# KAUNO KOLEGIJOS

# VEIKLOS VERTINIMO IŠVADOS

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# INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW REPORT OF

# KAUNAS COLLEGE OF HIGHER EDUCATION

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| Grupės vadovas:<br>Team leader: | Professor Jethro Newton |
| Grupės nariai:<br>Team members: | Dr Fredy Sidler |
| | Stasys Švagždys |
| | Simonas Valionis |
| | Søren Vang Rasmussen |
| | Merle Varik |
| Vertinimo sekretorius:<br>Review secretary: | Dr Tara Ryan |

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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      *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area*, 3rd edition (2009)

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 Institute

ISO      International Organization for Standardization

KK      Kauno Kolegija

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 KAUNAS COLLEGE OF HIGHER EDUCATION (referred to below as "KK" 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.

2. The College submitted a Self-Evaluation Report (SER) of 55 pages with 14 Annexes, and also further documentation as requested by the review team, covering the period 2007-2013. The Report of Lithuania's Research and Higher Education Monitoring and Analysis Centre (MOSTA) which considered KK's learning resources was also referred to in the review. References to all these sets of documentation are made in this report. The review team visited the College from 1st – 3rd April 2014 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 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 planning and 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 Jethro Newton*, Professor Emeritus University of Chester, former Dean of Academic Quality and Enhancement, UK; and members *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; *Stasys Švagždys*, Sales Manager, SIA UniCredit and visiting lecturer Vilnius University, and at Vilnius Business College, Lithuania; *Søren Vang Rasmussen*, former Rector University College Syddanmaark, Denmark; *Simonas Valionis* a student representative, Lithuania; *Merle Varik*, Vice-Rector for Development**,** Tartu Health Care College, Estonia; and review secretary *Dr Tara Ryan*, Educational Partnerships and Student Services Manager, Institute of Art, Design and Technology, Ireland.

5. The review team made a number of general and overarching observations:
    a) staff, students and stakeholders were open to discussion and dialogue with the review team
    b) there is a good atmosphere amongst staff (administrative and academic) and students
    c) staff are engaged with institutional issues, and are committed and motivated
    d) staff displayed awareness of institutional, regional and national challenges and a willingness to address them
    e) there are good relationships with social partners
    f) the SER was well structured and, together with the well-presented supporting documentation, provided the team with helpful information
    g) there were good opportunities for involvement of College staff in the development of the self-evaluation and for contributing to organisational learning.

However:

h) the SER did not fully do the College justice. It needed a sharper focus on, and more direct assessment of, the key challenges facing Kaunas College. Some of these important matters were highlighted in the document, some were not

i) Even so, the discussions in meetings enabled the review team to develop their understanding of the operation and functioning of the College and the achievements and strengths of Kaunas College.

## II. BACKGROUND INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSTITUTION

6.   Kaunas College is a state higher education institution which is focussed on 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, 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 Government of the Republic of Lithuania approved a new Statute of Kaunas College (Resolution No.1316). 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.   KK has 7,245 students across four faculties and two outreach campuses: Management and Economics (2,268); Technologies and Landscaping (2,283); Medicine (1,668) and the J. Vienožinskis Faculty of Arts (465); Kėdainai J Radvila Study Centre (293); and Tauragė Department (156).

9.   The College offers 49 first cycle professional bachelor degrees and the study of each of these programmes lead 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.  In total, more than 20,000 persons have graduated from the College since 2005.

11.  There is a total of 729 staff employed at KK, with a full time equivalent (FTE) of 546. 150 FTEs are administrative and support roles and 396 are academic posts.

12.  The period reviewed in the self-evaluation covered 2007 to 2013.

13.  KK's vision as articulated in Strategy 2012-2020 is to *be a modern, socially responsible, business-oriented and internationally recognized higher education institution upholding the national culture and traditions*.

14.  The stated mission is *to provide high-quality higher education focused on practical activities and the needs of the learners and the society, and also promote applied research and art activities*.

## III. STRATEGIC PLANNING & MANAGEMENT

**Strengths**

1. There is a willingness in KK for strategic thinking.
2. The College is making progress in developing and refining associated planning and monitoring processes, including at department and unit level.
3. Arrangements for resource allocation and the distribution of the budget work well and are understood.
4. The organisational structures and arrangements introduced in recent times appear to be working well and are understood by the staff of the College. Decision-making processes are well understood by the staff. There are good links between faculties/departments and the central administration and senior management, and the working arrangements between central administration units are good.
5. There is active and engaged development work in the area of quality management systems and Quality Assurance (QA) processes for academic and administrative areas. Supporting guidance and templates are aligned appropriately to the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance of Higher Education* (ESG)

**Areas for Development**

a) Realities identified, such as demographic decline and financial stability, may require the College leadership to be prepared to choose between priorities in the future, and to make hard decisions in the context of the 2020 Strategic Plan. KK management will need to demonstrate a capability and willingness to do this.
b) In taking forward the College's strategic planning and quality management systems, the institutional information system will need to be robust and effective; early progress with improvements in this is required.
c) The College's Quality Manual, and the principles upon which it is based, needs to integrate the key aspects of the annexes to the main body of the text so that the procedures and steps to be followed by users of the quality system are set out clearly and are more readily accessible.
d) The Quality Manual should also include a section describing appropriate procedures and regulatory requirements for the development of Joint Study Programmes.
e) Improvement is needed in ensuring that the response to issues raised in student surveys should be more systematic and that mechanisms should be put in place to ensure that actions taken at various levels are made clear to students and are well publicised.

### Strategic Planning & Risk Analysis

15. The Strategy 2013-2020 (hereinafter referred to as SP 2020) reflects the College's mission and is well-positioned within national Lithuanian and European priorities for the preparation of graduates with technical and professional skills. The plan is fit for purpose and is accessible to all staff and students on the College intranet. As will be referred to in this report, it includes objectives, targets, financial resources required to implement the strategy. An extended summary of the plan is also available on the public website, in both Lithuanian and in English.

16. There was evidence that there is a willingness for strategic thinking and that KK's involvement in the EU project on strategic planning has been beneficial to the whole institutional community in the development of the current plan.

17. Stakeholders were familiar with the content of SP 2020 and it was evident that the planning process was open and inclusive. Staff and students were directly involved in its development, which was an iterative process involving various campus community

meetings leading to subsequent revisions by the working team until final approval of the plan was granted by the College Council.

18. SP 2020 includes a detailed schedule of performance indicators which are appropriately balanced between qualitative and quantitative indicators. For example, an objective around programme provision, will be viewed as achieved where the institution has deepened its pedagogical approach to learning outcomes and assessment in its academic programmes; and this will be measured or assessed in a programme review process. This is complemented by another objective to increase programme provision by a specific number. The document identifies overarching objectives subsequently breaking them down into smaller targets which have expected outcomes measurable from both a quantitative and qualitative perspectives.

