



**STUDIJŲ KOKYBĖS VERTINIMO CENTRAS**

**KAUNO MIŠKŲ IR APLINKOS INŽINERIJOS  
KOLEGIJOS**

**VEIKLOS VERTINIMO IŠVADOS**

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**INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW REPORT  
OF KAUNAS COLLEGE OF FORESTRY AND  
ENVIRONMENTAL ENGINEERING**

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## CONTENTS

I. INTRODUCTION.....	3
II. BACKGROUND INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSTITUTION.....	3
III. STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT .....	5
IV. ACADEMIC STUDIES AND LIFE-LONG LEARNING .....	8
V. RESEARCH AND (OR) ART .....	12
VI. IMPACT ON REGIONAL AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT .....	14
VII. GOOD PRACTICE AND ENHANCEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS.....	16
VIII. JUDGEMENT .....	19
APPENDIX 1 .....	20
APPENDIX 2 .....	21
ANNEX 3. KAUNAS COLLEGE OF FORESTRY AND ENVIRONMENTAL ENGINEERING RESPONSE TO REVIEW REPORT .....	22

## I. INTRODUCTION

1. The review of Kaunas Forestry and Environmental Engineering College of Higher Education (**referred to below as “KFEEC” or “the College”**) was organised by the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education (SKVC), Lithuania, in its role as the Authorised Agency prescribed by Lithuanian law. The review was conducted in accordance with the prescribed methodology according to the Procedure for the External Review in Higher Education approved by Government Resolution No 1317 of 22 September, 2010.
2. The College submitted a Self Evaluation Report (SER) with Annexes, and further documentation as requested by the review team. An external assessment of the College learning resources was provided by Lithuania's Research and Higher Education Monitoring and Analysis Centre (MOSTA). The documentation is set out in Appendix 1. The review team visited the College from 29 - 31 October 2013 and conducted several meetings with the College, as well as touring the site. The list of meetings is set out in Appendix 2.
3. The College's Self Evaluation Report was made available in English for the team. The team considered that there could have been more quantitative and analytic information in the report, which was largely qualitative and descriptive. The team did not find all the appendices easy to interpret and needed to ask for clarification of some figures. However, the team found the sections on Strengths and Aspects to be Improved in the report helpful, although these also could have been more quantitative and more analytical.
4. The expert 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, 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 made appropriate reference to the criteria set out in the Methodology and took due account of the lists of sub-criteria in reaching their decision.
5. The external expert review team ('the team' or 'the review team') consisted of: team leader: Prof. dr. Ossi V. Lindqvist; Prof. dr. Lex M. Bouter; Julius Morkūnas; Prof. dr. Ana M. Pelacho; Habil. dr. Mečislovas Žalakevičius; review secretary: Dr Gillian Mary King.

## II. BACKGROUND INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSTITUTION

6. KFEEC's history goes back to 1927 but it was in 2002 that it gained the status of a higher education institution. In 2011 a new College statute reflected the College's change from a

Budget institution to a Public institution with state funding. 2011 was a year of change in the College, with the election of a new Council and sole manager (the Director), internal management reorganisation and new management processes.

7. The College was evaluated by a national team in 2007, which resulted in several recommendations. The current SER of the College shows that it has reacted positively to the recommendations, especially what concerns its strategic work, quality assurance, and distance and continuous learning, though admittedly not all of the outcomes of the measures are within the power of the College.
8. There are two faculties in the College, the Faculty of Forestry and Landscape Architecture and the Faculty of Environmental Engineering. There is also an Information Centre which deals with in-service courses and raising public awareness. In addition there is a Vocational Training department. Applied research has been carried out at the College since 2003.
9. Initially the College offered only a study programme in Forestry but between 2002 and 2007 five more programmes were established. The College's six study programmes include various specialist pathways. The College's SER indicates that at the end of 2012 the College had 1187 students and 86 lecturers. Other information indicates that there are 34 full-time equivalent lecturer posts.
10. As a College of Higher Education KFEEC prepares students for the Professional Bachelor degree and its programmes are oriented towards preparation for professional activities. It is required that practice and other work-related practical training should comprise no less than one third of the study volume. Within this practice activity, the volume of practical training should be no less than 30 credits.
11. The College's Mission, revised in 2011 is as follows: "Considering the changes in rural development, the mission of the College is to create and spread knowledge about forestry, landscape design, recreation technologies and environmental engineering. To achieve this main purpose, the following measures must be undertaken:
  - To prepare specialists of higher professional education and satisfy the needs of state's rural development by retaking advanced experience accumulated worldwide;
  - To ensure a modern study process that satisfies European standards and permits to realize the system of life-long learning;
  - To create new technologies of forestry, landscape design, recreation and environmental engineering and carry out applied research;
  - To develop environmental, cultural and national education of society."

