, changes are made. This is a *positive feature* of KSUAS.

94. It was noted that students are engaged in the processes for programme improvement through involvement on student committees. Students participate in round tables, Academic Council, College Council, the Ethics Committee, the Grant Allocations Committee, the Promotions Committee, etc.. In general there are student members in all College committees and the students stated that they find the mechanisms of engagement effective and they normally receive positive response to their proposals (see also Annex 7 of the SER, the Quality Manual).
95. The Student Council advised the panel that it receives funding from the College. The Council ensures that training is provided for its members, and advised that students completing training also complete a formal assessment.

Internationalisation and International Mobility

96. In 2013 the area of internationalisation was identified as a weakness and there were low mobility numbers. The College has adopted an emphasis on teaching English and aims to attract many young teachers (see Annex 3 of the SER, Implementation Plan) In addition, two international weeks are now held annually. The numbers of students and staff participating in mobility schemes remain small but are growing from an outgoing point of view. Incoming numbers are down except for a significant growth in incoming staff for training. The review panel encourages the College to continue making efforts in these areas, perhaps adopting the model of strategic partnerships utilised with regional stakeholders in this context also. The panel also *recommends* that the College continue to strongly encourage acquisition of English language. There may also be scope for KSUAS to look at including a minor specialisation in languages in specific programmes as relevant to the professional working environment, e.g. English, Russian, German.
97. Various positive initiatives mentioned were noted, including the international conference being run by the Faculty of Social Science; the Technology Faculty's eleven-year-old conference focussing on urban, green areas, and the increase on visiting professors in 2016 – seven up from three in 2015. The Health Faculty appears to have a more established international network, and can initiate joint projects with relative ease. Targets have also been set to generate new ideas for projects from international visits, e.g. starting research projects across Cyprus, Slovakia, Italy and Armenia. The panel also noted that other countries were interested in learning about the support system developed by KSUAS for oncology patients.

Employability

98. The Study and Careers Centre coordinates a number of activities which students stated they find very beneficial. It provides information for future students as well as for current students in respect of future careers. The Centre also collects data from alumni to inform about employment and work placement opportunities. Career support is provided across a number of dimensions - identifying employment opportunities, providing CV and interview skills and offering career counselling. KSUAS participated in a national project which developed a tool to coordinate a career management system for students – various consultations are provided, including virtual, academic links. The system allows a student create an e-portfolio. Employment opportunities are also listed in a database. The trajectory of graduate career can also be monitored by the College. Data is collected from state registers, the tax authority, social services; which enables the College to know employment status, salary, pace of employment, and length of employment. This Career Management Information System (CMIS) commenced in 2016 and is replacing local initiatives within academic departments. It

is anticipated that the effectiveness of the study programmes can be monitored through consideration of this data in the future. (See paragraphs 136 – 143 of the SER)

Judgement on the area: Academic Studies and Lifelong Learning is given positive evaluation.

V. RESEARCH AND/OR ART ACTIVITIES

Some strengths

- The College has made extraordinary progress in improving its research profile in a short period of time
- The Applied Research Centre is an excellent initiative and its work has useful targets
- The Health Faculty's commitment to submitting only to peer-reviewed journals is a strength
- Those involved in research are knowledgeable, articulate and committed

Some Areas for Improvement

- Knowledge-transfer, both internal and external, may merit from additional focus
- The social partners were very impressed with some of the student theses; there is potential to build upon or publish some of the student work

Alignment of Research Activities with Institutional Mission and Strategy

99. KSUAS has set strategic priorities and specific actions in its suite of Strategic Action Plans (SAP) and provided examples of work being carried out to address these priorities. They included working with Klaipeda city on health initiatives, transport initiatives and adult learning initiatives. It was clear from meetings with academic staff and the social partners that there was appreciation of the expertise in the College and the consultancy and research opportunities for the local community. The review panel was *encouraged* by the degree of support for the College from business and the interest in supporting research projects with the College.
100. It was stated during the meetings with social partners that they perceived KSUAS to be one of only two HEIs in the region with an interest in applied research and a new task force with the Municipality has been initiated to discuss the 2017 applied research plan.
101. These positive developments are set in the context of a negative finding in respect of research – applied research in the 2013 Report. It was evident to the review panel that KSUAS had responded with significant maturity and commitment to the feedback received and had engaged in a thoughtful and practical exercise to address the deficiencies, drawing on the strengths of the College. The mechanisms to address alignment to institutional mission and regional priorities are being managed within the new structures established to develop and embed a research culture in the College.