19. The College is making progress in developing and refining associated planning and monitoring processes, including at department and unit level. They are modelled around a comprehensive self-assessment undertaken by all staff annually. Each staff member completes a self-assessment (templates of which were viewed by the panel) and this relates to the overall College strategy in a hierarchal model – first to department plans, then to faculty plans and finally to the College strategy. Annual reviews take place, and on-going monitoring occurs during both departmental and individual meetings. Outputs are captured in the Director's annual report. (See paragraph 29 for comments relating to self-assessment links to the ESG and Quality Manual.)

20. The Strategic Plan 2020 also reflects the role of the College as a higher education institution in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) and identifies the European Research Area as relevant to its activities (this will be addressed further in paragraphs 86-87, Section V). It is structured around three key components; a situational analysis, an evaluation of the EHEA policy infrastructure and a consideration of national and regional strategic documents. It includes a SWOT analysis which informs the actions proposed, and the resources required to implement the targets have been established. Nevertheless SP 2020 does not include a formal risk analysis. The College accurately identified key challenges such as uncertain regulatory context, demographic change and financial issues. SP 2020 (p.78) specifically projects a reduction in State funding, however there is no associated risk management plan. This is something which the College will wish to put in place.

21. The College's senior managers, the governing Council, and academic and administrative staff are aware of the future challenges to be faced by Kaunas College in matters such as demographic decline and financial stability. In the view of the review team, these realities may require the College to be prepared to choose between priorities going forward, and to make hard decisions in the context of the 2020 Strategic Plan.

22. A willingness to introduce organisational change and to manage and explain changes was evidenced in the recent restructuring and also in the discontinuation of academic programmes (further discussed in Section IV). In light of such challenges the College will need to continue to be willing to assess for change and take necessary decisions. A formal risk management model will be of assistance in this.

### Management and Governance

23. The governance model of the College is established in Statute, and, as indicated in paragraph 7, there is a College Council, an Academic Council and a Director. External

stakeholders are represented on the two Councils as are students. There is also a system of study programme committees on which there is both external representation and student representation, ensuring that decision-making is inclusive and cognisant of the employer and national context.

24. Decision-making processes are well understood by the staff. There are good links between faculties/departments and the central administration and senior management, and the working arrangements between central administration units are good. It is evident that a strong team ethos exists and that decisions are made collegially.

25. In 2013 a significant restructuring was conducted whereby the number of faculties was reduced and there was a consolidation of resources. These organisational structures and arrangements appear to be working well and are understood by the staff of the College.

26. There is a system of fortnightly directorate meetings which integrates with the staff self-assessment process and ultimately with the Director's annual report. This is supplemented by a system of data collection. The review panel noted the College's current work on the development of a new information system to better collate, store and make accessible the data being retained. This is an important exercise and should assist in the more effective use of information. One monitoring mechanism of particular note is the use made of quantitative indicators for annual monitoring purposes as illustrated in the colour-coded table (review panel examined it during the visit) illustrating the status of programmes with regard to student numbers; mobility statistics; research production; graduate numbers and indicating by colour changes year on year. This is a good tool in which a significant amount of information is captured in an easy to read summary, and which enables one to perceive certain indicators of progress quickly.

## Quality and Quality Management

27. The review panel found good evidence of very active and engaged development work, over time, in the area of quality management systems and Quality Assurance (QA) processes for academic and administrative areas.

28. The systems recognise the wider European dimension of Higher Education (HE), and the KK self-assessment cycle and supporting guidance and templates are aligned appropriately to the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance of Higher Education* (*ESG*). The suite of study programmes available are publically listed online with details of their accreditation dates, their learning outcomes and an indication of assessment models, and the panel is confident that they are appropriately aligned to the National Qualifications Framework (NQF). This will be discussed further in paragraph 49, in Section IV.

29. The review team paid close attention to the College's Quality Manual, and to the principles upon which it is based. Work should be done to integrate the key aspects of the annexes to the manual into the main section so that the procedures and steps to be followed by users of the quality system are set out clearly. Perhaps this work can be undertaken in 2015 when the revised *ESG* is published. At that time it may be useful to group specific procedures under the seven elements of internal quality assurance, part one of the *ESG* (or whatever the 2015 equivalent may be), making the link with the *ESG* more visible. Similarly the self-assessment templates may benefit from some light touch, but explicit referencing to either the College Quality Manual or the *ESG* elements of internal quality assurance.

30. The review team also believes that it will be of benefit to the College if the Quality Manual includes a section describing appropriate procedures and regulatory requirements for the

development of Joint Study Programmes, which have unique regulatory contexts often involving the delegation of elements of authority (or quality assurance) to another institution. This is further discussed in paragraphs 55-58 in Section IV.

31. In testing the operation of the College's quality system and self-assessment cycle, the team noted the importance of the quantitative indicators that are contained in the annex to the Director's annual quality report for evaluating performance and quality outcomes at faculty, department and study programme levels. This document is a helpful tool in monitoring progress and sharing information amongst the management team.

32. In the on-going development of College's strategic planning and quality management systems, the institutional information system will need to be robust and effective ensuring the easy collation of and access to information, such as that referred to in the above paragraph. The review team notes that work is being done in this area and encourages KK to make early progress with this.

### Student Involvement

33. The team also noted the formal and informal opportunities for student representation and involvement in quality processes. Students were aware of their roles and participated fully in the various forums. Student surveys are periodically conducts as are various focus groups. The mixed methods for collecting feedback should add to the richness of the information received. However, the review team agrees with the College's own assessment that improvement is needed in ensuring that the response to issues raised in student surveys should be more systematic and that mechanisms should be put in place to ensure that actions taken at various levels are made clear to students and are well publicised.

34. KK allocates a portion of its funding to student scholarships as described in the SER paragraphs 87 & 89 and Appendix 5. State funding is also received to support students with disabilities which is disbursed on a monthly basis according to need. In light of drop-out rates (discussed in paragraphs 65-68, Section IV) the College may wish to consider the degree to which financial hardship is affecting students and whether any measures can be put in place to assist them.

### Staff Development and Appraisal

35. Staff and College-wide training and development needs are identified during the self-assessment cycle in which all staff (academic and support) participate. In line with the strategic objectives of KK, funding is provided to assist staff in acquiring higher qualifications; attending professional development programmes; developing their understanding and skills regarding teaching and learning issues; attending conferences; and publishing articles, etc.. The panel was satisfied that appropriate arrangements are in place for human resources planning. However the balance between full-time and part-time staff varied between areas reflecting the fields of study, thus care needs to be taken in maintain an overarching College ethos and professional approach where there is a high dependency on part-time staff who may not have the same opportunities as full-time staff to be involved in KK decision-making, strategic planning, quality assurance, professional development opportunities and other important institutional matters.

36. The recent development of the Competency Development Centre is a good initiative of the College and should assist in integrating strategic planning, quality assurance processes, and in ensuring that staff are supported in improving their qualifications. The review panel notes the College's vision and proactivity in establishing this Centre and is confident that it

will be useful in supporting the organisational change and developments currently being pursued. The collaboration with the Human Resources Department and the consideration of matters identified in the self-assessment process is essential in this process; and the review panel is confident that KK is developing this Centre and its work to good effect.