### III. STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT

12. The review team explored the strategic management of the College with reference to the criteria set out in the Methodology and considered the strategic plan's fitness for purpose, arrangements for the plan's publicity and its availability to stakeholders and the public at large, guarantees for its implementation, and management effectiveness.
13. The College SER noted that a new mission, vision and strategic directions were approved in 2011 and the KFEEC Strategy 2020 was adopted. This Strategy covers the years 2012-2020 and is accompanied by a detailed three year implementation plan for 2013-2015. The review team studied these documents and spoke to members of the College about their purpose and use. The team noted that the Strategy was based on a review of internal and external factors affecting the College and a SWOT analysis. The Strategy 2020 is a very detailed document with nine Strategic Directions, 21 Goals, and some 54 Objectives. It is not always obvious how the weaknesses identified in the SWOT are built into the Strategy, nor how the indicators in the Implementation Plan support the objectives. The 2013-2015 Implementation plan is 40 pages long and has over 200 measures to be implemented. The team did not find much evidence that the plan was used on a regular basis to inform decision-making.
14. With respect to the Strategy's fitness for purpose, the team noted that it aligned with the College's mission, the strategic needs of the region, and with relevant European principles. While the team considered the process of environmental analysis and the SWOT analysis to be a useful basis for the Strategy, it also considered that the Strategy was too complex and much too detailed for an institution the size of the College. The fixing of goals and objectives over an eight year timespan of the Strategy could make it difficult for the College to amend its goals over time, with the consequence that it might be difficult for the College to stay responsive and viable. While a rigorous monitoring system could mitigate these difficulties the team saw little evidence of regular, consistent and realistic monitoring of the Strategy. In addition, no adequate risk analysis appears to underpin the Strategy: for example, when members of the College were asked about scenario planning or alternative strategies for maintaining numbers of students on a small programme the solutions mentioned did not seem to have been thought through. Similarly, the College had no alternative strategies to put in place should the falling number of new students not stabilise, or should the College not be able to attract its targetted number of international students. Regarding the latter issue it was not clear to the team that a solid and realistic *business case for the income from versus costs of international students had been established, and the team recommends the College to do this.*
15. A limitation of the Strategy is that no resources or sources of funding are tied to specific objectives in the Strategy. The review team appreciates that the College has little flexibility in

its use of state funds. Nevertheless, there appears to be little planned management of the College's income earned from other sources. The team heard on more than one occasion the optimistic belief that funding for essential activities will always be found, although it was not clear that this belief was founded on any rigorous analysis.

16. As far as guarantees for implementation are concerned, the team considered that the detailed nature of the Strategy and lack of directly linked resources could mean that it will be difficult for the College to meet its strategic objectives. The monitoring procedure is labour-intensive and may divert effort away from the actual implementation of the strategy. While the team heard optimistic claims about meeting the objectives it saw little evidence about how this would be achieved, nor how the objectives would be realistically prioritised and monitored. The team considered that the College might not be operating at maximal administrative efficiency in view of the long and complex documentation that the team saw and the abundance of goals, objectives, tasks and measures that would require regular monitoring. Some of the people the team met pointed to the strong leadership of the College and their confidence in the leadership to achieve the Strategy. The review team agreed that leadership at Director level in the College is strong and the staff team is committed to its work and that this is possibly some guarantee to ensuring that the Strategy is implemented. However, no regular high level monitoring of the Strategy appears to take place: the team heard that the College Board reviews the plan only yearly.
17. In view of these factors, ***the team recommends that the College reviews its approach to strategic planning to ensure that it is appropriate to the size of the institution, that it is administratively feasible, that objectives are directly linked to available funds and resources, that the strategic plan is regularly and consistently monitored, and that it incorporates a rigorous risk analysis.***
18. In terms of adequacy of information available about the Strategy the team noted that the Strategy is available on the College's website. While various stakeholders whom the team met had heard of the Strategy, and some had had impact to sections of it, this knowledge was not particularly widespread.
19. The SER notes that College's present internal quality assurance system was established as part of the changes in organisation in 2011. It is, therefore, a fairly new system. The College's comprehensive Quality Guidelines include sections on study programmes, scientific and applied research, academic staff activities, and so on. The Guidelines describe the kinds of surveys to be carried out in the College and the management processes for all the major activities of the College. The review team considers this document a helpful start in establishing a quality culture in the College, but notes that that culture is still very young. A quality manager