Responding to the 2013 Report

102. In response to the 2013 Report the College made both structural and strategic changes. Senior staff advised that consultants were engaged who helped KSUAS to map a future direction. Visits were undertaken to other HEIs in Vilnius and Kaunas which had more experience in applied research. There were also visits to municipalities in the western region where specific proposals for applied research were made. Municipalities also reciprocated by identifying local businesses with whom applied research synergies could be developed. In addition to setting a model for development, the College received a number of commissioned applied research projects from these engagements.
103. From a structural point of view the Academic Council made a recommendation to the Council to give additional funding for the development of applied research, and this was accepted by the Council. The detail around this proposal was explained by senior staff during the site visit. This commenced in 2014 and has been increasing since. The State budget makes no allocation for this research, therefore the College has allocated additional funding to research

from both its operational budget and from its financial reserves. The College-allocated funding has enabled the establishment of an Applied Research Centre, led by a Deputy Director to provide strategic leadership for the area. There is also a project manager working in the centre. During meetings senior staff advised that 240K had been allocated for the implementation of the Strategic Action Plan and a portion of this was earmarked for the work of the ARC. All funds raised through research also go back into the ARC. The review panel was *impressed* with the amount of work undertaken in response to the 2013 Report, and with the level of commitment across all levels of College governance and staff constituencies. The innovative use of funding is also *commendable*.

104. Key actions taken by the College to improve its applied research activities include:
- a. A motivation system for active researchers was approved in 2015. The model includes recognition for research in the mandatory five-yearly staff reaccreditation process for academic staff
 - b. Financial support is being provided for researchers to submit to more expensive journals
 - c. Researchers are being encouraged to use the resources of the College for research
 - d. Where the College receives a commission for applied research 80% of the funding goes to the academic
 - e. Money has been sought from the Ministry for specific applied research projects
 - f. The running of an internal competition to encourage research in particular priority areas – three staff received awards and four of the applicants received monies – this includes funding to one student for a research project

Academic Capacity for Research

105. The review panel noted the figures presented to them by the College at the time of the site visit in October 2016, 10.9% of staff had a doctoral qualification, which is ahead of the target set for 2016. This is *commendable*. It was further noted during discussions that during the annual staff review conducted with the head of department personal plans are set for training and development and these include provision for PhD studies. In 2016 there are between ten and fourteen staff being supported in undertaking doctoral work. Staff are supported by the provision of paid leave, access to College resources, and from time to time financial support to attend international conferences or training.

Role of Applied Research Centre (ARC)

106. The Applied Research Centre, referred to in paragraph 103 has been a key instrument in changing the approach to applied research in KSUAS. Whilst it is still in the early period of its development it has clearly created an identity for itself in the College and is taking a clear leadership role. The review panel *commends* the establishment of the unit and the level of its work to date.
107. The new centre has responsibility for controlling and coordinating and the progress being made was evident to the review panel. This was identified in the SER and the review panel spent considerable time discussing the detail with the head of the Centre as well as other members of senior staff. It takes a leadership role in a range of activities including:
- a. The design of an institutional strategy around research
 - b. Setting direction and priority and bringing groups of researchers together, ensuring alignment to the competencies of academic staff. The SER identified five areas for applied research. The fields identified relate to the study programmes being provided to ensure a transfer of knowledge between applied research activities and the programmes.

