



## **STUDIJŲ KOKYBĖS VERTINIMO CENTRAS**

### **ALYTAUS KOLEGIJOS**

### **VEIKLOS VERTINIMO IŠVADOS**

---

### **INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW REPORT**

### **ALYTUS COLLEGE**

Grupės vadovas:  
Team leader:

Mr. Brian O'Connor

Grupės nariai:  
Team members:

Professor Johann Schneider

Ms. Jolanta Bareikienė

Dr. Andrius Čapas

Mr. Algirdas Raudonius

Vertinimo sekretorius:  
Review secretary:

Mr. Paul Mitchell

## CONTENTS

<b>I. INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>II. BACKGROUND INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSTITUTION.....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>III. STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT.....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>IV. ACADEMIC STUDIES AND LIFE-LONG LEARNING .....</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>V. RESEARCH AND ART .....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>VI. IMPACT ON REGIONAL AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT .....</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>VII. BEST PRACTICE EXAMPLES AND RECOMMENDATIONS .....</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>VIII. JUDGEMENT .....</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>ANNEX 1_ANDRIUS ČAPAS‘ COMMENT .....</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>ANNEX 2_ALYTUS COLLEGE RESPONSE TO REVIEW REPORT.....</b>	<b>200</b>

## **I. INTRODUCTION**

1 The review of Alytus College (AC) was commissioned 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 prescribed methodology pursuant to the Procedure for the External Review in Higher Education approved by Government Resolution No 1317 of 22 September, 2010.

2 The review was informed by the following principles:

- autonomy and accountability – account shall be taken of the balance between the autonomy and social responsibility of the institution of higher education;
- contextuality – account shall be taken of the qualities of the institution's mission, strategy and operating conditions;
- holistic approach – account shall be taken of the interaction and compatibility of the areas being reviewed;
- stakeholder involvement – representatives of the study system stakeholders (students, graduates, academics, employers and other social partners) shall be involved in the procedures of self-evaluation and evaluation;
- unity of internal and external quality assurance – the internal quality assurance system and the external review must be based on mutually harmonized principles and public criteria, which also lie at the basis of the quantitative and qualitative indicators set by the institution for itself;
- continuity – while conducting an institutional review of a higher education institution, account shall be taken of the previous evaluation and the follow-up performance.

3 The Review focused on examination of the following areas:

- strategic planning;
- academic studies and life-long learning;
- research and/or art (creative) activities;
- impact on regional and national development.

### **Membership**

4 The members of the Review Team were:

- Jolanta Bareikienė, (Dean of Kėdainiai J. Radvila Faculty), Kaunas College, Lithuania;
- Andrius Čapas, (Company Director), Santaviltė Company, Lithuania;
- Paul Mitchell, (HE consultant), UK, (Secretary);
- Brian O'Connor, (formerly Head of the School of Business and Social Studies), Institute of Technology, Tralee, Ireland, (Chair);
- Algirdas Raudonius, (student of Business Management), Vilnius College, Lithuania;
- Johann Schneider (formerly Rector of the University of Applied Sciences, Frankfurt), Germany.

### **Approach**

5 The review was carried out using the process prescribed at national level. The Team sought to conduct the review in a manner that was not only professional and courteous, but also constructively searching and challenging. The review process as a whole proceeded smoothly and responsively. During the site visit, the Team was met with unfailing courtesy and helpfulness, and was able to engage in discussion and exploration of key issues.

## **Procedure**

6 In fulfilling the purposes of the review the Team has:

- considered the broad national, regional and professional contexts within which the College operates;
- considered a self-evaluation document prepared by the College and a range of supporting documents submitted in advance of the site visit;
- considered additional documentation relevant to the Team's lines of enquiry during the site visit;
- conducted a three-day visit to the College (8 – 10 November 2011);
- toured the facilities and learning resources available in the College;
- met a range of stakeholders representative of all College activities (Appendix 1), including:
  - College Council members
  - College Director and Deputy Directors (two meetings)
  - Members of College Academic Board and representatives of Students' Embassy
  - Self-evaluation group members
  - Representatives of Quality Department
  - Four separate groups, each comprising a cross-section of administrative staff, Deans and heads of units, teaching staff and researchers to discuss respectively:
    - strategic management
    - academic studies and life-long learning
    - research and/or art activities
    - impact on regional and national development
  - Graduates
  - Social partners
  - Student representatives

The experts have also been presented with the results of the evaluation of learning resources and associated infrastructure conducted by MOSTA and with the evaluation decision of 22 June 2012.