- will take up appointment in December, and there are plans to expand this role into a quality office. The team was told that Committees of Studies review programme learning objectives every year. Changes are made to programmes according to the results of student questionnaires, feedback from social partners, and from final thesis defense committees. The team found little evidence that information contained in European Standards and Guidelines (ESG) is used on a regular or consistent basis, although it heard that study programme committees design courses which take into account Lithuanian requirements, and that these in turn reflect the ESG.
20. The team heard that there is some systematic evaluation of the development needs of teaching staff and staff are encouraged to improve their qualifications for enrolling for PhD programmes. The College has a target for 25% of staff to have PhDs. Currently this proportion is 19%.
  21. The team considered that some improvements to gathering and analysis of management information would be useful to the College. The team asked for information about student progression and completion rates which was not readily available, or not available at all (see also paragraph 34). The collection of relevant numerical evidence on critical indicators would enhance the College's decision-making capacity and would help the College to benchmark its activity against that of similar colleges elsewhere.
  22. In view of these findings, ***the team recommends that the College makes a continued effort to embed a quality culture within the College, taking into account national and international good practice, such as European Standards and Guidelines.***
  23. The team heard that the teaching and other staff are very supportive of their students: they are willing to advise and answer questions, to help with finding jobs, they are mindful of students' welfare, and they remain in contact with students after graduation. ***The team finds the supportive approach of staff to their students a feature of good practice.***
  24. The team explored how process management, including decision-making and distribution of responsibilities, worked in the College. Much of this seems to rest with the most senior management of the College, although decentralized budgeting has recently been introduced. Since so much responsibility appears to rest with the role of Director of the College the team considers that some form of human resource succession planning for the senior management would be wise. Currently only short term planning for study programme needs is carried out.
  25. The SER describes how the changes to the organisation in 2011 were identified and managed. The staff whom the team met were motivated and enthusiastic about the College which indicates that the changes probably have been effectively managed. In addition, for a relatively small total annual budget the College gives good value and is a cost-effective institution.
  26. The review team toured some of the College buildings to look at facilities for learning. The team noted that the condition and upkeep of the buildings was good, although no specific study

space for students outside of the library was available and open. The team heard that library opening hours did not permit students to study for as long as they might want to during the weekdays and weekends, and that hostel accommodation was not always conducive to study. The review team encourages the College to consider how to provide more independent study space for students. Students considered access to library holdings and help from staff was good. Wifi is available in the College buildings and hostels have access to the Internet.

27. As part of the strategic management, the issue of academic ethics at large as well as the role of the Ethics Commission in the College need more proactive visibility, though apparently few problems have emerged so far.
28. In summary, the team found the strong leadership, dedicated and supportive staff, and cost-effectiveness to be strengths of the College, whereas its approach to strategic planning and its development, immature quality assurance system, incomplete collection and analysis of management information, and lack of workforce (succession) planning are points for improvement.
29. **The team's judgement on the area of Strategic Management is positive.**

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

30. The review team explored academic studies and life-long learning of KFEEC with reference to the criteria set out in the Methodology and considered compliance with the requirements for Lithuanian higher education and harmonisation with the principles of the European Higher Education Area.
31. The team found substantial evidence that qualifications and lifelong learning align with the College's mission and strategy and also with the needs of national economy, social and cultural development. The College's Strategy includes objectives such as 1.1.1: 'to create and implement new study programs or their branches according to the most modern education tendencies, expectations of students and employers'; and 4.2.1: 'To develop life-long learning services related to target society groups'.
32. The relevance of the study programmes to national interests is indicated in the SER: forestry and rural development creates over 5% of the total added value of the country, and remains fairly stable over time; employment opportunities in relevant fields are being maintained, although on a decreasing basis; specialists are required for rural area development. The College prepares Professional Bachelors as specialists that satisfy the needs of rural development. The SER states that only 9% of graduates do not find a proper job within six months after graduation and 52% of graduates find jobs in their specialist field or continue studies close to the area

studied at the College . The six Professional Bachelor programs which provide for these interests are unique in Lithuania in the combination of subjects and the amount of practical training which they provide and three new specialisations within the programmes are planned or being implemented. ***The uniquely targeted nature of the programmes to the needs of the market, and the degree of practical training offered to students are considered a feature of good practice by the team.***