### Financial Management & Resources

37. Arrangements within KK for resource allocation and the distribution of the budget work well and are understood. Money is budgeted for a single year, and each faculty has its own budget based on its student numbers. A portion of the student related income is allocated to the central College budget, where a centralised fund is used for special purposes according to strategic needs.

38. The Finance Office issues monthly financial reports indicating the current spend and these are formally reviewed at Departmental meetings, thus ensuring a process of on-going monitoring.

39. The review panel noted the current process of infrastructural improvements. A new building is due for completion later in 2014 which will house the library and facilitate the co-location of various student support offices.

40. These improvements, funded through EU and national funds, should assist in improved organisational effectiveness, if the current process of streamlining of organisational units and focussing on desired strategic outcomes is maintained. The new equipment, IT systems, laboratories should help improve the student experience.

41. The review panel noted the challenge identified by the College that government funding is reducing (as discussed in paragraph 20), and supports the College's view, expressed the SER paragraph 90, that alternative sources of funding should be sought.

### Learning Resources

42. The review panel considered the report of the Research and Studies Monitoring and Analysis Centre (MOSTA) June 2013, *Findings Regarding the Compliance of KK Learning Resources with the Minimum Quality Requirements for the Infrastructure and Organisation of Higher Education Studies*. KK was given a positive evaluation. The panel also had the opportunity to view some of the institution's laboratories and classrooms, and a library during the visit. These were of a standard or type common to many European HEIs.

### Code of Ethics

43. The review panel *confirmed* that a Code of Ethics is in place. A single document provides a framework for both students and staff and is available to all on the intranet. During meetings staff and students indicated an awareness of the document and an appreciation of its importance.

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

## IV. ACADEMIC STUDIES AND LIFE-LONG LEARNING

**Strengths**

1. The College has put in place a process for the modernisation of academic programmes, taking account of external (national and European) frameworks and the principles of the Bologna process, including a learning outcomes approach.
2. Students stated that the College is student-oriented and students conveyed a positive view of the teaching staff and of student involvement in College processes.
3. There is an attractive range of relevant vocational and professionally-orientated programmes which are valued by external stakeholders and by graduates and students themselves. Graduates value the practical and work-related aspect of study programmes.
4. There is external engagement with partners (both cooperation and involvement) for the development and review of curricula and of study programmes.
5. There is a preparedness to withdraw, suspend, or close down programmes that are no longer viable.
6. Opportunities for international mobility through the Erasmus programme are well-publicised and well understood and the take-up is good.
7. The College is engaging with the Lifelong Learning agenda and is taking practical steps to make progress in this area, through the provision of non-formal learning programmes and through making available opportunities for the recognition of prior learning.
8. The review team also formed the view that central and local support for student employability is good, and this includes careers advice and provision of practical placement opportunities.

**Areas for Development**

a) Steps should be taken to ensure that all relevant staff groups are included in opportunities to enhance language capabilities provided by the College's Competence Development Centre, e.g. research active staff must develop their skills in languages such as English.
b) To assist the process of developing student-centred learning and a new learning and teaching paradigm, the role and functions of the Competence Development Centre should be extended to include the enhancement of learning and teaching and to broaden the institutional understanding of the various dimensions of student-centred learning.
c) Consideration should be given to the establishment one central student support services centre which has responsibility, on a 'one stop shop' basis, for all aspects of central student support, including both learning skills and student academic development, and personal welfare and pastoral support and guidance.
d) Additional initiatives to address student-drop out should be considered. They may include the introduction of a year-long approach to student induction in the first year of study; forming closer links with local schools to assist them in assessing these matters; providing prospective students with more information at pre-entry level on the academic standards that are required for the successful completion of each study programme.
e) The Study Area Committees may advise on the potential opportunities for some rationalisation of the number and types of study programmes in order to have less but more generalized study programmes.
f) The review team encourages the College to continue to make further progress with both staff and student inward and outward mobility in the European context.
g) In reviewing the College's aspirations and plans to develop Joint Study Programmes, the team advises that procedures should be put in place to ensure that risk assessment and due diligence analyses are undertaken at an early stage for all international agreements.
h) When constructing Diploma Supplements the opportunity should be taken by the College to include information on the recognition of qualifications in the respective jurisdictions.

**Programmes, Institutional Strategy and the National Environment**

44. Kaunas College has an attractive range of relevant vocational and professionally-orientated programmes which are valued by external stakeholders and by graduates and students themselves. Graduates value the practical and work-related aspect of study programmes and there is significant external engagement with social partners (cooperation and involvement) for the development and review of the curriculum and of study programmes. The positive climate of employer and local industry/business engagement with the College is acknowledged by the review panel.

45. As indicated in paragraph 15, the programmes reflect well both Lithuanian national priorities – "*Well-qualified human resources are crucial to creating higher value added, therefore measures should be taken to retain skilled persons through promoting social dialogue, improving the efficiency of the education system and its conformity to market demands. In this regard, an effective system of qualifications and guaranteed opportunities for all age groups to raise their competences under lifelong learning programmes is important*"[1] and also those of the wider European Higher Education Area (EHEA). Regional partners explained that their specialist training needs were being met by the College and that they viewed their access to KK personnel and resources to be both good and effective. Local stakeholders were also very committed to KK, understanding it to be a very significant contributor to the sustainability of the region and localities in which it operates campuses or centres.

46. Both senior management and heads of faculty and department are cognisant of the employment environment and of local institutional challenges and there is a preparedness to withdraw, suspend, or close down programmes that are no longer viable. In SP 2020 a commitment to a focus on studies in the Biomedical Sciences and in the Technological Sciences is articulated and this focus was presented across a range of meetings with KK staff.

47. The review team noted the proposal to establish Study Area Committees. This may be a useful mechanism to achieve a more holistic approach to reviewing and monitoring programmes which are inter-related. The team considers that one task which these bodies could undertake is to advise on the potential opportunities for some rationalisation of the number and types of study programmes. This would ensure that each study programme covers general competences in the study field, but also enables specialisation through the selection of optional and elective modules, as it is required at level 6 (Bachelor's degree) by the LQF[2], "*[T]he qualification is intended for complex activities distinguished by a variety of tasks and their content. Different means and methods are employed when dealing with problems in various areas of professional activities. Therefore, the performance of activities requires the application of broad theoretical knowledge…*" This emphasizes that immediate employability is not the only goal on graduation, but that a level 6 qualification provides a basis for lifelong employability.

**Bologna: Qualifications Frameworks, Standards, Learning Outcomes**

48. As a higher education institution (HEI) KK offers first cycle study programmes as comprehended by European and Lithuanian Higher Education System. The professional

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[1] *Lithuania National Reform Programme*, 2012, p.9.

