



STUDIJŲ KOKYBĖS VERTINIMO CENTRAS

KAUNO TECHNIKOS KOLEGIJA

VEIKLOS VERTINIMO IŠVADOS

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW REPORT

KAUNAS TECHNICAL COLLEGE

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. This report describes a review of Kaunas Technical College (the College¹) carried out in 2013 by a team of experts from Lithuania and other European countries (the team). The previous review of the College in 2008 made a number of recommendations, and the College's progress in relation to these is noted in the relevant places in the present report.
2. In advance of the site visit the College provided the team with a Self-Evaluation Report (SER) supported by detailed annexes. The SER had been prepared by a group broadly representative of the College community and its social partners, including a student representative. The SER covered the information required to prepare the team for its visit to the College and was presented in a clear format; it described its activities under each heading and provided suitable analysis of them, drawing conclusions about strengths and weaknesses and presenting aims for improvement. This showed the College's capacity for critical self-analysis.
3. Before visiting the College, members of the team reviewed the SER with its annexes, commenting on the points it made and the questions it prompted. Additional information was requested and supplied in advance of the site visit, and further documentation was supplied during the visit. In advance of the visit the team was provided with other background information, including an evaluation of learning resources by MOSTA. The team met in Vilnius immediately before the visit to the College for a day's training, including an overview of the national education system and preparation of the agenda. The visit took place over the three days 15 – 17 October 2013, and included a tour to review facilities and thirteen formal meetings. The team spent the day after the visit agreeing its judgements and drawing together material for its report, which was refined and finalized by email correspondence over the subsequent month.
4. The review team consisted of the following members.
 - Professor Bob Munn (U.K., team leader): independent consultant on quality in higher education, emeritus professor of chemical physics and formerly Vice-President for Teaching and Learning at the University of Manchester, with experience of reviewing institutions in the U.K., Lithuania, South Africa and Saudi Arabia.
 - Dr Frank McMahon (Ireland): Bologna Expert and former Director of Academic Affairs of the Dublin Institute of Technology, with experience of reviewing institutions in Switzerland, Mexico, Italy and Romania (among others) and of reviewing programmes in many countries including Lithuania.
 - Prof. dr José Sarsfield Cabral (Portugal): Pro-Rector at the University of Porto, responsible for the Quality Management Office, and Head of the Industrial Engineering Department of the Faculty of Engineering, with experience of reviewing institutions in Romania under the EUA Institutional Evaluation Program (IEP).
 - Doc. dr Vincentas Vytis Stragys (Lithuania, employer representative): managing director of the Lithuanian Association of Civil Engineers, currently a Vice-President of the European Council of Civil Engineers (ECCE), and formerly head of the Geotechnical Department at Vilnius Gediminas Technical University, with experience of reviewing programmes in Lithuania.

¹ Although the College refers to itself as Kaunas University of Applied Engineering Sciences in the English version of the SER and in other English publications, its title in the official State Register of Lithuania translates as 'College', and that will be used here; see also paragraph 51

- Dionis Martsinkevichus (Lithuania, student representative): President of the Student Council at Vilnius Gediminas Technical University, with experience of reviewing institutions and programmes in Lithuania.
- Pika Radmilovič (Slovenia, review secretary): head of the Quality Development Office at the University of Maribor, with experience of reviewing institutions in various countries under the EUA IEP.

The team was supported by an SKVC evaluation coordinator.