33. Modern study process implementation started a few years ago and has made considerable progress. In some instances this has been helped by feedback from partners. There is a plan to establish distance learning for all courses although this is still in its infancy.
34. During its visit the review team explored the drop-out rate (proportion of a year cohort of students who do not complete a specific year of their study) at the College. The College provided a table from which the team could calculate that the first year drop-out rate for full-time students had been 13% in 2010, and in 2012 it was 18%. The additional drop-out rate in the second and third years was lower. The team heard that the College was investigating reasons for the drop out rate and was trying to put some solutions in place. The team did not receive any information, however, on the final number of students who graduated in any given year, and it became apparent that the College did not have data on either the average time it takes a student to complete a study programme or on the proportion of the cohorts that never gets its degree. ***The team recommends that the College takes steps to gather the relevant data which would enable it to have a complete picture of the progression of its students through the study programmes in order that such information can more effectively support its planning activities.***
35. During its visit the team received information about the study programme in Hydraulic Engineering for which only 8 students entered in the previous year. Since 8 students is the cut-off point below which the programme could not be offered the Team explored with the College how the decision would be taken, should it need to close down the programme. The team heard that some measures had been taken to increase numbers such as changes to the programme and better relations with partners but no detailed strategy for deciding on the future of the programme seemed to be available.
36. The college collaborates with Universities and research institutions in forestry and develops tools required to be applied, mainly in the field of Forestry. This is accomplished both in the study programmes and in the life-long learning activities (courses) developed.
37. The College is involved in raising public awareness on environmental, cultural and national issues through the various interactions with society: activities ranging from school children (for

attracting young people to the College's study programmes and activities) through to adults. There is also effective communication with the many business and social partners.

38. The college provides a large number of life-long learning activities in which over 2200 participants enrolled over the last 5 years. Interactions with partners help to ensure that the activities on offer are targeted and relevant. Some are oriented to improve employment opportunities to recent graduates, others to provide certifications that are required to work in a specific field. This aspect is also in agreement with the Mission of the College and is very widely developed by the College and helps to contribute to the College's stability and viability. The review team encourages the College to keep up its activities in this area.
39. There is systematic monitoring of graduates six months after finishing their degree. The College teachers and the Director are active in helping unemployed graduates to find jobs or to get specific additional competences through its life-long learning activities. Yet there is no further systematic monitoring of the graduates which would allow the College to collect precise data of employment and career success, and to follow up students who were unemployed for some time. However, the team noted that many graduates remain in contact with the college, so that the college is well aware of the graduates' professional career. The College also uses other tools to improve the graduates employment possibilities, such as the Career days to which prospective employers are invited. On the other hand the team found less evidence that this monitoring contributes directly to the improvement of studies, although it was obvious that the College had taken on board stake-holder feedback to include more practical and entrepreneurial training in the programs.
40. There is abundant and effective cooperation between the College and its numerous and diverse partners which enriches the education of the graduates. This is especially relevant for study programmes leading to a Professional Bachelor. Partners are involved as members of College committees, including Final Thesis Committees, at specific meetings, in life-long activities and so on.
41. Partners have provided useful inputs to the College for studies and life-long learning, among others the benefits of implementing distance learning (through MOODLE). They have also provided the resources to help achieve these aims, e.g. through allowing the use of the partners' facilities (laboratories, open areas, etc.) to College students. The development of the three recently proposed specialisations within the study programs has been done in consultation with partners to identify employment niches within the professional fields concerned. The review team encourages the College in its intention of actively looking for involvement with new partners but suggests that it does this in a targeted way, managing the different stakeholder views and perspectives constructively.