The review panel notes this positive feature, but *recommends* that greater work be done on the aspect of knowledge transfer both between applied research and the academic programmes and also with social partners. It was noted that when researchers submit their proposal, they have to explain how it meets the institutional priority. Initial work occurs at the level of department and the initiators can be heads or lecturers. A proposal is formulated and a team is convened, then a written proposal form is submitted to the ARC. These projects are seen as good opportunities for interdisciplinary work. Groups of researchers do not receive a grant from the College, rather research is seen as a core part of the daily work of academic staff. On receipt of an application to engage in a research project the Centre examines it to see if it meets the objectives of the College and establishes if there are other interested parties in other faculties/department. There were discipline focusses in the applications being received for research support. In this context the ARC seeks to adhere to *Lithuania's Smart Development goals* – e.g. transport, food safety. Examples given included work done under the area of sustainable environment which focusses on food safety and quality, which is linked the national smart specialisation.

- c. The development of a marketing and communications strategy where the applied research services are described, identifying the priority areas which include amongst other areas innovative technologies, modern techniques of education, health and well-being interventions
 - d. Providing advice and support to individual academics and to heads of department including assisting with the design of funding proposal submissions
 - e. Monitoring the applied research activities on a quarterly basis
 - f. Sending requests from the public for research to relevant College units
 - g. Actively seeking commissioned research and commercialisation opportunities
 - h. Setting research outcomes around publications and allocating funds to support people in publishing.
108. The review panel noted and affirmed the College attestation that through these interventions there is already evidence that:
- a. The attitude of staff to research has changed
 - b. The numbers of publications have increased
 - c. There are increased numbers of commissioned projects
 - d. There has been an increase in income from applied research
109. Other actions taken included the identification of areas of applied research which were the weakest and the development of plans to support improvements.

Knowledge Transfer

110. A key characteristic of good academic research is that findings are shared with members of the academic community and society as a whole. One of the main mechanisms to share research findings is through publication of research outputs and KSUAS has set targets for the numbers and types of publications, specifying metrics around peer-reviewed publications and presentations (see section 11.2 of Annex 3 of the SER).
111. Targets have also been set to incrementally increase the number of publications in international journals, as opposed to national ones. Currently there is an average of fifty publications per year, of which 40% are peer reviewed (see Annex 18 of the SER). It is intended to increase the number of peer-reviewed articles. It was noted during meetings at the site visit that the Faculty of Health only publish in internationally peer-reviewed journals,

which is laudable. There may be merit in the Health Faculty sharing some of their approaches to research with other Departments.

112. Staff advised that the quality of research output is currently measured by the meta-metrics of whether a paper is accepted for publication or where it is paid research, that payment is received. Whilst real and pragmatic metrics, the College may also wish to consider other ways of ensuring the quality of research conducted. It was noted that research groups are usually led by a PhD holder and the head of the group is responsible for the quality of the work.
113. Whilst good work is being done in improving practices around publication and dissemination of findings through conferences and presentations, the College is encouraged to deepen and broaden this work. It is *recommended* that knowledge transfer receive particular attention, and that liaison with industry and the employer groups be a focus. There is potential for synergistic relationships in this context, and the College could better exploit the outputs of its research through deepening the relationships with the social partners. There are possibilities to have greater integration with business; final theses could reflect even more real-life problems; teaching staff need to keep both their academic qualifications and professional practice up to date. Research outcomes need to influence the teaching and learning experience of students also.
114. There were some excellent and inspiring stories told by members of the employer group during the meeting with the review panel. All parties would benefit from the sharing of the good news stories. It was noted that in this context there may be issues of commercial sensitivity requiring agreements around non-disclosure, nevertheless there may be ways to share overarching outcomes of certain business-funded research projects, or student theses which address a particular employer problem.