[2] Lithunian Qualifications Framework (English version): Available online: http://www.kpmpc.lt/LTKS_EKS/LTQF_official_translation.pdf

bachelor offered corresponds with level 6 of ISCED Classification (2011) and also with level 6 of European and Lithuanian Qualifications Frameworks as stated in paragraph 9 and referred to in paragraph 47. In its on-going study programme monitoring, KK should ensure that all its study programmes are at and remain at level 6, i.e. that the defined learning outcomes of each study programme and its respective modules align to the generic competences defined by level 6 of the LQF.

49. Over the past decade KK has put in place a process for the modernisation of academic programmes, taking account of the external (national and European) frameworks and the principles of the Bologna process, including a learning outcomes approach. As indicated in paragraph 28, the College has the full suite of its programmes on its website in a programme catalogue, providing information on both objectives and programme learning outcomes. This catalogue would benefit from the inclusion of the NQF level of the programme, as well as a clearer indication of how the credits are distributed, by year and unit. The description of credit in small units, e.g. 3, 2, etc. reduces the overall sense of what a student will study in a 60 ECT year.

50. In discussions with the panel, the College indicated that the allocation of workload is an area of programme development and review which remains a challenge. The panel acknowledges that this is not dissimilar to experiences in other countries implementing Bologna reform. This may be an area on which the Competency Development Centre may wish to provide training. Issues to consider include volume of learning outcomes and volume of assessment mapped to those learning outcomes; duplication of assessment of learning outcomes; and balance between contact hours and reasonable periods of independent study. The panel acknowledges the challenge to avoid the development of false or mechanistic understandings of modernisation tools, which would undermine the ultimate objectives of higher education such as "the pursuit of deep learning"[3]. It is acknowledged that the longitudinal study being conducted in the Management Faculty will assist in this process and is a worthwhile exercise.

**Lifelong Learning**

51. The review panel confirmed that the College is engaging with the Lifelong Learning agenda and is taking practical steps to make progress in this area, through the provision of non-formal learning programmes and through making available opportunities for the recognition of prior learning. It is noteworthy that, in the absence of regulatory requirements for accreditation of short, part-time programmes, a process of internal programme approval is being undertaken. The proactive approach of the College reflects an understanding both of lifelong learning, and student and employer needs regarding the certification of learning.

52. The scale of non-formal programme provision along with training programmes for social partners and community groups, or even individual public lectures or courses is significant and evidences a commitment to the communities in which the College is based, as discussed in Section VI.

53. The ability to study programmes in a variety modes - full-time, part-time, and through personalised study plans - which is offered by KK is also a useful approach; it helps to

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[3] Karjalainen, A., Alha, K. and Jutila, S. (2006). *Give me Time to Think Determining Student Workload in Higher Education* (Oulu, University of Oulu, Teaching Development Unit). Available online [http://www.oulu.fi/w5w/tyokalut/GET2.pdf].

make higher education accessible to many different cohorts of learners. In the College's consideration of future developments in these approaches, the distinctive support needs of the diverse groups should be considered and provided for.

### Joint Programmes

54.    The Lithuanian Ministry of Education and Science in its *Action Plan 2013-16* identifies the development of Joint Programmes 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.    In reviewing the College's aspirations and plans to develop Joint Study Programmes, the team advises that procedures should be put in place to ensure that risk assessment and due diligence analyses are undertaken at an early stage for all international agreements[4]. This is particularly critical where a partner is in another country and subject to different regulations. In addition the recognition of joint qualifications by third party countries is not always guaranteed so this should also be considered when establishing and approving such a programme.

56.    Further, having reviewed existing international agreements, the review team advises that when constructing Diploma Supplements the opportunity should be taken by the College to include the recognition of qualifications in the respective jurisdictions.

57.    Generally in the case of joint programmes and joint awards, the institutions involved should reach a shared understanding of their individual responsibilities in relation to maintaining oversight of the academic standards of those components of the programme for which they are responsible: e.g. entry criteria, programme content, learning outcomes and assessment arrangements, award classification criteria, legal capacity, certification and recognition of awards, as well as bespoke models of on-going monitoring, periodic review and reaccreditation processes. The academic requirements of each of the awarding institutions involved should be established to ensure standards are attained and continue to be attained over time. These arrangements should be recorded in the written agreements. KK may wish to take the opportunity to revise its current agreements before its next programme accreditation period to reflect a more robust understanding of the dimensions and challenges of a joint degree.

58.    In light of any work undertaken on developing a deeper understanding of the intricacies of joint programmes and joint degrees, the College may wish to consider if objective 1.3.2 proposing the development of various joint programmes in SP 2020 is fully realisable.

### Enhancing Student-centred learning

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[4] Useful documents to consult include: *Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications Concerning Higher education in the European region, Lisbon (1997); the Committee of the Convention on the recognition of qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region, Recommendation the Recognition of Joint Degrees, Strasbourg (2004); the 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); Joint degrees: legal framework in Member States, EACEA (2013)* http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/erasmus_mundus/beneficiaries/documents/action1/jointdegreeprogrammes_may2013.pdf; *Guidelines for Good Practice for Awarding Joint Degrees, European Consortium for Accreditation in higher education (2012); Bridge Handbook: Joint Programmes and Recognition of Joint Degrees, Bridge Project (2012). 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).

59. Students stated that the College is student-oriented and they conveyed a positive view of the teaching staff and of student involvement in College processes. In discussing student-centred learning, the students were of the view that this was the key orientation of academic staff, citing encouragement received to engage in independent learning. Students stated that the lecturer role is to facilitate learning. They also indicated that staff members were readily available for consultation in person or by email and that it was easy to access academic advice or support.

60. During discussions with various staff groupings the review team noted the examples provided of the College's efforts to secure a transition towards student-centred learning and a new learning and teaching paradigm. The team believes that to assist this process, the role and functions of the Competence Development Centre should be extended to include the enhancement of learning and teaching and to broaden the institutional understanding of the various dimensions of student-centred learning[5].

### Student Support & Guidance

61. The review team paid close attention to the various ways in which different organisational units provide services and support for students. Matters such as careers advice, learning skills development, personal welfare, student drop-out, and students with special needs, attracted the team's attention. In light of student needs consideration should be given to the establishment of one central student support services centre which has responsibility, on a 'one stop shop' basis, for all aspects of central student support, including both learning skills and student academic development, and personal welfare and pastoral support and guidance. This may bring the recent establishment of a Student Affairs unit to its next stage of development, and align with plans already in place to co-locate certain student support functions in the new library building being constructed.

62. On a number of occasions during meetings staff noted increasing needs from students for psychological support. In noting this, the review panel suggests that KK consider whether health and/or counselling services might be provided by the College, or a system of referral to such public services where available. Alternatively, or in addition, the provision of written or online information about supports available for various life situations may assist students in knowing where or how to access appropriate help[6].