II. BACKGROUND INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSTITUTION

5. The College traces its origins continuously back to 1920, but in essentially its present form dates from 2002. It became a public institution in 2011. Its mission is to provide studies in engineering that meet local, national and European needs and standards, and to create and disseminate knowledge and advanced practical experience of applied science that contribute to economic development and competitiveness.
6. Accordingly, the College specializes in applied engineering sciences. Until the current academic year there were two faculties: Civil Engineering, with just over 500 students on two professional bachelor degree programmes (Bologna first cycle); and Electro-mechanics, with 1000 students on five professional bachelor degree programmes. Among the programmes, motor transport electronics and road construction engineering are unique among colleges in Lithuania. All programmes are offered both full-time and part-time.
7. From late 2012 the College underwent a number of structural changes, starting with the formation of a new College Council and leading to the appointment of a new Director in March 2013. It was decided to eliminate departments and to transfer their functions to study field committees. Moreover, recognizing that the College offers programmes in only one broad area, it was decided to join the two faculties into a single Faculty of Engineering Sciences. Because the new structure was implemented only on 2 September 2013, a few weeks before the review visit and after the SER was written, much of the information presented to the team necessarily related to the old structure, and there is little information yet about the performance of the College under the new structure. As result this report relates largely to performance under the old structure but is mostly expressed in terms of the new structure.

III. STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT

8. The Strategic Plan aligns with relevant internal and external documents, both national and European, as shown for the EHEA in particular by a detailed mapping, and the Plan is revised when these external factors change. The College is also trying to follow the expectations of the European Research Area, although its research activity is limited to applied research. The Strategic Plan seems generally comprehensive and workable, with components that appear to be valid and to work together. However, the SWOT analysis describes some opportunities that are internal rather than being dependent on the external environment as would be expected.
9. The strategic objectives in the College's Statute cover the areas of teaching and learning, applied research, development of teacher qualification, and regional and national impact, along with development of the College's management structure. These objectives and areas reflect the mission of the College, taking due account of the environment in which it

operates. In turn, the strategic areas are expanded into aims and tasks, with each task assigned to a responsible body and given an expected outcome and a suitable performance indicator. When it comes to implementing the Plan, the intended outcomes and performance measures are specified, together with the necessary analysis so that the overall position can be determined.

10. The 81 indicators in the Plan are a mixture of qualitative and quantitative measures that cover the full range of College activity. They are generally sound, but some could be stronger: e.g. updating a programme is not exactly the same as improving it, and the number of study programmes and subjects in foreign languages is only part of providing favourable conditions for incoming students. A good feature of the Plan is that it contains objectives and tasks that specifically address weaknesses identified in the College's SWOT analysis.
11. The monitoring indicators and outcomes allocate clear responsibilities; the Director monitors the implementation each year. Monitoring is also undertaken through reports that are widely disseminated and presented to a variety of meetings up to Academic Council and College Council, though open meetings are not well attended despite publicity. The reports for the last three years are used as a basis for planning for the next year at both College and department level, with input from external partners as well as from members of the College community including students.
12. Information about the Strategic Plan and its implementation is circulated among a wide range of internal and external groups in different formats suited to each. The SER acknowledges that external dissemination could still be improved, but the Annual Report for 2012 is detailed, informative and readable. The SER states that process management, data collection and systematic use of databases also need to be improved in order to eliminate weaknesses in monitoring of the College's plans. Accordingly, the College has developed a formal descriptor for the management of its strategic planning that should ensure systematic monitoring, consistent with the recommendation in the 2008 review. Nevertheless, from its meetings the team was generally satisfied that the College adheres to and implements its Strategic Plan. However, the recent reform of the organizational structure means that the action plan needs revising and updating, in order to ensure that its objectives are correctly deployed and aligned throughout the new structure and that all the necessary resources are assigned. The College indicated in the SER that it needed to install or enhance various information systems, and it appears that this has been done.
13. In its management of quality, the College operates to the ISO 9001:2008 standard; its performance was audited in April 2012 and again in January 2013. The resulting Quality Manual is rather high-level, dealing predominantly with roles and responsibilities without describing day-to-day quality activities, but these appear in procedural documents and feed into quality assurance and enhancement activities. There is a carefully detailed process for introducing, approving and monitoring a new programme. Overall, the quality management system is intended to satisfy the needs of customers, defined as students and employers, and is consistent with the recommendation in the 2008 report.
14. One feature of the quality system is the Quality Board, consisting of the Director, senior staff (heads of department until this academic year), a student representative, and an external quality expert. The central quality department that supports the Quality Board comprises a quality specialist, reporting directly to the Director, who monitors the various quality processes, while the quality research coordinator is mainly responsible for collecting, analysing and reporting on student feedback. The Quality Board is advisory, and meets every semester to provide strategic oversight of the system. It therefore appears to perform a

useful role in counterbalancing the formality of the system necessary to satisfy ISO 9001, and the team **commends** the Quality Board as good practice. The Director has also instituted monthly meetings for students.