Impact of Strategic Partners on Applied Research

115. The strategic partners of the College were fulsome in their praise of KSUAS and how it contributes to their region and respective organisations. They gave many examples of how their offers of work placement were received, leading to the development of micro research projects. It was evident to the review panel that the employer group had input to programme development, and the development of final year projects which could draw on real-life problems from their industries. This was demonstrated across a wide range of businesses, e.g. from fishing to spa management to dental health, etc..
116. It was also noted that many of the strategic partners had given and would in the future give equipment and software to the College to assist it in both the educational and research dimensions of its mission. Strategic partners were also open to giving courses and/or lectures in the College and also suggested academic staff could take up short-term internships in their companies.
117. Partners stated that the College is easy to work with and that the students and graduates are very well prepared professionally – they have had significant exposure to the work environment. Examples were given by the Public Health Bureau which enables students to participate in community health initiatives. There are opportunities to work on joint projects, joint publications and research projects and it was noted that the College asks for topics for final theses from the companies. It was stated that while students sometimes use questionnaires that may not be methodologically sound, other students do progress the research ideas. In the field of physiotherapy it was suggested that some student work is of a standard and utility to be published, but that due to time constraints data collected may not always be statistically relevant. It was noted that specialists are also involved in the

assessment of the thesis defence, and that from time to time students are recommended to publish their findings. However due to time constraints and lack of motivation this sometimes does not happen. The panel *recommends* that in these instances students be supported to consider building upon their work and publishing later.

118. The review panel recognises the intent of KSUAS to deepen and enhance its relationship with its strategic partnerships. This is a worthwhile objective and the panel notes the significantly positive disposition of its strategic partners towards the College and *endorses* the College's intent to deepen the relationships.

International Links and Mobility and Impact

119. As discussed in paragraphs 96-97 the College has identified targets around increased student and staff mobility. It was noted that staff advised that when they travel abroad for teaching assignments they use the opportunity to discuss their research and seek opportunities for joint research.
120. A range of projects were referenced such as an Erasmus IP project in Estonia, a joint project with Tampere, Finland which was funded under the European Union's Seventh Framework Programme for Research and Technological Development, projects with Portugal, Cyprus. A small number of international visiting lecturers were mentioned. The review panel encourages KSUAS to build and further develop these links ensuring they are strategically aligned to the priority areas of the College.
121. It was also noted both in the SER and in dialogue with staff that the College makes a financial contribution to language training for staff. This is important in supporting staff in their international work (see section 7.1 of Annex 3 of the SER).

Student involvement in Research

122. All students undertake a final year project which involves an element of research. These research activities are core to the particular study programme, but may not necessarily relate directly to the research of academic staff. Students advised that they have their own research society. Also academic researchers may employ students in some of their applied research projects where the ethical parameters permit such involvement. Examples included the 2016 KSUAS project undertaken for the Klaipeda City Municipality study on non-formal education where students assisted with data collection. Students also gained experience in discussing the issues around lifelong learning with the people being surveyed. Another project brought students from Poland, Latvia, Ukraine and Lithuania together to identify the profile of a typical young employee for the European labour market. Students and lecturers were involved together and it involved the KSUAS students travelling to Poland as part of the project. A further research activity involved research around ethno-cultural teaching in second-level schools. Staff involved students in considering how ideas around the subject of ethno-culture could be introduced to schools.
123. It is noteworthy that in the KSUAS competition to fund a small number of College research projects, there were student applications and one of the selected projects was submitted by a student. The inclusion and recognition of students is *commendable*.
124. Further positive examples of student involvement in research work includes final year projects and theses undertaken in response to research problems of strategic partners, the presentation of student findings in student conferences and the publication of information on student projects in marketing literature.

Judgement on the area: Research and/or Art Activities is given positive evaluation.