## **Self-evaluation document**

7 The self-evaluation document submitted by AC comprised an account of the following principal areas:

- Introduction;
  - Strategic Management;
  - Studies and Lifelong Learning;
  - Science and (or) creative activities;
  - Impact for the development of the Region and the Country;
- Annexes:
- Orientation of AC vision, mission and goals towards development of applied research, provision of consultations, and education of the society open to learning and culture;
  - AC academic staff qualification improvement system
  - Study programmes implemented by AC;
  - AC agreements with employers' representatives and other institutions 2006–2011;
  - AC participation in EU structural funds projects;
  - AC participation in international projects 2005–2011;
  - ERASMUS mobility programme (outgoing teachers/staff);
  - ERASMUS mobility programme (outgoing students);
  - ERASMUS mobility programme (incoming teachers/staff);

- ERASMUS mobility programme (incoming students);
- Summary of AC research activities;
- Most important consultations of AC academic staff;
- Significant AC research for Southern Lithuania region;
- Final projects of practical value.

8 The Team considered that the self-evaluation document could have been strengthened had it contained greater evidence of a capacity for self-reflection and a more robust analysis of the College's strategic intent. The Team felt that the opportunities presented by having to undertake a self-evaluation had not been exploited fully. The document provided an adequate and sometimes repetitive description of activity, but did not use the opportunity to evaluate and challenge the College's own strategy and policy. It also tended to portray the organization as task-focused and reactive. There was thus little initial evidence in this self-assessment of the College actively seeking from the Team an external critique of its identity, role, performance and impact. An initial opportunity was therefore missed to analyze the challenges and opportunities facing the College, tentatively outlined in the College's own SWOT analysis. This defensive approach to self-analysis is perhaps not wholly unexpected in the early stages of a new and developing external national QA regime.

## **II. BACKGROUND INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSTITUTION**

9 Alytus College (AC) is a state higher education institution, located in the Region of Southern Lithuania. The College traces its origins back to the Alytus Mechanical and Technical School, which was established in 1960 and which later became a Polytechnic School. The College was established in its present form in 2000, following the adoption in Lithuania of the new Law on Higher Education, which introduced a national binary system (of Colleges and Universities) for Higher Education. In 2010, the College celebrated both its 10th anniversary in its present form and the 50th anniversary of its existence as an educational institution.

10 The Team was informed that College activity and provision is driven by national and local strategic needs, which are in turn reflected in the College Statute and the College Strategic Activity Plans. The College's Strategic Activity Plan for 2011 - 2013 seeks to respond actively to the priorities of the Republic of Lithuania, to the development of the region of South Lithuania and to local and national integration into the European Union (EU) area. Its stated main goals are:

- to enable individuals to acquire higher education and professional qualifications that meet the needs of the Lithuanian economy, science and the latest technology level;
- to foster the society, receptive to education and culture, able to work under conditions of rapid technological change, ready to integrate into the Lithuanian and international markets;
- to develop applied science and research activities, to create conditions for continuous and lifelong learning, to cooperate with local authorities and economic entities in developing professional competency, counselling and retraining.

11 The College's senior academic and administrative officer is the Director, who is supported by two Deputy Directors. The governing body of the College is the College Council (comprising 50% external membership), which monitors and is responsible for the College's overall performance and is externally accountable. The principal senior academic decision-making body is the Academic Board, which considers the main academic issues, monitors the quality of

studies and appoints representatives to the College Council. Student interests are represented by the Students' President and Alytus College Student Embassy (ACSE).

12 There are three Faculties, each headed by a Dean:

- Management;
- Engineering;
- Information and Communication Technologies.

13 Secondary school graduates are eligible for admission to the College. Undergraduate students study on a full-time (3 years) or part-time (4 years) basis. The study programme comprises 180 ECTS credits. College graduates are awarded the professional bachelor's degree and the College also (since 2010) issues an accompanying Diploma Supplement. On completion of the programme, graduates can (on payment of the appropriate fee) attend a 'top up' programme designed to provide sufficient credit for the award of a 'double degree.' Nearly 1200 undergraduate students study at AC; there is also a wide programme of both credit bearing and non-credit bearing adult education provision and numerous bespoke professional training and development courses. The College offers a wide range of lifelong learning provision, in response to both City and Regional demand.

14 In response to perceived national and international economic and associated labour market demands, the College currently offers the following (14) undergraduate study programmes:

- Automobile Maintenance;
- Accounting;
- Technologies of Electronic Publishing;
- Finance;
- Corporate Finance Management;
- Office and Enterprise Administration;
- Technologies of Information Systems;
- Computer Network Administration;
- Marketing Management;
- Software Systems;
- Trade Management;
- Land Transport Technologies;
- Construction Engineering Systems;
- Business Management.

15 The College's undergraduate programmes are designed to instil within students:

- a thorough grounding in the academic and professional competencies within the appropriate field(s);
- development of students' cultural and social maturity through exposure to the synergistic cooperative interactions of the institution's academic staff with social partners;
- development of initiative;
- development of communication skills in both native and foreign languages;
- practical application of administrative and managerial tools;
- the ability systematically to assess and engage with the business environment and professional activity in the globalized market.