15. The internal quality assurance system basically meets the requirements of the European Standards and Guidelines. Students are involved in the evaluation and improvement of study programmes, first as members of committees at all levels from study programme committees to College Council. Students also provide feedback to the College through teaching questionnaires issued by academic staff after each semester's teaching, and through questionnaires about the wider student experience issued centrally at the end of each year. The questionnaires are collected and analysed by central quality staff and the results go to study programme committees, the Quality Board, and Academic Council. Students receive results through various channels, including the learning management system Moodle, meetings and academic staff tutors, but they also expressed interest in being informed more broadly about quality processes and the present developments. The team thought this might usefully be done by providing students when they enrol with programme handbooks containing this sort of wider information as well as details of the whole programme including the arrangements for practice placements. The College specifies that reports of committee meetings should be made public on its website within three working days; however, those that the team tried to access appeared to be restricted to members of the relevant committee.
16. Overall, the quality management system is well established and documented, supported by functioning data collection and information systems, again consistent with the recommendation in the 2008 report. The quality-related information system covers students' satisfaction with their programmes and the effectiveness of teachers. However, the quality system and its procedures must be adjusted to fit the management structure resulting from the recent changes. The team **recommends** that, while maintaining compliance with the ISO 9001:2008 standard, the College should also make explicit the relationship between its quality system and its procedures with the European Standards and Guidelines for internal quality assurance within higher education institutions (ESG). The team also **recommends** that, in order to avoid the risk of the quality system being regarded as a separate autonomous management system, the College should integrate its quality procedures fully within its management procedures.
17. New teaching staff are expected to have at least a Master's degree, and practical experience relevant to their role. They are assigned a senior mentor for two years to assist with induction and training, but there is no formal training programme in pedagogy. Staff who need to improve their competence benefit from specific measures such as attendance at courses, while practice is also enhanced by drawing on expertise within the College on pedagogy. Teaching staff are accredited for a renewable period of five years.
18. The College says that staff assessment of their own performance needs to be further developed alongside the existing evaluation by students, and that staff performance needs to be evaluated at study field and institutional level. It was clear during the visit that this objective was being taken seriously. In particular, staff salaries depend on the assessment of their teaching quality on a points system that yields three overall levels of performance. The team therefore recognizes the College's intention to provide good teaching, but **recommends** that the College should enhance its arrangements by introducing a suitably resourced formal certificated course in higher education pedagogy that is mandatory for all new teaching staff. For efficiency such a course might usefully be arranged in collaboration with other higher education institutions in the area. Mandatory initial training could also provide an

opportunity to develop foreign language skills for new staff who lack them (not forgetting the need to develop language skills for those current staff who need them).