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[5] A useful text to consult is Sursock, A. & Smidt, H. (2010). *Trends 2010: A Decade of Change in European Higher Education*. Brussels: European University Association.  In particular, p.31 may offer a sense of the breadth of student-centred learning.
"There is a shift in focus from the teacher and what is taught, to the learner and what is learned.
A student-centred approach to learning involves a different relationship between teacher and learner, whereby the teacher becomes a facilitator, and where the responsibility for learning is shared, and the learning is 'negotiated'.
The process approaches learners as individuals – taking account of their particular backgrounds, experiences, perceptual frameworks, learning style and needs.
The learners 'construct' their own meaning by pro-active learning, discovery and reflection. The teacher builds critical thinking as part of the learning process.
There is often a stress on inter-disciplinarity, with the goal of attaining higher level, generic skills and knowledge.
The learner is involved in determining what is learned.
Student-centred learning is focused on outcomes, rather than inputs.
The learning process is not just or primarily about transfer and restitution of knowledge, but about deeper understanding and critical thinking (e.g. an understanding of the parameters and the provisional nature of knowledge).
Assessment is generally formative, and feedback continuous.
A student-centred approach makes it flexible and easier to develop blended teaching models and to recognise prior learning, thus benefiting both traditional and non-traditional learners and providing the flexibility to learn throughout life.
While student-centred learning represents a significant shift in focus, it is not absolute. Student-centred and teacher-centred approaches are not necessarily mutually exclusive approaches – most learning takes place somewhere along this continuum." (p.31)
[6] See for example http://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/help-information/podcasts/

63. In considering careers support, the review team also formed the view that central and local support for student employability is good. There is good provision of careers advice and provision of practical placement opportunities on all programmes. The panel noted that in the recent restructuring the provision of careers support to students was strengthened through the allocation of additional resources.

64. Paragraph 34 notes financial support is available to students.

**Drop-out**

65. The team recognises the actions being taken to address the high student drop-out rate and the issue of student workload (as mentioned in paragraph 50) and believes that further initiatives should be considered. This might include the introduction of a year-long approach to student induction in the first year of study, with a strong focus on student development and student engagement and 'learning to learn' skills work. Indeed when the College is considering possible online supports in the context of paragraph 62, KK may also wish to examine the many international online resources to support student learning that the College could also promote or utilise in its response to student difficulties.

66. The peer mentoring initiative that KK has introduced for its international student population is a good development. Buddy systems are recognised to give support and enhance student engagement. Perhaps this is also an initiative that the College may wish to expand amongst its first year students in particular, initially targeting cohorts with high drop-out rates. It would also benefit those students offering support to their peers.

67. In its reflections on the high drop-out rate present in some programmes the College might also wish to consider how it might form closer links with local schools to assist them in assessing this matter. Providing information to, and learning from, particular high schools from which many learners progress to KK may assist the College in having a better understanding of the challenges students face on enrolment on certain academic programmes.

68. The panel also recommends that further consideration be given to providing prospective students with clear information at pre-entry level on the academic standards required for the successful completion of each study programme. In the approval of a programme (both internally and externally through an accreditation process) three core criteria are typically considered carefully: is there clarity regarding pre-requisite learning required (entry requirements) to study a programme; is there a clear articulation of the programme standard (learning outcomes/framework alignment/assessment); and is there clarity on the learning environment and programme structure in and through which the learning will take place (teaching/equipment/mode of learning, etc.). Fairness demands that students know what will be expected of them when they enrol on a particular programme, and that being offered a place is an indication that they have a reasonable opportunity to complete the programme. The College may wish to consider whether certain entry standards are appropriate for the intended programme outcomes and NQF standard of certain programmes.

**International Engagement**

69. In discussions with students and staff it was evident that opportunities for international mobility through the Erasmus programme are well-publicised and well understood, and the take-up is good. Students spoke positively of experiences on Erasmus work placements

and how such placements have benefitted them personally and in their careers. Participating in 156 distinct Erasmus partnerships, over 1000 students participated in outgoing Erasmus placements over the five year period of the evaluation, and KK welcomed over 400 incoming students. Generally the numbers increased over the period, with significant growth in incoming numbers reflecting institutional efforts to increase the balance between outgoing and incoming students.

70. Staff also spoke of professional development opportunities which involved them travelling abroad to participate in training or conferences or workshops, and that on return there is a sharing of experience and/or an updating of practices. The numbers over the period 2008-2013 grew slowly, but steadily, particularly with regard to incoming staff visits 377 outgoing to 238 incoming over the whole period.

71. The review team wishes to encourage the College to make further progress with both staff and student inward and outward mobility in the European context. The positive take-up of Erasmus opportunities could be further enhanced. There is also greater scope to develop links with similar institutions abroad.

72. During the visit, the panel observed that provision is being made by the College's Competence Development Centre to enhance the language capability of staff. This is an important activity, but steps should be taken to ensure that all relevant staff groups are included in this. For example, if progress is to be made in the internationalisation of applied research, then research active staff must develop their skills in languages such as English.

**Stakeholder Involvement: Cooperation with Academic, Social and Business Partners**

73. The College has a system of programme committees for each study programme and representatives from social and business partners sit on these. The stakeholders indicated satisfaction with the degree to which they are consulted on programme development and advised that they can contribute to on-going monitoring and review of programmes. Certain KK study programme coordinators have also surveyed employers on their views of a particular programme. Examples were cited of changes made to programmes arising from stakeholder feedback received in various ways.

74. The review panel also noted the engagement of stakeholders on assessment panels for final year projects, which is a positive feature.

75. As noted above a strength of KK is the technical practical skills-based programmes it offers. A key element of this is the mandatory work placement element of all programmes and the number of credits assigned to this. This is enabled through the commitment and interest of local stakeholders in offering work placement positions to students. The review panel noted that many stakeholders are eager to employ KK graduates. A commentary on graduate surveys is made in section VI, paragraphs 105-108.

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

## V. RESEARCH AND/OR ART ACTIVITIES

**Strengths**

1. KK has determination to grow capacity and to extend activities in the area of applied research.
2. Though the volume of activity in applied research projects and partnerships, regionally and internationally is modest, attention is being focused on areas of College strength and on regional and national needs.
3. Provision is made to assist staff in gaining higher academic qualifications and exposure to applied research opportunities and advanced scholarship.

**Areas for Development**

a) A stricter definition of 'applied research' should be applied making a clear distinction between what is applied research on the one hand, and what is lifelong learning or Continuous Professional Development (CPD) activity on the other hand.
b) As Kaunas College seeks to develop capacity in applied research, consultancy, and knowledge transfer activity, for income generation purposes, the review team advises the College that it will also need to underpin this by drawing upon external fundamental research ensuring that teaching is informed by research and advanced scholarship in line with the NQF level 6, Bachelor's degree descriptor.
c) Balance also needs to be achieved between teaching and applied research and the College should not lose sight of its strengths as a teaching institution.
d) A dedicated research policy is required for KK, which will set clear priorities both for external contract work and business engagement purposes and also for the development of the applied research capacity of the College.
e) As resources allow, the College might wish to consider the merits of creating a 'seed fund' to stimulate growth and sustainability in selected areas of strength in applied research.
f) There is a need for more international partnerships in the context of the ERA, but if such aspirations are to be realised there is a need for language training for researchers.