VI. IMPACT ON REGIONAL AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Some Strengths

- There has been a noticeable improvement in the engagement with partners since 2013
- The grouping of partners and the identification of strategic partners is a good approach, and is an improvement since 2013
- The range and quality of engagement with strategic partners has been strengthened

Some Areas for Development

- The College could coordinate even more deeply with the social partners who are eager to support KSUAS
- The measures identified in the Strategic Plan could be improved by greater simplification and clarity

Mission & Strategic Plan

125. The College's Training and Service Centre has as one of its aims to ensure that programmes are developed responding to the needs of the region, ensuring there are appropriately qualified personnel in the region. The social partners met by the panel affirmed that the needs of the region are specifically addressed by the programmes and graduates of KSUAS. It is noteworthy that the College has students who are third generation students coming from the region, indicating that there is both a loyalty to the College and also an appreciation of the relevance of a qualification from KSUAS.
126. The Director of Klaipeda Association of Employers advised that KSUAS graduates arrive into the real world, having a grasp of a company's overall functions.
127. Staff advised that the needs of the region are assessed by conducting surveys about existing demand and that the departments conduct these surveys themselves. Whether graduate skills are aligned to the needs of the employer is established, by asking not just if they obtain employment, but employment in their field of study. The panel recognises the importance of these metrics in establishing relevance to the region's employment needs.
128. It was further noted at the meetings that at the end of CPD programmes offered by the College, all participants are surveyed, as well as their employers. The College's marketing strategy has a target to ensure that the services offered by the College are accessible to businesses and regional communities. Consequently, KSUAS has commenced outreach activities, providing training to various groups in other cities. This is a *commendable* activity, though the panel cautions the College to ensure it is financially viable and sustainable.
129. The College stated that there are 266 service providers for adult training in the region but there is a lack of information for the public on what is available, i.e. that a single promotional platform is missing regionally. The College is working on identifying its position within this spectrum and by conducting surveys ensuring that adequate information is available on the website, and that certain client groups are directly targeted by newsletters or social networks as relevant. KSUAS is committed to developing adult education. Consideration is being given to implementing models of distance learning to address the needs of adult learners.
130. The College advised that it is working on a 2017 marketing plan which identifies actions around deepening cooperation with companies and commissioning applied research. There is

a desire to have a higher quantitative target, and be more ambitious for its 2017 regional partnerships.

Impact on the Region

131. The review panel noted the specific measures of impact identified in Table 14 of the SER; communication; providing high quality specialists; creation of social culture. The panel confirmed that these are being implemented, but as indicated in the section on Research recommends that careful attention be given to the dimension of knowledge transfer. The panel *recommends* that the strategic plan measures could be improved. Whilst the results are good, the measurements are not clear: Table 14 in the SER is a useful overview, but the more detailed analysis in the SAP would merit from simplification in the next version. It is also worthy of consideration whether the strategic plan and its measures for effectiveness are sufficiently ambitious.

Voluntary Work

132. Both students and staff are very involved in community and voluntary activities in the region as verified during the site visit and stated in paragraph 203 and table 14 of the SER. This is partially driven by the nature of the programmes in the fields of health care and social science. For example, both students and staff are involved in “Food bank” and St. Francis Oncology Centre voluntary activities in Klaipeda.
133. There are also College projects around areas such as the mobility of Klaipeda senior citizens; the prevention of excessive alcohol consumption; the digitalisation of materials at the Lithuanian miner museum holdings; and warmly appreciated work in silk therapy for children with Downs Syndrome. Student activities were identified by consulting Klaipeda City’s documentation and the Klaipeda Public Health Bureau on local needs.
134. Other events include ones organised directly by the College on campus. Some relate to the promotion of Lithuanian culture, celebrating Christmas or other significant dates, or participation in the Run for Hope. The review panel noted the positive resonance all these events had with staff, and that there was a genuine commitment to the social fabric of the region.
135. Students and staff from the College are also very involved with the local sports events and are helpful in supporting this.

Social Partner and Employer Engagement

136. As indicated in paragraphs 45, 73-78 and 115-118, there is considerable positive engagement between the College and the social and employer organisations in the Region. It was noted that Gražina Markvaldienė, the Director of Klaipeda State University of Applied Sciences was elected as the Deputy Chairperson of the Klaipeda City Council for Academic Affairs under the Klaipeda City Municipality in 2016.
137. Municipality staff met by the panel stated that the City has certain expectations of the College, even though there is no formal governance relationship between the parties. Objectives of the City Municipality include that Klaipeda would have better relationships with social partners and achieve greater income generation from local stakeholders. The City also wants to develop stronger relationships with its HEIs, in particular with regard to research. This perspective from the Klaipeda City has resonance with the objectives of the College and offers good opportunities to develop and deepen the relationships in a targeted fashion.