### **III. STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT**

16 The College defines its vision and mission as follows:

**Vision**

AC is an institution of higher education supplying the demand for training business specialists in the changing global environment; applying the newest technologies in the process of studies; actively and successfully integrating into the international space as an institution of education; a centre of applied research; a centre of culture and science; an inseparable part of the positive image of Lithuania; open to the society, competitive and providing opportunity for self-expression of its each member.

**Mission**

To educate qualified specialists of business and technology fields acquiring higher professional education, who are able to work independently under conditions of competition market and supply social and economic needs of Alytus region and the country; to provide conditions for lifelong learning, improve the acquired qualification and retrain; raise educated, creative, respectable, enterprising and ethically responsible personalities, educate the society, form its social, technological and engineering culture, moral values, public spirit and civic self-consciousness.

**Strategic goal**

To provide conditions to obtain higher education and professional qualification corresponding to the needs of Lithuanian economy, level of science and newest technologies; educate the society open to education and culture, able to work under conditions of changing technologies, ready to integrate into Lithuanian and international market.

17 The delivery mechanisms for achieving these goals are set out in two schedules/work streams of activity for 2011-13 (supported by two funding streams of 3,000 thousand Lt and 2,245 thousand Lt from Government and outside sources respectively).

18 The Team can confirm that the strategic plan of the College reflects the provisions of the new (2009) Law on Science and Studies and that its objectives correspond to the priorities of the Government Programme. The College, in preparing its strategic plan and in formulating its main performance indicators has taken into account the provisions of the Lithuanian State strategy for education for 2003– 2012, the Bologna Declaration, the Communications of Prague, Berlin, Bergen, London and Leuven, the Lisbon Strategy of European Union and the programmes associated with each. The College is also fully embedded and is a key player in the social and economic infrastructure of the region in which it is located. The College pays close attention to the objectives defined in the Alytus City Municipality Development Plan to 2015, and to the implementation of priorities, goals and objectives of the Development Plan for 2010-2020 of the Alytus Regional Development Board.

19 The progress of the College against the strategic plan is monitored in accordance with a number of institutional performance indicators, including:

- Admission numbers of state funded students;
- Staff student ratios;
- Student drop-out and completion rates;
- Number of graduates gaining employment;
- Relative number of accredited programmes;
- Relative number of teachers with scientific degree;
- Updating of IT resources and technological equipment, per cent;
- Relative number of students receiving scholarships according to high study results;
- Number of students receiving nominal LR President scholarships;
- Number of events organized for the students;
- Number of prepared teaching/learning material packages;
- Number of prepared e-teaching/learning modules;

- Number of signed bilateral agreements with institutions of higher education;
- Number of students participating in international mobility programmes;
- Number of teachers participating in international academic exchange;
- Number of teachers who are able to teach in foreign languages;
- Proportion of income for services of studies in the total amount of income for the supplied services;
- Number of students studying in places not funded by the state;
- Number of connections to documents from the subscribed databases;
- Proportion of computerized work places in the total number of students;
- Proportion of projects performed on order and direct Government funding for research;
- Number of national and international conferences;
- Number of articles in reviewed publications Number of agreements on consultations, teaching, research and project activities for businesses and individual customers;
- Proportion of expenses for administration and economic in the total amount of Government assignments Proportion of building maintenance expenses in the total amount of economic expenses;
- Proportion of administration expenses in the total amount of administration and economic expenses;
- Area of repaired premises (cubic m).

The Team believes these quantitative indicators are helpful to the institution and that they are used effectively. However, the College could perhaps consider adoption of additional qualitative indicators, including self-identified benchmarks and benchmarking data from comparable institutions.

20 The indicators are reviewed by the Directorate and inform the annual review submitted to the College Council. The Team was informed that the College had adopted a 'bottom up' approach to planning. Whilst this achieves a degree of consensus across the institution, the Team felt that a more dynamic challenge process could operate with advantage in the preparation of future strategic plans, as between College Council, Academic Board, Faculty Boards and Student Embassy, so as to ensure broader input and greater understanding and ownership of the final corporate strategy.

The College has a strong College Council on which all major stakeholders are represented. It has 50% external membership, has a very good understanding of the College and is able to hold the Directorate to account in a supportive but challenging environment. In accordance with revisions to Lithuanian law, College Directors will in future attend meetings of their Councils in an advisory capacity only, rather than as full members; the Team noted the importance of maintaining this key principle of accountability and effective governance.

The College Council, key external partners and senior managers were well informed about the strategic plan. Other members of the College who met the Team were less well informed. Internally information is cascaded through the Academic Board and through the line management structure. The College produces an annual report to stakeholders. At present it has limited manpower capacity to expand its corporate website, although the Team heard that there were plans to increase this.