19. As already noted (paragraph 7), the College has recently made what appear to be appropriate changes in its structure in order to improve efficiency across its activities, consistent with the recommendation in the 2008 review. These changes, including replacement of the Director, were instituted by the College Council as a response to dissatisfaction with the College's performance amid increasing competition. This shows that the College Council is willing and able to evaluate the performance of the College and then to take and implement important strategic decisions designed to improve the performance. However, although the new structure had been implemented at the time of the visit, some changes required to support it (such as consequential amendments to the Quality Management System, the Quality Manual and related procedures) had still not been addressed. The team therefore **recommends** that the College should act promptly to ensure that all its procedures and documentation reflect its new structure. Documents such as the College's organizational structure diagram will also need to be updated as changes are implemented.
20. Academic departments have been abolished, and their duties have been taken over by three study field committees (transport and mechanical engineering; electrical power and electronics; and civil engineering), each responsible for two or three programmes with their own programme committees, within a single faculty. Teaching staff belong to one of these study field committees, the chair of which allocates teaching duties (possibly on a study programme for which a different field committee is responsible). Study field committees are responsible for peer review of teaching; they have members who liaise with the new Study Organization Department, which provides administrative support and is the primary point of liaison with students. Admissions and careers come under the new Study Communication and Careers Department. All these areas are overseen by the Vice-Director for Academic Activity.
21. Study field committees also each include a sub-unit responsible for the research of the academic staff within their field, which liaises with the Science and Innovation Service. The Vice-Director for Infrastructure and Development (a new position) oversees the Library and the Department of Information Technology, together with the Public Relations and Marketing Department, which is responsible for communications.
22. Although the study field committees are overseen by the Vice-Director for Academic Activity, the College structure still includes a single Faculty and a Dean. The SER is silent on the duties of the Dean, but the team learned that he maintains the relationship with social partners and develops new ones, obtaining the opinions of employers to help develop the College's study programmes. The Dean is also responsible for the relationship with students: he monitors their academic achievements and their social needs, and presents his findings to the administration. The team did not hear about any continuing role for the Faculty.
23. In reflecting on the new structure, the team felt that the name 'study field committees' did not fully convey the functions of these units: committees are deliberative bodies, whereas these are clearly organizational units. The team understood that, having abolished the former departments, the College wished not to re-use 'department', but **recommends** that the College should find a name more suitable for organizational units, such as 'divisions' or 'sections'. This could also facilitate international links, where comparable units might not understand how they could link with a committee.

24. In its management of human resources, the College recognizes the importance of employing, recruiting and developing suitable staff, as noted in paragraph 17, and it adopts open and systematic approaches to these aspects. Detailed analyses of the academic staff complement show that they have more than adequate qualifications and experience. The College used to have a rather high proportion of older academic staff, but this has reduced in recent years while the total number of teaching staff has remained essentially unchanged at just over 100, all with at least Master's degrees. Otherwise turnover is low, and this provides favourable circumstances for investment in staff development. About a quarter of staff have doctorates, and the College has a system of incentives and rewards for academic staff.
25. The SER acknowledges that administrative and support staff development is less well established, but plans to improve this are in hand. The team suggests that these plans should also include improving foreign language competences to support the College's international activities (see also paragraph 18). The team also **recommends** that the College should consider the introduction of a personal review and development system that would ensure that all employees, whether academic, administrative or support staff, review their performance in the previous year and agree with their manager the priorities for the year ahead. Nevertheless, in general the College manages its staff pro-actively and effectively.
26. Process management is informed by ISO 9001:2008, with well-defined roles for the full range of individuals, committees and stakeholders, consistent with the recommendation in the 2008 report. For example, employees are invited to become involved in the decision-making process at least every six months by attending general meetings to address important problems. Accordingly, continuous improvement is intended as an integral part of the College's processes, and as already noted, the operational plan is specifically directed towards eliminating weaknesses.
27. Optimization is an essential feature of the ISO standard that the College follows, and accordingly there is a formal Quality Improvement Plan. This has recently been updated. However, like the Quality Manual it needs further updating to reflect the recent structural changes. Additionally, the units or persons now in charge of producing the quality improvement plan need to be clearly specified. The SER identifies a number of risks, and the College told the team that it undertakes formal risk analysis.
28. The College has a broad programme of improvement of learning spaces, equipment and IT facilities, including some in cooperation with other HEIs, for example Kaunas University of Technology. The team **commends** as good practice the effective use of EU structural funds for this purpose. The College's account of this programme all seems reasonable, though it does not make clear exactly how the College sets its priorities. The facilities that the team saw, including some newly fitted-out learning spaces with new equipment, appeared appropriate for the subjects, level and number of students taught. Students who met the team confirmed that equipment was generally adequate and was improving year by year, though there was room for further improvement by the acquisition of more and better equipment. The buildings that the team saw were not accessible for disabled students and staff, and the team **recommends** that the College should consider its policy on access and support for disabled people.
29. The Library was not mentioned in the SER (apart from stating that the College belongs to the Lithuanian College Library Association), and the Librarian was not among the staff the College provided for the formal meetings. However, the team did meet the Librarian in the Library, which appeared adequate, and students were satisfied with what was provided, though some found what they needed elsewhere and so did not use the Library. In view of