138. The various relationships with businesses and the municipality led to a specific proposal that the College establish a forestry programme. The College responded directly to this and has designed a new programme in this field which is particularly relevant to the region.
139. The College also stated that it encourages staff to become involved in local networks and give clear examples, e.g. the IBM breakfast club; the Lithuanian Professional body for Public Relations Specialists; the Lithuanian Marketing Association, etc.. Every lecturer is encouraged to be involved in their relevant professional network to improve their expertise and connections. This is encouraged in particular if associations relate to study and the College pays membership fees for various professional associations. KSUAS staff also act as experts for various organisations, e.g. Institution for the checking of vocational training school programmes; driver training courses.
140. Employers advised that they frequently come to the College to seek potential employees, but it is always a challenge to keep a balance between education and business when they have students on placement. The value the employer group place on KSUAS is commendable. It was noted that in the wellness and hospitality industry half of the employees in the region are graduates of the College. Two spas are opening in region in the near future and they will be seeking 600 employees, and they hope to recruit 200 graduates from the College. KSUAS has had a partnership with the regional Social Work Department for over 20 years. The staff there have been involved in revising and renewing the social work programme, and provide work placements. Staff act as supervisors of placement students; of the seventeen social workers in Department, twelve are graduates of the College.

Placements and Social Partnerships

141. As indicated in previous paragraphs the College has no difficulty in finding work placements for its students. Frequently employers contact the Careers Centre or a particular academic department to seek students. Opportunities come from the region as a whole, not just Klaipeda City.
142. Companies, in accepting students on placements, indicated that they were committed to ensuring that students obtain a thorough and meaningful work experience. Some companies have significant international expertise and opportunities for international training which are of benefit to students. Company staff also participate in the viva for the final theses, and can contribute to their assessment. Advice is given on technical requirements of programmes and changes in the work environment are communicated to ensure programmes retain professional currency.
143. Employers advised that they can see the effects of the work placement in the theses and that they also have the opportunity to receive feedback from the students and implement changes in their companies in response to student suggestions made.

Graduate Experience

144. During the site visit the panel met with a group of eighteen graduates, representative of all the faculties and many of the study fields, all of whom were members of the Alumni Association. Helpfully they had graduated at different periods of time and were working in different areas of employment; this enabled the review panel to have a somewhat comprehensive insight into the graduate experience.
145. All graduates met by the panel believed that their qualification prepared them sufficiently well for work. They were very positive about their experience at KSUAS and advised that the reasons they chose the College included the following factors: widest variety of study programmes regionally; convenient to home; the level of practical experience obtained the

- competence of staff and therefore their ability to really explain their field; the availability of State-funding; flexibility in study modes; positive interaction with academic staff and feeling of belonging to a close-knit family, which remains now that they are graduates.
146. A persistent theme from both students and graduates was that their choice of KSUAS was significantly predicated on the real-life experience available to them through the work placement element of the programme and the excellence of the lecturer-practitioner staff. It was asserted that this was the view of employers also and therefore studying at KSUAS meant a good chance of gaining employment on graduation. It was repeatedly evident to the panel members that the practical nature of the education and training being provided by KSUAS is a very positive feature of the College.
 147. It is noteworthy that some graduates had attended Continuing Professional Development courses in the College relating to their profession. In the instances given, the employer paid a contribution to the course and there was also State-funding.
 148. Graduates also attested to the fact that they were able to progress to Masters programmes in other institutions and that their qualifications were well recognised.
 149. Graduates noted that the College's Career Centre does not just assist in finding work, but also is effective in promoting KSUAS in local secondary schools, at open days and at careers fairs. The alumni also noted that the College was increasing its alumni activities, noting that the Faculty of Health Sciences had organised an alumni day for the first time in 2016. The day was perceived as very good with much practical support and advice.
 150. The graduates stated that they perceived the role of the Alumni Club to change the culture so that the College is not just relying on alumni to do things, but also to create an environment whereby graduates can help each other. The contribution of alumni to the provision of work placements and the provision of laboratory equipment was noted. Its work on organising social events during the Summer was also noted, along with the growth in numbers from 100 to 200 during 2016. The panel encourages the College to support the Club in its work, particularly in its attempt to create a supportive infrastructure for themselves. It was noted that at the point of graduation both the alumni club and each faculty collect contact information, and graduates are subsequently invited to various events.