21 As evidenced by its SWOT analysis, the College has the capacity to identify the major trends which continue to impact on its performance. Over the last few years, financial pressures have been severe and the College has been successful in attracting some 60% of its funding from non-Government sources. Much of this external funding has been project based, but deployed in



combination with other income in such a way as to support key priorities and purposes. This creative use of mainly project funding does however carry short term institutional risk in terms of a possible drift in institutional mission. Whilst overall this risk has to date been well managed, future strategic plans will however need to focus more clearly on the identified key priorities. Similarly, project funding streams should be more clearly focused and clustered around those key priority activities.

22 The College has in place systems for the development, implementation and evaluation of study programmes and for input from relevant stakeholders. For proposed new programmes or restructuring of existing programmes, Departments conduct market research and identify needs and trends. They undertake discussions with social partners and if the need or the trend is confirmed, initiate the preparation of a new programme or the revision of an already existing programme. Study Programme Committees are then formed for the development and delivery of new study programmes. Faculty Boards in turn approve new and updated study programmes, courses and their descriptions. The Academic Board approves the study programmes and submits them for assessment and approval. Programme monitoring is carried out by the Quality Assurance Department, Committees of Study Programmes, Faculty Boards and the Academic Board. A review of all study programmes forms part of the College's annual institutional self-assessment exercise. External assessment of study programmes is also carried out, in accordance with the national framework.

23 Student feedback is sought via:

- An annual study 'The employment of AC graduates'. The aim of the study is to find out the characteristics of Alytus College graduates' employment after graduation and identify what can be improved in the College degree programs in order better to prepare the graduates for their professional activity;
- In-course questionnaires and interviews undertaken by teaching staff;
- Participation of students in institutional governance, programme management and quality assurance activities.

24 The College is moving towards full adoption of the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance. Programme design is carried out in accordance with the requirements of the EHEA degree Framework: EHEA specifications relating to adoption of student-oriented modes of study, of revised teaching and learning methodologies and of the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System are also being implemented; learning outcomes and assessment criteria are formulated with the active participation of the social partners. The College is also considering implementation of a quality management system which would meet the ISO 9001 and EFQM requirements.

25 The College has 78 full-time teaching staff (of whom 70 are qualified to Master's level, 2 to doctoral level and 6 are undertaking Doctoral study). It has 38 part-time teaching staff (of whom 29 are qualified to Master's level, 6 to doctoral level and 3 are undertaking Doctoral study). Staff performance is evaluated annually by heads of department. The Team was impressed by the energy and commitment of the staff it met, who demonstrated commitment to current students and to residents of the region. The College is striving to meet a priority to increase the number of staff with doctorates and is very supportive in encouraging staff to undertake doctoral study; the College has put a number of measures in place to support staff in this activity, but the incentives available to it are very limited.

26 The College is responsive to new challenges and needs and has in place mechanisms for the identification of risk and for its mitigation. It has for example correctly identified a need to focus on student recruitment in the light of falling demand and has put in place a vigorous recruitment

campaign both within Lithuania and internationally, supported by a new College unit. The Team noted the College's plans to implement an internationalisation agenda which includes:

- increased recruitment of international students, supported by the establishment of the International Studies Centre;
- increased staff and student mobility within Europe, through Erasmus and related schemes;
- an enhancement of English language capacity across the College;
- tentative discussions around the possibility of setting up with European partners a jointly awarded degree programme.

27 The Team visited the two main College buildings. The principal College building on the main site has been extensively refurbished over recent years and provides a pleasant and comfortable working environment for staff and students. The teaching rooms and laboratory space are light and airy, appropriately equipped and fit for purpose. The learning environment is designed to support a flexible and modern approach to teaching and learning, including use of distance learning and self directed learning. Students have access to scientific literature, periodicals, video and audio sources, distance learning materials, specialized online databases and learning packages via the intranet. *Moodle* is used as the College's learning platform. There is adequate library and private learning space for students, including a modern Internet reading-room. It was noted that there were plans to expand further the number of computer workstations for private study. The City (as landlord) has provided a new teaching building in the town centre to house the Faculty of Information and Communication Technologies. This building provides excellent modern teaching accommodation and houses a number of specialist IT facilities (e.g. publishing equipment) which further enhances the breadth and depth of teaching which can be offered. The facilities available in this building also underpin the College's considerable level of lifelong learning activity delivered to residents of the City of Alytus. Students who met the Team spoke of the high standard of accommodation provide in the Student Hostel, which also had internet connectivity for private study.

28 The Team has received and considered, as contextual information, the evaluation of the College's Learning resources and Associated Infrastructure conducted by the Research and Higher Education Monitoring and Analysis Centre (MOSTA) under the auspices of the Ministry of Education and Science. This evaluation had concluded that the following indicators did not meet the prescribed thresholds and that the College should pay more attention to those indicators:

- Upgrading of equipment;
- Number of students of all modes of study in a certain subject area per member of support staff for studies and research;
- Ratio of teaching staff members with advanced degrees to the total number of teaching staff;
- The number of students gaining admission with lower than 9 cut-off mark in particular study subject area.