42. In terms of compliance with the provisions of the European Higher Education Area, the College study process complies with the EHEA statements and the studies are awarded Level 6 in the Lithuanian Qualification Framework and in the European Qualification Framework.
43. As far as international mobility is concerned the number of students from foreign countries in the College has increased slightly, but it is still very low (7 in 2012). The College SWOT recognised that numbers of incoming foreign exchange students is low and a target has been set to have 2-5% of the students from other countries, thus 20-50 students, by 2020. At the same time it seeks to organise teaching in English for foreign students in 2 study specialisations. It was not clear to the team how this would be accomplished or how foreign students would be taught in the classes. The team considered that that target number for incoming foreign students would be too small to make the creation of international classrooms possible.
44. The number of teaching staff going abroad or foreign teachers coming to the College is also low. In 2012 11 lecturers left for teaching and 11 lecturers arrived for teaching. These numbers have increased gradually over a five year period. The team considered that it would be timely for the College to review the viability of its internationalisation agenda and *recommends that the College review its approach to internationalisation, considering all aspects involved, including which countries to target, which study programmes to offer, and the volume to aim at*. In carrying out this review the team considers that the views of the current international students could provide valuable input. (See also the team's recommendation above concerning the need to prepare a realistic business case for the income from and the costs of international students (paragraph 14)).
45. In summary, the team considered the following aspects to be strengths of the College's activities: the relatively long established programmes; satisfactory facilities; practical training opportunities for students; the environment for effective collaboration created by the Director, through the teachers to the students and social partners; a natural environment which supports study in the subject; and the many social and business partners. The team identifies as areas for improvement the lack of accurate and timely data on students' progression and completion of their studies, and the lack of a convincing strategy for implementing a sustainable internationalisation agenda.
46. **The team's judgement on the area of Academic Studies and Life-Long Learning is positive.**

## V. RESEARCH AND (OR) ART

47. The review team explored the applied research activities in the College with reference to the criteria set out in the Methodology and considered the relevance, international links and harmonization of research activities in the College with the provisions of the European Research Area.
48. As a College of Higher Education KFEEC is required to develop applied research necessary for the region, and to provide consultation to local government and economic entities. The College does not have the powers to award PhD degrees. However, the College has aspirations to increase the percentage of staff with a PhD to 25% by offering the current staff members opportunities to complete a PhD awarded by another institution. While this may be a positive contribution, the team also strongly suggests that the College considers recruiting those who already have PhDs to new staff positions.
49. The team found that the College's applied research is very much oriented towards professional practice and is commissioned in close collaboration with relevant organisations and enterprises. The team considered that many of the projects have more the nature of professional consultancy, and not so much of empirical applied research. The team learned that some projects concern the formulation of professional norms or procedures on the basis of theoretical considerations and consensus. The relevance of these activities thus aligns well with the College's mission and strategy, and with regional and national priorities. The applied research projects are typically relevant to and appreciated by the customers. The team considers these to be positive features. There is collaboration with scientists from universities and research institutes although this seems to be still in development. As the College takes this development further, the team encourages it consider making the collaborations more structured and less *ad hoc*, by choosing a limited number of preferred partners for collaboration in applied research, and building a strong relationship with these partners.
50. The volume of applied research is small (figures given for total research funding for 2012 vary between €49,000 – €71,000), but the college plans to enlarge this. The strategy for deciding which applied research projects will be pursued and accepted is to carry out almost any research within the relevant fields which a customer is willing to pay for. The team heard that the College considered that focus was given to this strategy by there being a main theme of applied research in each department. It did not become clear what these themes were. The team also heard that it was also hoped that as the College became stronger in applied research it could perhaps concentrate on bigger and fewer research projects. The team agrees with this direction and ***recommends that as the College works toward more volume of applied research it also becomes more focused, while keeping some flexibility to deal with changing customer needs.***

51. Importantly, the team heard that, for understandable reasons, some of the applied research projects seem to be executed below the real level of costs. *The team, therefore, recommends, that as the College seeks to enlarge its research agenda it should always calculate the total real costs of the project including staff and infrastructure overheads and, if needed, take an explicit decision to accept the project below cost price, at the same time deciding where the rest of the budget will come from.*
52. Although the team asked various participants it found no clear awareness of the need for quality assurance in research (relating to methods and design, data collection, storage and analysis, reporting, conflicts of interest, potential breaches of scientific integrity). The team was told that there was an Ethics Commission in the College, but it had had no cases of research problems to deal with so far. *The team recommends that the College explore whether their approach to quality assurance of applied research is fit for purpose, possibly by reviewing what similar institutions (including those abroad) have in place for quality assurance.*
53. The **impact of business and social partners** on the College's applied research is clear *and the team considers this to be a feature of good practice.* The College carries out applied research for many of its partners. Amongst many examples the team heard of a 2 year joint project with a partner which involved both staff and students. Students of the college are often involved in data collection for applied research projects, and sometimes applied research projects offer opportunities for students to do their Bachelor thesis. *The review team consider this to be good practice.*
54. The College has aspirations towards international collaboration in applied research, but there are no current examples of projects or publications with foreign colleagues. The team considers that it would be wise, given the College's size and other strategic priorities, for the College to concentrate on collaboration with Lithuanian partners in the medium term. The College currently has no ambitions to obtain ERC or Framework Programme grants and the team considers that a sensible and realistic view.
55. The College's publication strategy is mainly focussed on professionals in Lithuania, but also some articles are published in peer-reviewed international journals. The team considers this to be acceptable, although a gradual increase in peer reviewed international publications may help to facilitate the College's educational ambitions at the international level.
56. In summary, the team found that close engagement with business and social partners and student participation in applied research projects are strengths of the College. Areas to improve include the lack of focus and large number of small applied research projects carried out; imperfect costing of research projects; and the lack of structured quality assurance for applied research.