Judgement on the area: Impact on Regional and National Development is given positive evaluation.

VII. GOOD PRACTICE AND ENHANCEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

Strategic Management

Some Strengths

- The College is committed to sound strategic management
- There is good infrastructure and it is being effectively managed
- There is effective financial management with wise use of reserves
- There is a commitment to a model of quality assurance, evidenced in the establishment of a Centre for Quality Management, with a dedicated senior member of staff
- There is a good model for promotion to associate professor with clear and appropriate criteria
- The requirement for academic staff to attend a course on education theory and practice
- The growth in number of PhD holders and the encouragement, support and incentivisation being given to young academics

Some Areas for Improvement

- The Strategic Action Plan needs to be expressed more simply and clearly, with the articulation of a more top-down direction
- If properly used the ISO system may be of assistance in ensuring and demonstrating good practice, but greater use should be made of the ESG
- The Council should have an annual formal schedule of meetings

Academic Studies and Life-long Learning

Some Strengths

- The high calibre of academic staff, committed and knowledgeable
- The very positive students who love their College, are delighted they chose it
- The social partners were full of praise for what they perceive to be the excellent preparation of the students: students are very well prepared for work and self-confident in their knowledge
- Student-Centred Learning was well understood and being implemented
- The Careers Centre is an excellent facility and seems very effective in its work in ensure the employability of graduates

Some Areas for Improvement

- International mobility is an area which needs to be focussed upon, and developed
- The number of study programmes may be too high: energy may be better focussed if there were less programmes, releasing persons for deeper engagement with students and research
- Dedicated due diligence processes for the establishment of joint programmes are required if this is to be a future area of development
- KSUAS could seek new ways to cooperate with businesses, having more confidence in the commitment and interest of their strategic partners

Research and/or Art Activities

Some strengths

- The College has made extraordinary progress in improving its research profile in a short period of time
- The Applied Research Centre is an excellent initiative and its work has useful targets
- The Health Faculty's commitment to only submitting to peer-reviewed journals is a strength

- Those involved in research are knowledgeable, articulate and committed

Some Areas for Improvement

- Knowledge-transfer, from both internal and external perspectives, may merit from additional focus
- The social partners were very impressed with some of the student theses; there is potential to build upon or publish some of the student work

Impact on Regional and National Development

Some Strengths

- There has been a noticeable improvement in the engagement with partners since 2013
- The grouping of partners and the identification of strategic partners is a good approach, and is an improvement since 2013
- The range and quality of engagement with strategic partners has been strengthened

Some Areas for Development

- The College could coordinate more deeply with the social partners who are eager to support KSUAS
- The measures identified in the Strategic Plan could be improved by greater simplification and clarity

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR AUTHORITIES (MINISTRY, ETC.) FOR IMPROVEMENT

The Review Panel noted that the KSUAS review took place towards the end of the current SKVC cycle of reviews and that work is ongoing on a successor model. The panel members encourage the Ministry to consider a future model of Quality Assurance which focusses on quality enhancement and which is separate from audit or accreditation requirements (if they are required). This may encourage a more supportive and honest process, further enhancing the Lithuanian higher education sector.

VIII. JUDGEMENT

Klaipeda State University of Applied Sciences is given positive evaluation.

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ANNEX. KLAIPEDA STATE UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES RESPONSE TO
REVIEW REPORT