The Team found that the College was actively seeking to address the issues of equipment replacement and of support staff through its normal planning mechanisms. It was also addressing the issue of the number of its staff with higher degrees (see Para. 26 above), although the Team accepts that this is a challenging requirement. In regard to further action on student retention, the College was seeking to optimize its welfare and counseling capacity, although it was recognized that the local economic situation, which often obliged students to withdraw for family reasons, was unhelpful. In regard to student admissions, the College had identified this as part of its risk management review and has initiated a major student recruitment initiative, both to increase numbers and to enhance the levels of student qualifications on entry. A key part of its planning

was to establish new programmes in niche areas of the market relevant to the Region (e.g. tourism), to re-position certain other programmes so that they would have both increased national and international appeal, and also to collaborate with Lithuanian universities in the development of pathways for the College's graduates to progress to masters' programmes.

29 Staff and students consulted by the Team were clear about the practical consequences of academic misconduct (with particular reference to plagiarism). The Team felt however that current policies could with benefit be more formally articulated and publicised within the College's developing quality assurance framework.

### **Team Judgements**

30 In recent years, the College has had to respond to a number of external challenges, including reductions in state funding and a decline in student numbers. It has responded well to these challenges through:

- A well found and highly supportive student experience for students attending the College, with a high degree of personal academic and pastoral attention for the individual student;
- Energetic leadership provided by the Director;
- Highly committed social and Regional partners;
- A robust Governance structure, with a fully engaged, participative and committed College Council which recognises the key role played by the College in the Regional economy;
- A highly creative and successful track record in attracting external project funding to support and develop the institution's key activities;
- A well managed physical and human resource infrastructure.

### **31 Team Recommendations**

31.1 The relatively small size of the College allows many aspects of operational business to be dealt with on a relatively informal basis. This places considerable pressure on the Directorate. As the complexity of College business continues to develop, consideration should be given to:

- a crisper definition of roles and the delegated responsibilities of other senior academic and administrative managers across the institution;
- a more general formalisation of policies and procedures, systems and documentation, particularly in relation to institutional strategic planning processes, human resource policies and quality assurance;
- the development of qualitative performance indicators and benchmarking;
- a more structured approach to the development and dissemination of the content of the strategic plan to all stakeholders.

31.2 As evidenced by its SWOT analysis, the College has the capacity to identify the major trends which continue to impact on its performance. It has been remarkably successful in attracting some 60% of its funding from non-Government sources. This creative use of mainly project funding does however carry short term institutional risk in terms of a possible drift in institutional mission. Whilst overall this risk has to date been well managed, future strategic plans will however need to focus more clearly on identified key priorities. Similarly, project funding streams should be more clearly focused and clustered around those key priority activities. A key priority will be further development and implementation of strategies to recruit appropriately qualified students.

31.3 The Team heard of the College's plan to review its quality assurance arrangements, linked to the possible adoption of one or more of the international standards (e.g. EFQM, ISO9000). The direct and indirect costs of moving towards such an accreditation should not be

underestimated. The team would recommend that the College should in the first instance audit itself against the following key areas of the ESG:

- Policy and Procedures for Quality Assurance;
- Approval, monitoring and periodic review of programmes and awards;
- Assessment of students;
- Quality Assurance of teaching staff;
- Learning resources and student support;
- Information systems;
- Public Information.

A systems audit, followed by an action plan for full compliance with the ESG would provide the College with a strong foundation for deciding in due course on the most appropriate future internal quality system.

31.4 The Team would recommend as part of a College audit of its quality assurance mechanisms, the formalisation and publication of a number of key aspects of student management policies, including assessment and examination conventions, student progress regulations and academic misconduct regulations.

31.5 The Team had some evidence to suggest that student input to QA could sometimes be patchy. As part of the quality systems audit, the Team would recommend a clearer mapping of the principal points and mechanisms for student input at different levels within the overall Quality Assurance system, so as to guarantee the effectiveness of the student voice.

31.6 A more systematic mapping of documentation about follow up actions taken in response to the recommendations of external programme review teams is also recommended.

31.7 The College has an ambitious internationalisation policy. The Team would recommend development of a business plan for this activity to include:

- analysis of capacity for delivery and identification of resources;
- a comprehensive project plan for development and delivery of the programme;
- an assessment of English language capacity across the College together with a proposed action plan for improvement;
- a bespoke market survey of the opportunities for attracting fee paying international students to the College (and to which academic areas);
- strategies for balancing incoming and outgoing Erasmus student numbers.

31.8 There is a perceived need to articulate staff development policies more clearly, in addition to addressing the particular need to increase the number of academic staff holding doctorates. Progress with this latter priority would also enhance the College's capacity to achieve its stated aim of increasing the number of publications by staff in peer reviewed journals.