### Developing 'Applied Research'

76. During meetings with various staff cohorts, KK evidenced a determination to grow capacity and to extend activities in the area of applied research. This determination is underpinned in goals set in the Strategic Plan. The review panel supports the College in this strategy. It is particularly important if national legislation changes and KK is enabled to provide NQF level 7, Master degree programmes.

77. The review team considered the information provided on an array of activities such as courses and seminars and small-scale projects that have been placed under the umbrella category of 'applied research'. However, the team advises that a stricter definition should be applied and that a clear distinction should be made between what is applied research on the one hand, and what is lifelong learning or CPD activity on the other hand. Prior to addressing the stated goal of developing methodology for the assessment of applied research, such clear definitions must be in place to make the exercise effective and relevant according to international understandings and benchmarks. A more transparent measurement of applied research outputs will be aided by this definition.

78. Provision is made by the College to assist staff in gaining higher academic qualifications and gaining exposure to applied research opportunities and advanced scholarship. This is an important development activity and is currently addressed through the individual self-assessment process, with support being granted at department and faculty level. The panel

notes the work being proposed under the Strategic Plan to establish a "staff professional development system" and encourages the College to continue with this ensuring that staff are proactively encouraged to pursue education and development opportunities aligned to the College's strategy.

79. As already cited in paragraph 47, the descriptor for a level 6 qualification on the LQF states *"the performance of activities requires the application of broad theoretical knowledge based on the results of new fundamental and applied research or necessary for the introduction of various innovations"*. As Kaunas College seeks to develop capacity in applied research, consultancy, and knowledge transfer activity, for income generation purposes, the review team advises the College that it will also need to underpin this by drawing upon external fundamental research and through links with universities. This will help to ensure that teaching is informed by research and advanced scholarship.

### Mission-Appropriate Research

80. Though the volume of activity in applied research projects and partnerships, regionally and internationally is modest, attention is being focused on areas of College strength (biomedical and technological studies) and on regional and national needs, which is a prudent and potentially effective approach.

81. Whilst encouraging KK in its research development work, the team believes that a balance needs to be achieved between teaching and applied research and advises the College not lose sight of its strengths as a teaching institution. These strengths were well articulated by students, and in the feedback from stakeholders.

82. Through discussion with the College and its external partners, and through consideration of all of the documentation made available, the review team recommends that a formal research policy is required. This policy should set clear priorities both for external contract work and business engagement purposes and also for the development of the applied research capacity of the College.

83. The team also advises that, as resources allow, the College might wish to consider the merits of creating a 'seed fund' to stimulate growth and sustainability in the selected areas of strength in applied research. This may complement the strategy of identifying certain fields of study for focus and development.

### International Links and Mobility

84. As noted in paragraph 80, research activity at KK is limited, not least because of the inability of the College to access national funding under current legislation. Notwithstanding this, the College has participated in a number of international research projects of varying scales, for example with Norway, Latvia, China (Taiwan), Poland, Afghanistan, Bulgaria, Belarus, the Netherlands, and the UK. The panel notes that of the 175 international partners cited, 156 are Erasmus partners (p.5 SER). In the development of the research policy recommended in paragraph 82, KK may wish to consider whether the College wishes to target and prioritise particular regions and/or fields of study for research collaborations. This is not currently identified in objective 2.2 of SP 2020. Additionally the College may wish to consider a systematic plan of inviting various international experts to share perspectives with KK staff and students.

85. There is a modest attendance at international conferences, and whilst the College does support this activity, and also the subsequent dissemination of good practices learnt, or information gained, there is less staff engagement in peer-reviewed research and in the

sharing of findings in peer-reviewed publications (33 peer-reviewed publications between 2008 and 2013, SER, annex 10). This may also be an area that KK wishes to consider when drafting a formal research policy.

86. The College referenced the European Research Area (ERA) in the creation of its Strategic Plan. The review panel notes the objectives of the ERA under Europe 2020 as the following:

- increased effectiveness of national research systems
- optimal levels of transnational co-operation and competition
- an open labour market for researchers by improving researcher mobility, training and careers as well as an open and merit-based recruitment
- gender equality and gender mainstreaming in research
- optimal circulation and transfer of scientific knowledge including via digital ERA (EU, 2012)[7].

87. While there is a reasonable awareness of the requirements of the ERA, there is a need for more international partnerships as identified in the SP 2020. However, if such aspirations are to be realised there is a need for language training for researchers. Joint research programmes may assist the College in growing its research capacity and in deepening staff scholarship.

### Regional Impact

88. A small number of KK staff members, according to their relevant artistic or design field, exhibit their work on a regular basis primarily in national, but also in international locations.

89. The main locus for the promotion of art and culture is the J. Vienožinskis Faculty of Arts which opens various student exhibitions to the public, as well as hosting exhibitions of the work of local and foreign artists. Students spoke positively of exhibiting work and visiting the exhibits of fellow students. A further venture of the faculty is the "Academy of Arts *Menukas*", creativity activities for pre-school children and their parents. This is provided free to charge to socially disadvantaged groups (SER, annex 12, p.28).

90. A very significant amount of formal and informal training and development activities are undertaken by the College across the regions served by KK. As indicated above, and more comprehensively in Section VI, the activities and interventions of the College are welcomed and valued by local businesses and communities.

**Judgement on the area: Research and Art Activities is given a positive evaluation.**

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[7] http://ec.europa.eu/research/era/pdf/era-communication/joint-statement-17072012_en.pdf

## VI. IMPACT ON REGIONAL AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

**Strengths**

1. The College is making a positive impact at regional level, providing relevant programmes and contributing to the sustainability and development of regions.
2. The regional centres are valued by social partners, as is the provision of CPD and advanced training and professional updating opportunities.
3. There is strong representation and involvement of prominent external stakeholders and social partners in College governance structures and in curriculum matters, and the working relationships with senior managers of KK are effective.
4. The review team heard from employers that Kaunas College's ability to respond to their needs was a good example of why they valued the college higher education.
5. The system of tripartite agreements for supporting student placements represents good practice and provides good evidence of the emphasis place on employability of KK graduates.
6. The College's staff participate in and contribute in various ways to community and voluntary service activities.

**Areas for Development**

a) The College should make early progress in implementing the recommendations of the 2005 institutional review regarding the distribution and analysis of centrally administered graduate and employer surveys.