the rather low profile of the Library and the development of e-learning facilities (see paragraph 30), the team **recommends** that the College should review its policy on library and information services with the assistance of a committee that should include staff and students.

30. The recent extension of wi-fi access across the College and the provision of Moodle as the learning management system are enhancements that appear to be well appreciated by students. Between them, they will provide better support for independent, part-time and distance learning, and the team **commends** as good practice the introduction of Moodle as an effective enhancement of learning opportunities for students. However, students would benefit if more informal learning spaces were provided, with places to re-charge laptops.
31. More than 80% of the College's income is allocated by the State. Managing the College's finances has been complicated by fluctuations in various factors, while the accounting basis has had to change from funds to accruals. The SER describes how the funds are controlled and how they are spent. The Director has considerable freedom to allocate the funds available within the agreed budget, although any significant structural changes are subject to approval by the College Council. The management of the College's finances appears to be well conducted.
32. The College has codes of ethics for staff and students, and alleged breaches are considered by the Professional Ethics Committee of the Academic Council; there is also a Dispute Resolution Commission. For students, adherence to the code of ethics falls within the regulations to which they sign up on entry, but plagiarism does not appear to be a significant problem.
33. In respect of strategic management, the College believes its strengths lie in the Strategic Plan, its use of the ISO standard, the active engagement of various deliberative bodies, and the competence of its teaching staff. Against these, it sets weaknesses in its performance monitoring, its staff evaluation and enhancement, and its communications.
34. Overall, this is a fair assessment: the College gives a broadly persuasive account of strategic planning and implementation. All the components of strategic planning are carried out: mission, vision, objectives, action plans, indicators and feed-back. The recent structural and organizational changes have been significant and mean that action plans need to be revised and updated and assigned the necessary resources. Some consequential changes need to be implemented without delay (see paragraph 19), and the full effect of the changes will not be evident for some time. Nevertheless, the new structure appears fit for purpose and capable of supporting continuing good strategic management at the College.

Judgement on the area: Strategic Management is given positive evaluation

IV. ACADEMIC STUDIES AND LIFELONG LEARNING

35. The College provided a detailed analysis to show how the programmes it offers are explicitly related to its mission, to local and national economic needs, and to international expectations, and it confirmed that its programmes accord with the Lithuanian qualifications framework, consistent with the fact that all are fully accredited. The programmes are valued by the College's social partners, who regard them as making a substantial contribution to both the regional and the national economy. Graduates of the programmes who met the team

indicated that the education they received at the College and the qualification they gained had contributed greatly to their personal success in their careers.