#### **IV. ACADEMIC STUDIES AND LIFE-LONG LEARNING**

32 In addition to the undergraduate provision described in the previous section, the College delivers a range of part-time training courses and seminars for adults. This is based on a flexible and open approach to learning, combining, as appropriate, formal and informal teaching with vocational training. In accordance with its broader social partnership, the College has for example provided short courses on computer literacy for the local population and since 2008 houses and supports the Third Age university for local senior residents. The Team heard of the range of short formal and informal courses provided by the College covering both business needs and also the needs of the unemployed. Different kinds of training courses are arranged regularly

as to reflect a rapidly changing external business environment. Through its close contact with businesses and graduates, the College is able to respond rapidly to market demands. In co-operation with businesses, as well as through its own links with company managers and through feedback from its graduates, the College is able to gauge priority training needs. The demand for non-formal training is increasing every year. The College in this way is highly responsive to the Government education strategy for 2003–2012.

33 In 2006 the College established the Careers and Public Relations Centre (CPRC). The CPRC organizes and coordinates the College's relations with its social partners and collaborates with specialists of Alytus Labour Market Training and Consulting Centre. It promotes career opportunities for students and graduates, including information on the situation on the labour market and job vacancies. It provides practical job-related skills training for students, including social and personal skills, problem solving skills, decision taking and negotiating skills. CPRC also coordinates a wide range of student recruitment activity for the College.

34 The College has an international orientation in addition to its national and regional roles, and it is committed to a continued involvement in international activities. It has responded actively to the principles of the Lisbon strategy and of the Bologna Declaration. ECTS was introduced in 2000 and the Diploma Supplement was issued in 2005. This facilitates the recognition of student qualifications and academic achievement. The College places a special emphasis on the mobility of students and teachers and on active participation in European co-operation projects. Currently it is involved in partnerships and projects with more than 50 European institutions of higher education and has put in place a quality assurance structure to support this activity.

### **Team Judgements**

35.1 The College is popular with students who feel well supported both in their academic studies and in their welfare and is greatly valued by external stakeholders.

35.2 The Team notes the view of students and other stakeholders that the College's undergraduate programmes provide a solid basis for transfer on favourable terms after graduation to similar programmes at universities in Lithuania.

35.3 Some 90% of students are regionally domiciled. National patterns of emigration and other demographic factors have placed particular pressures on the recruitment of appropriately qualified students to HEIs. The College is responding well to this challenge through an energetic recruitment strategy and by working closely with feeder institutions. A trend towards broadening the entry profile may in addition require some re-thinking of the first year curriculum content to take account of different types of prior achievement.

35.4 The College has made particular efforts to deliver lifelong learning opportunities in the Region and has good facilities and support services to meet the needs of part-time, mature and lifelong learners. It is sensitive to the needs of students with special needs, including physical disability and makes appropriate adjustments.

### **36 Team Recommendations**

*(see paras. 31.3 - 31.7 under 'Strategic Management')*

## **V. RESEARCH AND ART**

37 The College is committed to implementing the policies of the EU and of the Lithuanian Government in regard to the development of applied research. It is committed to the

development of the professional and scientific competences of its academic staff. This in turn helps to foster student creativity, entrepreneurship and student involvement in the economic life of the Region.

The College undertakes a wide range of projects and the opportunities which this provides for student engagement significantly enhances the overall depth and quality of teaching and learning at the College. Senior students are involved in applied research in a number of ways including: applied research projects and presentation of results in students' national and international conferences and seminars; reports and publications in national and international events; tailored applied research for final projects; course papers; articles in the regional press, participation in international contests and exhibitions of entrepreneurship.

### **Team Judgements**

38.1 While there can be many levels and approaches to 'Research' (including research and development and the application of applied research), the activities of the College in this area seem to be appropriate to the institution and highly responsive to the needs of the Region.

38.2 Students benefit considerably from the practical opportunities offered through project work and the intellectual challenges presented. Indeed the Team heard that some project work had been developed beyond the initial phase and carried through to Master's level.

### **Team Recommendations**

39.1 The approach to applied research activity has been driven largely by external funding availability. The College should consider whether future strategic plans for research should focus more clearly on identified key priorities and areas of expertise. This might enable the College to build capacity and reputation in identified key areas and attract funding from a wider funding base. Similarly, project funding streams could be more clearly focused and clustered around those key priority activities and could drive up the overall quality of research activity. These changes would also provide the opportunity for academic staff to achieve a higher level of publications in peer reviewed journals, in accordance with a strategic priority for enhancing research impact.

39.2 The Team would recommend a review of the pricing and costing policy for externally commissioned research, so as to ensure that an appropriate level of College overheads is included in the contracted price.