57. **The team's judgement on the area of Applied Research is positive.**

## VI. IMPACT ON REGIONAL AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

58. The review team explored the College's impact on regional and national development with reference to the criteria set out in the Methodology and considered the effectiveness and relevance of its contribution and impact on the economic, cultural, social and environmental development.
59. The College's Mission, revised in 2011, has an overall aim of 'to create and spread knowledge about forestry, landscape design, recreation technologies and environmental engineering' and includes various measures which have regional and national impact. The College's measures of its impact are reflected in its previous and current mission and strategic documents. For example, Strategic direction V of the 2020 Strategy is 'Increase of the impact on economic and social processes with a focus on the identification of problems of the country (region) and solutions thereof.' The implementation plan of 2013-2015 develops the tasks and measures for Direction V, including such tasks as: 'To promote entrepreneurship and cooperation with business as the key aspect of the College'
60. The College's SER discusses the effectiveness of the implementation of its impact measures under four headings: production of qualified specialists, impact of applied research, impact on business, and impact on the country's public administration and non governmental organisations.
61. The team found that the College provides qualified specialists for companies, institutions and other organisations for the whole of Lithuania in areas related to forestry, rural and nature tourism, land management and real estate evaluation sectors. The team heard that many graduates in forestry and other related sectors are graduates of the College and that the skills of graduates of the College are appreciated by employers.
62. While the team heard evidence of the success of implementation with respect to the Forestry programme, less evidence was heard for other programmes. ***The team recommends that the College considers how it monitors its impact on national and regional development in programmes other than Forestry.*** The graduates of the Forestry study programme are employed in forest enterprises, forest districts, forest nurseries, forestry Inspection Service, State Institute of Forestry Management Planning, companies serving private forest owners, companies of forest harvesting and other institutions and organisations. Graduates can also establish their own enterprises, including plantations of Christmas trees, medical plants, energy crops and others, and develop forestry-related business activities.

63. The College ensures continuous updating and improvement of skills relevant to the latest scientific achievements by organizing various qualification improvement courses and providing life-long learning services. With partners the College carried out a project funded by EU Structural Funds “The system of informing society about the tools of harmonious forestry development in forests and protected areas sensitive to farming that was prepared using the Dainava region as an example”. In applied research and consultation activities the College presents solutions for customers operating in different regions of Lithuania.
64. The team found that the College’s activities are aligned with the priorities of national and regional economic, cultural and social development. The impact of the College is reflected in research in the maintenance and preservation of ecosystems and the increase of the vitality and attractiveness of rural areas. These areas are important to the development of Lithuania as they have implications for positive changes in Lithuanian rural areas, for decrease of recent emigration, and for reduction of unemployment.
65. Another important College activity is the development of national standards in forestry, as these have impact on the forestry sector’s activity and its effectiveness. Provision of services to businesses brings not only financial benefits to the College: academic staff are also given an opportunity to improve professional qualification, and business representatives are involved in study programme quality improvement.
66. College impact on economic development is made through provision of services to business organisations; by the installation of new technologies; by events organised by the College; and by the improvement of the special skills of the specialists of these business organisations and of agriculture specialists. Important College services are directed to the green plantation management companies and individuals who intend to create businesses of this kind.
67. The College organises courses under the program, “The basics of farming” which is attended by individuals who lack agricultural education. The College also organises programs of professional education and retraining.
68. The College maintains close and efficient relations with the Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Environment, Kaunas Region Municipality Administration and other public management institutions. The College has an impact on environmental protection through education starting from children in general schools, by organisation of competitions, demonstration of films, education of landowners working in protected areas, etc.
69. The College delivers lifelong learning, organising science popularisation events of various formats (practical conferences, seminars, debates, radio and television shows, etc.), and publishes popular science articles.