### Mission & Strategic Plan

91. In the establishment of its measures for regional impact the College consulted a number of national and international documents including *Kaunas Region Development Plan until 2013*, *Kaunas Region Development Plan until 2020*, *Plan of Strategic Development of Kėdainiai Region until 2015*, *Plan of Strategic development of Tauragė Region for 2008– 2013*, *Druskininkai Municipality Strategic Development Plan 2004–2013*, *United Nations European Economic Commission of Sustainable Development Educational Strategy up to 2015*, *National Strategy for Sustainable Development up to 2020* and *National Educational Programme of Sustainable Development for 2003–2012*. These documents provide a relevant context for the creation of appropriate measures.

92. The College collects a range of data by which it can assess its impact on the region. They include metrics such as contracts received from business, public sector, industry; training provided; exhibitions held; and industry collaborations. This data was viewed by the panel.

### Engaging with the Community

93. From the evidence available, including external stakeholder feedback, it is apparent that the College is making a positive impact at regional level. This includes areas of study programme provision in which the College has strengths, and also its role in contributing to the sustainability and development of regions.

94. External stakeholders cited numerous specific examples of the responsiveness of KK to feedback offered, as well as examples of solutions to business problems proposed by KK staff and/or students. The College's ability to respond to the needs of social partners was a good example of why they valued it.

95. Although the challenges of low student numbers are acknowledged, the regional centres are valued by social partners, as is the provision of CPD and advanced training and professional updating opportunities. As noted earlier in paragraph 45, the direct

contribution of the College to the sustainability of smaller regional locations is highly valued.

96. There is strong representation and involvement of prominent external stakeholders and social partners in College governance structures and in curriculum matters and the working relationships with senior managers of KK are effective. As noted in Section IV, social partners appear well engaged in programme development and review activities, as well as in the provision of work placement opportunities and appropriate participation in assessment.

97. The system of tripartite agreements for supporting student placements represents good practice and provides good evidence of the emphasis place on employability of KK graduates.

98. The review panel also noted that final year projects often reflect regional issues, or address problems facing some of the business or industry partners. This is complemented by stakeholder involvement in final theses' committees.

## Social Inclusion

99. The College has participated in State schemes to support the participation of students with disabilities in higher education. Steps have been taken to make the learning environment more accessible and the review panel encourages the College to continue to engage in these activities. In this context KK may wish to enhance the information provided for prospective students, and also consider the range of supports available, including for those students with learning difficulties, such as dyslexia, dysgraphia, autism spectrum disorders, and other conditions.

100. The level of non-formal education being provided noteworthy and is recognised as a way to provide educational opportunities for persons who may not be able to participate in HE otherwise. The activities indicated in appendices 11 and 12 of the SER are good indicators of both community engagement and openness to promoting access to higher education in Kaunas College. They include: *Cycle of consultations - Geodesy, cartography, real estate cadaster information systems, geographic information systems; Conferences - Development of studies and business partnership to ensure the quality of specialist training in food industry; Seminar -The hierarchy of legislation, preparation of laws, regulations and other documents, amongst a wide variety of other activities*.

101. The College also participates in the Third Age programme, offering computing programmes to older persons.

## Voluntary Work

102. It is apparent that the College's staff and students participate in and contribute in various ways to community and voluntary service which support socially excluded or disadvantaged groups.

103. Of note is the involvement of students in various activities which form part of their study programme, an approach which may facilitate social solidarity and altruism, as well as various skills' development, e.g. the work of occupational therapy and physical therapy students in kindergarten schools (SER p.51).

104. Students also participate in various voluntary initiatives, such as the national *Let's Do* project on the environment or in the distribution of food to those in need through the Food

Bank. KK staff and student involvement in the Food Bank initiative is also aimed at stimulating the involvement of the local community in the project.

### Graduates and Alumni Association

105. KK's system of monitoring the employment and career progression of graduates is through the conduct of local departmental surveys. A central system has not yet been implemented, though a pilot did take place in 2013. The College should make early progress in implementing the recommendations of the 2005 institutional review regarding the distribution and analysis of centrally administered graduate and employer surveys, and bring the pilot swiftly to its next stage of full implementation.

106. In light of staff feedback about the challenges in gaining reasonable response rates to various surveys, consideration of the timing or how to incentivise the completion of surveys could be undertaken.

107. The review panel noted that alumni clubs operate at faculty level, and that under the SP 2020 there is an intent to enhance activities with alumni (see objective 1.2). No awareness of the plan (assuming it exists) to develop a college level alumni association was found. Such an overarching alumni association may be a useful advisory forum for the College, and its establishment may be worthy of consideration.

108. The establishment of an overarching alumni association may also provide an opportunity to explore the scope for accessing in income generation and external sponsorships.

### Schools

109. The review panel considered the College's relationships with high schools and suggests that this is an area which may benefit from additional focus and engagement. As indicated in paragraph 67, enhanced communication may assist the College in addressing some of the aspects of student drop-out.

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

## VII. GOOD PRACTICE AND ENHANCEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

**A number of examples of good practice identified by the review panel have been highlighted in the Report. These include the following:**

1. The universal application of the self-assessment cycle by all staff, departments and faculties and its use for improvement purposes.
2. The open consultative processes utilised in planning and review.
3. The establishment of the Competency Development Centre, its interface with the Human Resources Department, and its use of the self-assessment reports.
4. The good opportunities provided for all students to undertake significant periods of work placement on their programmes and for engaging in work related practice.
5. The system of tripartite agreements for supporting student placements represents good practice and provides good evidence of the emphasis place on employability of Kaunas College graduates.
6. The participation by social partners in final project assessment panels.
7. The use made of quantitative indicators for annual monitoring purposes as illustrated in the colour-coded table illustrating the status of programmes with regard to student numbers; mobility statistics; research production; graduate numbers and indicating by colour changes year on year.
8. The breadth and depth of engagement with external stakeholders, including the wide provision of training and lifelong learning opportunities and professional development opportunities.
9. The internal accreditation of short programmes of learning to enable ease of future recognition of prior learning.
10. The strategic efforts made by the College to contribute to the sustainability of regional locations and the nurturing of positive relationships with many social partners.


**The following is a summary of the review panel's recommendations:**

1. **Strategic Planning and Management**
   It is recommended that:
   a) in light of realities identified, such as demographic decline and financial stability, KK leadership will need to demonstrate a capability and willingness to choose between priorities in the future, and to make hard decisions in the context of the 2020 Strategic Plan
   b) in taking forward the College's strategic planning and quality management systems, the institutional information system will need to be robust and effective and early progress with improvements in this is required.
   c) the College's Quality Manual, and the principles upon which it is based, needs to integrate the key aspects of the annexes to the main body of the text so that the procedures and steps to be followed by users of the quality system are set out clearly and are more readily accessible.
   d) the Quality Manual should also include a section describing appropriate procedures and regulatory requirements for the development of Joint Study Programmes.

e) improvement is needed in ensuring that the response to issues raised in student surveys is more systematic and mechanisms be put in place to ensure that actions taken at various levels are made clear to students and are well publicised.