## **VI. IMPACT ON REGIONAL AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

40 The College is highly responsive to the needs of the Region. The Team noted the operation of the College placement scheme and its importance in maintaining good relations with local companies. A compulsory placement is included in the curricula of all professional degree programmes. Within each study programme there are defined descriptions of the placement including its aims, objectives, duration, other conditions and requirements. Upon completion of the placement, the student has to hand in a placement report as well as a job reference received from the company.

The Team heard from employers of their confidence in recruiting to their businesses graduates from the College. Employers were uniformly positive about the quality of graduates they had employed. They felt well-connected to the College, which was in turn highly responsive to their needs for trained manpower and applied research. 61 % of this year's graduates had found immediate local employment, which compared well to the position in other Regions.

41 The College is a member of various Regional bodies including: science, education and business associations; unions, boards and societies; Chamber of Commerce networks; and networks across the European Union, Lithuania, Alytus City and Region (such as Alytus Confederation of Manufacturers and Southern Lithuania Confederation of Manufacturers). Teachers and students support a wide range of local initiatives and participate in various public events, such as celebrations of Independence Day and Independence Restitution Day. College academic staff takes part in the activities of different associations such as: the Lithuanian adult education association, associations of Lithuanian teachers of economics, Lithuanian educators and researchers of accounting and associations of Lithuanian teachers of automobile transport. College managers have close links with the City authorities: some senior staff are members of Alytus City Council, members of the City's Economic, Budget and Investment committees, or members of various working groups responsible for example for the Implementation of e-tools in Alytus region, the Strategic Development Plan of Alytus Region (Human Resources Development work group) and the SME development group under Alytus City Municipality.

### **Team Judgements**

42 The Team noted from its meetings with social partners, graduates and students of the College that all were fully supportive of the College and expressed satisfaction with its programmes and services. The programmes offered by the College are appropriate to, and supportive of the region and its people. The College is perceived by stakeholder social partners as an important resource for meeting the needs of the Region and for supporting the national agenda. The College's approach to internationalisation was similarly of importance to the region and its economy. The Team noted however, an inherent danger that initiatives could potentially be driven primarily either by the needs of the external partners or by the individual interests of staff members. The College may wish to consider the articulation of a future Regional engagement strategy which maps more directly to the College's own perception of its role in addressing regional needs and which reflects its own overall strategic priorities.

### **43 Team Recommendations**

43.1 That within the context of an already highly successful portfolio of activity, the College considers articulating its future regional policy more explicitly, with a view to achieving an increased prioritization of activity within its future regional engagement profile.

43.2 That the College's successful Regional strategy could usefully be made available to other HEIs as a case study of good practice.

## **VII. BEST PRACTICE EXAMPLES AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **Best Practice**

- Positioning of the College to ensure its prominence in the delivery of education in Southern Lithuania;
- A vibrant institutional ambience emanating from competent, creative and innovative staff;
- The high quality of the student experience at the College;
- Study programmes focusing on the acquisition of practical skills, which is greatly valued by employers and other partners;
- The excellent staff /student relations within the College;
- The close working relationship and mutual interdependence which exists between the College and Alytus City/Region;
- The responsiveness of the College to its social partners, with an agile and timely approach to delivering local training, research and cultural needs;

- Flexible study programmes consistent with the needs of the state and the region;
- The College's considerable success in generating external funding over a sustained period.

## **Recommendations**

The Team offers the following recommendations for consideration by the College:

44.1 The relatively small size of the College allows many aspects of operational business to be dealt with on a relatively informal basis. This places considerable pressure on the Directorate. As the complexity of College business continues to develop, consideration should be given to:

- a crisper definition of roles and of delegated responsibilities of other senior academic and administrative managers across the institution;
- a more general formalisation of policies and procedures, systems and documentation, particularly in relation to institutional strategic planning processes, human resource policies and quality assurance;
- the development of qualitative performance indicators and benchmarking;
- a more structured approach to the development and dissemination of the content of the strategic plan to all stakeholders.

44.2 As evidenced by its SWOT analysis, the College has the capacity to identify the major trends which continue to impact on its performance. It has been remarkably successful in attracting some 60% of its funding from non-Government sources. This creative use of mainly project funding does however carry short term institutional risk in terms of a possible drift in institutional mission. Whilst overall this risk has to date been well managed, future strategic plans may however need to focus more clearly on identified key priorities. Similarly, project funding streams could be more clearly focused and clustered around those key priority activities. A key priority will be further development and implementation of strategies to recruit appropriately qualified students.

44.3 The Team heard of the College's plan to review its quality assurance arrangements, linked to the possible adoption of one or more of the international standards (e.g. EFQM, ISO9000). The direct and indirect costs of moving towards such an accreditation should not be underestimated. The team would recommend that the College should in the first instance audit itself against the following key areas of the ESG:

- Policy and Procedures for Quality Assurance;
- Approval, monitoring and periodic review of programmes and awards;
- Assessment of students;
- Quality Assurance of teaching staff;
- Learning resources and student support;
- Information systems;
- Public Information.