70. Themes pertaining to national and regional development are included in students' training practice and graduation projects. Applied research related to the development of regional problems or the problems of specific organisations operating in the forestry and rural development sectors also involves students. During the period of 2007-2012, students prepared 450 final Bachelor theses which contain specific recommendations for the forestry and rural development sectors. College provision of services to businesses gives students the opportunity to obtain practice positions and jobs.
71. The team heard that teaching and administrative staff participate in different voluntary service activities, including participation in elected professional bodies: boards, committees, strategic planning groups, etc., which are not directly related to the staff's professional activity. Teachers of the College participate in contributing expertise and preparation of strategic documents; they are invited to participate in permanent and temporary working groups, boards and commissions; and they participate in the activity of various associations. The College fosters efficient relations with associations and public enterprises, whose activities are consistent with the professional competence area of the College: the Union of Lithuanian Foresters, Union of Lithuanian Planning and Hydrotechnics Engineers, Association of Agricultural Engineering, and so on. In most of the organisations employees of the College are active members. College experts organise different public activities such as debates, and participate in radio and television shows; they publish popular science articles and carry out other public awareness activities.
72. *The many and varied ways in which the College impacts on national and regional development are considered to be a feature of good practice.*
73. In summary, the main strengths of the College in this area are a well organised contribution to national and regional development; unique College specialisation meeting the needs of the current market; an ambitious aspirational, motivated, innovative and flexible approach to engagement. The main area for development is the difference in impact on national and regional development of the different study programs offered by the College.
74. **The team's judgement on the area of Impact on Regional and National Development is positive.**

## VII. GOOD PRACTICE AND ENHANCEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

75. The team considers the following to be examples of good practice:

- the supportive approach of staff to their students (23)

- the uniquely targeted nature of the study programmes to the needs of the market, and the degree of practical training offered to students (32)
- the clear impact of business and social partners on the College's activities (45) and applied research (53)
- the involvement of students in data collection for applied research projects, and opportunities to use applied research projects as a means of preparing the professional Bachelor thesis (53)
- the many and varied ways in which the College impacts on national and regional development. (72)

76. The following is a summary of the team's recommendations:

The College should:

- prepare a realistic business case for the income from versus the costs of international students (14)
- review the approach to strategic planning to ensure that it is appropriate to the size of the College, that it is administratively feasible, that objectives are directly linked to available funds and resources, that the strategic plan is regularly and consistently monitored, and that it incorporates a rigorous risk analysis (17)
- make a continued effort to embed a quality culture within the College, taking into account national and international good practice, such as European Standards and Guidelines (22)
- take steps to gather the relevant management information which would enable the College to have a complete picture of the progression of its students, in order that such information can more effectively support its planning activities (34)
- review the approach to internationalisation, considering all aspects involved, including which countries to target, which study programmes to offer, and the volume to aim at (44)
- become more focused in the variety of the applied research carried out, while keeping some flexibility to deal with changing customer needs (50)
- calculate the total real costs of research projects, including staff and infrastructure overheads and, if needed, take an explicit decision to accept the project below cost price, at the same time deciding where the rest of the budget will come from (51)
- explore whether its approach to quality assurance of applied research is fit for purpose, possibly by reviewing what processes similar institutions (including those abroad) have in place for quality assurance (52)

- consider how it monitors its impact on national and regional development in programmes other than Forestry (62)

## VIII. JUDGEMENT

Kaunas College of Forestry and Environmental Engineering is given positive evaluation.

Grupės vadovas:  
Team leader:

Prof. dr Ossi V. Linqvist

Grupės nariai:  
Team members:

Prof. dr. Lex M. Bouter

Prof. dr. Ana M. Pelacho

Habil. dr. Mečislovas Žalakevičius

Julius Morkūnas

Vertinimo sekretorius:  
Review secretary:

Dr. Gillian Mary King

## APPENDIX 1

### **LIST OF APPENDICES TO THE SELF EVALUATION REPORT:**

1. Development strategy of Kaunas Forestry and Environmental Engineering of Higher Education for 2006 -2012;
2. Strategy 2020 of Kaunas Forestry and Environmental Engineering of Higher Education;
3. Plan of implementation of Kaunas Forestry and Environmental Engineering of Higher Education strategy for 2013 – 2015;
4. Quality Guide of Kaunas Forestry and Environmental Engineering of Higher Education;
5. Report on the activities of Kaunas Forestry and Environmental Engineering of Higher Education in 2012;
6. Results of accreditation of study programmes of Kaunas Forestry and Environmental Engineering of Higher Education;
7. Projects which were implemented or are being implemented by the College intended to renew and develop infrastructure, improve and develop studies, improve competences of lecturers and researchers;
8. Structure of Kaunas Forestry and Environmental Engineering of Higher Education;
9. Turnover in the academic staff of Kaunas Forestry and Environmental Engineering of Higher Education;
10. Funds of Kaunas Forestry and Environmental Engineering College of Higher Education;
11. Studies of Kaunas Forestry and Environmental Engineering College of Higher Education;
12. Research and experimental (social, cultural) development of Kaunas Forestry and Environmental Engineering College of Higher Education;
13. List of significant research projects of Kaunas Forestry and Environmental Engineering College of Higher Education in 2007-2012.
14. List of scientific production of Kaunas Forestry and Environmental Engineering College of Higher Education;
15. Impact on the development of regions and the entire country: suitability and effectiveness of the input of the College and its impact on the development

### **ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION RECEIVED:**

Table 10. Compliance with documents of European Higher Education Area and those of EU related to higher education

Spreadsheet of number of students 2010 - 2013

## APPENDIX 2

### MEETINGS CONDUCTED BY THE REVIEW TEAM:

<b>Tuesday, 29 October</b>
Observation of facilities and learning resources
Meeting with Director
Meeting with self-evaluation group members and representatives responsible for quality
Meeting with the Academic Council representatives
Meeting with College Board members
<b>Wednesday, 30 October</b>
Meeting about academic studies and life-long learning
Meeting about applied research and/or art activities
Meeting with students and student representatives
Meeting about impact on regional and national development
Meeting with social partners
Meeting with graduates
<b>Thursday, 31 October</b>
Meeting about the results of MOSTA material resources assessment
Final meeting with Director and Deputy Directors
Preliminary (oral) feedback to the institution

## ANNEX 3. KAUNAS COLLEGE OF FORESTRY AND ENVIRONMENTAL ENGINEERING RESPONSE TO REVIEW REPORT

### RESPONSE TO THE FINDINGS OF THE EVALUATION OF KAUNAS FORESTRY AND ENVIRONMENTAL ENGINEERING COLLEGE OF HIGHER EDUCATION

We thank the experts of the Evaluation Team of College activities who have completed a great job analysing activities and the achieved results at Kaunas Forestry and Environmental Engineering College of Higher Education in 2008-2012. The experts' suggestions and recommendations will be used to improve the efficiency and performance of the College.

The streamlining of strategic planning according to the suggestions of the experts will allow to easier coordinate the activities of the College. Although currently operating strategic plan of a complex structure has its own advantages as well. Previous strategic plans of a similar structure provided preconditions for successful development of activities in the past (2002-2012). Then the activities of the College were expanding very rapidly (several times had increased the number of students and teachers, the amount of financial resources, had strengthened the role of the College in the sectors of forestry and environmental engineering). The monitoring of implementation of the current (2012-2016) strategic plan in 2013 showed that it is sufficiently realistic. The volume of planned measures in all nine strategic directions were implemented by from 100.0 to 128.8 %, while the volume of planned measures of various strategic objectives were implemented by from 80.0 to 151.8 %. Nevertheless, we recognize that the prepared strategic plan of activities of the College is too complicated, even meticulous, thus its rationalization really makes sense.

KFEECHE aims to promote all programs and participates in the exhibitions of studies each year, organizes open days, presentations in schools. The study program of Hydraulic Engineering was discussed in detail with water management companies and readjusted in accordance with the requirements of the operating legislation. A promotion plan of the study program has been worked out, which provides measures to promote the program and to attract entrants.

In the strategic plan of the College it is intended to improve communication with the alumni. It is foreseen to establish KFEECHE ALUMNI club and to activate collection of information necessary to improve study programs.

The College has signed a cooperation agreement with the VMU, where it is foreseen to concentrate efforts and attract students from Asian and Eastern European countries in order to fulfil the objective to reach the number of 2-5 percent of students from other countries by the year 2020.

Planning to expand applied research, the Council of the College approved priority research directions, on which it is expected to focus and to consistently develop. In the strategic plan of the College for the years 2013-2015 it is foreseen to concentrate the efforts of the staff on intensification of activities in the fields of landscape architecture, recreation, environmental engineering and on strengthening of the influence on the development of the country and different regions.

Director



Assoc. prof. Albinas Tebera

Self-evaluation team leader



Assoc. prof. Loreta Semaškiene