2. **Academic Studies & Lifelong Learning**

It is recommended that:

a) steps are taken to ensure that all relevant staff groups are included in opportunities to enhance language capabilities provided by the College's Competence Development Centre, e.g. research active staff must develop their skills in languages such as English.

b) to assist the process of developing student-centred learning and a new learning and teaching paradigm, the role and functions of the Competence Development Centre should be extended to include the enhancement of learning and teaching and to broaden the institutional understanding of the various dimensions of student-centred learning.

c) consideration is given to the establishment one central student support services centre which has responsibility, on a 'one stop shop' basis, for all aspects of central student support, including both learning skills and student academic development, and personal welfare and pastoral support and guidance.

d) additional initiatives to address student-drop out are considered. They may include the introduction of a year-long approach to student induction in the first year of study; forming closer links with local schools to assist them in assessing these matters; providing prospective students with more information at pre-entry level on the academic standards that are required for the successful completion of each study programme.

e) the Study Area Committees should advise on the potential opportunities for some rationalisation of the number and types of study programmes in order to have less but more generalized study programmes.

f) the College continues to make further progress with both staff and student inward and outward mobility in the European context.

g) in reviewing the College's aspirations and plans to develop Joint Study Programmes, procedures are put in place to ensure that risk assessment and due diligence analyses are undertaken at an early stage for all international agreements.

h) when constructing Diploma Supplements the opportunity should be taken by the College to include information on the recognition of qualifications in the respective jurisdictions.

3. **Research and Art Activities**

It is recommended that:

a) a stricter definition of 'applied research' is applied, making a clear distinction between what is applied research on the one hand, and what is lifelong learning or CPD activity on the other hand.

b) as Kaunas College seeks to develop capacity in applied research, consultancy, and knowledge transfer activity, for income generation purposes, it will also need to underpin this by drawing upon external fundamental research ensuring that teaching is informed by research and advanced scholarship.

g) balance also needs to be achieved between teaching and applied research and the College not lose sight of its strengths as a teaching institution.

h) a dedicated research policy is required for KK, which will set clear priorities both for external contract work and business engagement purposes and also for the development of the applied research capacity of the College.

i) as resources allow, the College should consider the merits of creating a 'seed fund' to stimulate growth and sustainability in selected areas of strength in applied research.

j) there is a need more for international partnerships in the context of the ERA, but if such aspirations are to be realised there is a need for language training for researchers.

**4. Impact on Regional and National Development**

It is recommended that:

a) the College makes early progress in implementing the recommendations of the 2005 institutional review regarding the distribution and analysis of centrally administered graduate and employer surveys.

**For consideration by the Ministry of Education and Science**

The following are some observations that the review panel offers for consideration by the Ministry of Education and Science:

- Clarity should be provided and maintained regarding the basis on which institutions are entitled to use the title of 'University'.
- The regulatory context of joint programmes, particularly those which involve transnational partnerships, should be made clearer.
- Consideration of the benefits of enabling successful institutions in the College sector to develop programmes at Level 7 should be undertaken.
- Students' ability to benefit from higher education is a central consideration in entry criteria and processes. Clear guidance should be provided to the sector on retention and drop-out by providing benchmarks and targets to HEIs.

## VIII. JUDGEMENT

Kaunas College of Higher Education is given a positive evaluation.

|  |  |
|---|---|
| Grupės vadovas:<br>Team leader: | Prof. Jethro Newton |
| Grupės nariai:<br>Team members: | Dr. Fredy Sidler |
| | Mr Søren Vang Rasmussen |
| | Ms Merle Varik |
| | Mr Stasys Švagždys |
| | Mr Simonas Valionis |
| Vertinimo sekretorius:<br>Review secretary: | Dr Tara Ryan |

**ANNEX. KAUNAS COLLEGE OF HIGHER EDUCATION RESPONSE TO REVIEW REPORT**

**KAUNO KOLEGIJA RESPONSE TO THE DRAFT OF REVIEW REPORT**

In response to the Draft Institutional Review Report, on behalf of the community of Kauno Kolegija (hereinafter – KK) we would like to thank the review team (Professor Jethro Newton, Dr. Fredy Sidler, Søren Vang Rasmussen, Dr. Tara Ryan, Merle Varik, Stasys Švagždys, Simonas Valionis) for the objective and impartial evaluation of KK activity.

KK is grateful for the positive appreciation of self-evaluation process and Self-Evaluation Report as well structured and well presented. We regret that the strictly regulated volume of the Self-Evaluation Report limited our possibilities to reveal some aspects in this document. Therefore, a more detailed analysis of the weaknesses and opportunities was presented to the review team in additional documents (the analysis of the current situation in Strategy 2012, Strategy 2020).

We hereby inform that no key factual errors were noticed in the Review Report. KK accepts the team's recommendations on the improvement of KK activity.

We would like to point out that KK administration together with KK Council and the Academic Council has been paying great attention to risk management to ensure the implementation of the Strategy 2020. The risk management actions are set out in the annual performance plans at every level of KK structure. They affect the corresponding adjustments of the 2020 Strategic Plan. Therefore, the 2020 Strategic Plan can be and is revised in response to the internal and external changes.

KK partially agree with the recommendation to improve the Quality Manual by integrating the key aspects of the annexes to the main body of the text. KK is planning to include the essential procedures into the main section of the Quality Manual. The detailed descriptions of the procedures will be included in the annexes to ensure the confidentiality of the information.

Considering the fact that the academic, material and social support for students are provided in the different departments, we agree to give consideration to the establishment of Students' information centre (or appoint a responsible person) with responsibility to direct the students to the appropriate departments responsible for issues of their concern.

Thought many actions have been taken on prevention of student drop-out, we accept the Review team's recommendation to pay great attention to the first-year student adaptation, to provide prospective students with more information on the academic standards at KK, to form closer links with local schools. Specific measures will be taken and responsible departments and employees will be provided to implement this recommendation. We greatly appreciate the Review team's advice on peer mentoring initiative.

The KK Diploma Supplement meets the requirements of the Diploma Supplement completion. In 2013 it has received the Diploma Supplement Label – quality and internationalization fostering institutions' identification brand. Therefore, the recommendation to include information on the recognition of qualifications in the respective jurisdictions in Diploma Supplements is not sufficiently clear.

We would like to point out that the definition of "applied research" presented in the KK Self-Evaluation Report is consistent with the established practice on the issues of applied research in the College sector in Lithuania HE and the normative documents of the Ministry for Education and Science of the Republic of Lithuania.

KK is ready for implementation of the recommendations and some actions have already been taken: the establishment of Study Area Committees and definition of their functions are scheduled in Strategy 2020; the strategic measures and indicators are set to further develop internationalization, including teachers and students mobility; to ensure closer co-operation with foreign institutions of higher education; the regulations on Joint Study Programmes development, organization and implementation are being worked out. We would like to thank the Review team for the useful sources of information about Joint Study Programmes.

Once again we express our gratitude to the Review team for recognition of KK achievements and for the valuable recommendations, which will help to improve KK activity.


Mindaugas Misiūnas


Director of Kauno Kolegija