A systems audit, followed by an action plan for full compliance with the ESG would provide the College with a strong foundation for deciding in due course on the most appropriate future internal quality system.

44.4 The Team would recommend (as part of the above College audit of its quality assurance mechanisms), the formalisation and publication of a number of key aspects of student management policies, including assessment and examination conventions, student progress regulations and academic misconduct regulations.



44.5 The Team had some evidence to suggest that student input to QA could sometimes be patchy. As part of the above quality systems audit, the Team would recommend a clearer mapping of the principal points and mechanisms for student input at different levels within the overall Quality Assurance system, so as to guarantee the effectiveness of the student voice.

44.6 A more systematic mapping of documentation about follow up actions taken in response to the recommendations of external programme review teams is also recommended.

44.7 The College has an ambitious internationalisation policy. The Team would recommend development of a business plan for this activity to include:

- analysis of capacity for delivery and identification of resources;
- a comprehensive project plan for development and delivery of the programme;
- an assessment of English language capacity across the College together with a proposed action plan for improvement;
- a bespoke market survey of the opportunities for attracting fee paying international students to the College (and to which academic areas);
- strategies for balancing incoming and outgoing Erasmus student numbers.

44.8 There is a perceived need to articulate staff development policies more clearly. This is in addition to addressing the particular need to increase the number of academic staff holding doctorates. Progress with this latter priority would also enhance the College's capacity to achieve its stated aim of increasing the number of publications by staff in peer reviewed journals.

44.9 The approach to applied research activity has been driven largely by external funding availability. The College should consider whether future strategic plans for research should focus more clearly on identified key priorities and areas of expertise. This might enable the College to build capacity and reputation in identified key areas and attract funding from a wider funding base. Similarly, project funding streams could be more clearly focused and clustered around those key priority activities and could drive up the overall quality of research activity. These changes would also provide the opportunity for academic staff to achieve a higher level of publications in peer reviewed journals, in accordance with a strategic priority for enhancing research impact.

44.10 The Team would recommend a review of the pricing and costing policy for externally commissioned research, so as to ensure that an appropriate level of College overheads is included in the contracted price.

44.11 That within the context of an already highly successful portfolio of activity, the College considers articulating its future regional policy more explicitly, with a view to achieving an increased prioritization of activity within its future regional engagement profile.

44.12 That the College's successful Regional strategy could usefully be made available to other HEIs as a case study of good practice.

## VIII. JUDGEMENT

### **Recommendation:**

That Alytus College is given a **positive** evaluation.

Grupės vadovas:  
Team leader:

Mr. Brian O'Connor

Grupės nariai:  
Team members:

Professor. Johann Schneider

Ms. Jolanta Bareikienė

Dr. Andrius Čapas

Mr. Algirdas Raudonius

Vertinimo sekretorius:  
Review secretary:

Mr. Paul Mitchell

## ANNEX 1

### ANDRIUS ČAPAS' COMMENT

According to information on the Alytus College official web site [<http://www.akolegija.lt/?id=show&nr=136>], members of Alytus College Council are:

- Antanas Levickas, Ministry of Education and Science, Head of Non-University Studies Division;
- Algirdas Vrubliauskas, Alytus District Municipality, Mayor;
- Gediminas Daukšys, UAB Vėtrija, director;
- prof.habil.dr. Aivaras Kareiva, Vilnius University, Dean of the Faculty of Chemistry;
- Rimantas Kareivis, UAB Metkonas, director;
- Danutė Remeikienė, Alytus College, director;
- Lina Kankevičienė, Alytus College, Dean of the Faculty of Information and Communication Technologies;
- Nerijus Cesiulis, Alytus College, member appointed as the representative of students.

Director of Alytus College is a member of Alytus College Council. This contradicts the Law on Higher Education and Research (Article 20, Clause 10), which states:

10. The Director of the Bureau shall attend the general meetings of members of the Bureau and meetings of the Council in an advisory capacity.

## **ANNEX 2**

### **ALYTUS COLLEGE RESPONSE TO REVIEW REPORT**

In response to the project of the Institutional Review Report we would like to notify some nonessential remarks:

- 1) Item 12 – the name of the faculty “Engineering and Information” should be replaced by “Engineering”;
- 2) Item 13 – when indicating the amount of the programmes, 120 ECTS should be replaced by 180 ECTS;
- 3) Item 27- in the sentence “The City (as landlord) has provided a new teaching building in the town centre to house the Faculty of Communication Technologies” the name of the faculty should be replaced by “Faculty of Information and Communication Technologies”.
- 4) Item 28 – “the rate of completion of first and second degree of higher education” should be deleted as in the report of MOSTA such rate is not indicated;
- 5) Items 31.3 and 44.3 – international standard EQFM should be replaced by EFQM.

Thank you for the remarks and recommendations.