36. The College shows considerable commitment to lifelong learning, which is offered in a range of carefully thought-through packages related to the needs of learners, employers and society. These packages have proved attractive to students, but the number enrolled has fallen in recent years. Students can enter by recognition of prior qualifications, with full or partial qualifications from other higher education institutions recognized for entry or as part of their programme. They can study full time (FT) or part time (PT) for professional bachelor's degrees or other formal or local certification. The College also collaborates in providing 'bridge' programmes to prepare its graduates for entry to universities, and the team heard from a representative of one such university that the length of its bridging course was being reduced because of the high level of practical skills possessed by the College's graduates.
37. Part-time programmes are carefully planned, though PT students have decreased from about half to a third of the total as full-time employment has become harder to obtain. However, the team learned that sometimes PT students may receive their timetable only the day before it starts, leaving too little time to make the necessary arrangements, e.g. with employers. The team was also told that PT students do not have the same opportunities for feedback on teaching as the FT ones. Students may request a personalized timetable. The College is taking steps to formalize and quality assure recognition of informally acquired competences; the College also recognizes and accredits prior certificated learning, for example from other higher education institutions. Part-time, distance and lifelong learning are supported by a range of mechanisms including tutorials and the Moodle virtual learning environment.
38. The SER presents an analysis of drop-out and its causes for FT and PT students. Although FT drop-out rates have fallen from 50 to 30%, PT drop-out rates have remained steady at around 50%, though sometimes that represents students who move abroad for work. Students told the team that some students dropped out during the first year because their programmes initially contained too much basic maths and physics and too little of the engineering they were expecting. When the team raised this point with teaching staff, some thought the initial maths and physics teaching was essential preparation for the engineering, while others thought this material could be reduced in volume or postponed. The team *recommends* that in order to counter drop-out the College should consider how best to motivate students early in their programmes, perhaps by visits to engineering companies and by relevant group projects in the College. Some students and graduates told the team they would have liked more practical, and hence the team *recommends* that the College should keep under review the balance between the practical and theoretical components in the curriculum.
39. The College collects information on graduate employment by a variety of methods, though it recognizes some difficulties in obtaining reliable data. The results show a satisfactory picture relative to comparable institutions, with rates having increased to above 80% in the last two years. The College seeks to enhance employability (having taken advice from employers) by offering students optional courses to broaden their programme, and supports students by developing career management activities. Graduates and social partners confirmed that the College's degrees provided valuable preparation for employment, especially in their strongly practical orientation.
40. Although the College clearly remains in contact with some of its graduates, there appears to be no formal alumni association. Such a body could facilitate social and professional interaction among graduates, assist the College in its portfolio planning and marketing, and

lead to donations to support aspects of its work such as student facilities and research activity. Hence the team **recommends** that the College should explore the establishment of an alumni association.

41. The College cooperates with universities, other colleges, training institutions and schools across a range of areas to enhance teaching methodology and curricula. Cooperation with universities (especially Kaunas University of Technology, and also Vytautas Magnus University and Vilnius Gediminas Technical University) supports student transfers, staff exchanges, curriculum updating, methodological development, sharing of teaching facilities and expertise, internal quality assurance, and joint student activities. Cooperation with other colleges including Lithuania Business College, Klaipėda State College, Šiauliai State College and Panevėžys College includes harmonization of curricula, enhancement of teaching, and joint research. Cooperation with training institutions and schools encourages and facilitates entry to the College.
42. The College also cooperates with employers and their representatives to provide professional and practical updating of curricula and of its academic staff and its partners' employees. Businesses provide projects for students and practice placements, which are well organized, with both an industrial supervisor and a College supervisor from the teaching staff, and the business partners expressed themselves satisfied with the arrangements. Social partners provide specialist teachers for the College and assessors of student work, especially final theses; they also contribute to work groups formed to consider new or updated programmes, although the team believes that the College could seek the advice of social partners on its programme portfolio more systematically. Overall, the College cooperates actively with a wide range of partners for mutual benefit, and there may be scope for extending current types of collaboration to additional partners.
43. The College's portfolio of programmes is focused in selected areas of engineering. It is not clear that there is a systematic process of portfolio review, although changes are made, most recently to merge Exploitation of Electricity Economy and Electronic Building Control Systems, where recruitment was disappointing, into Electric Energy and Electronic Engineering . The range of programmes is generally seen as appropriate by students, graduates, employers and social partners, and the College is concerned to maintain quality rather than quantity. However, the current student body is overwhelmingly male, and the team **recommends** that the College should consider expanding its portfolio to include programmes such as design that might be of more interest to female students. This should help recruitment by widening the pool of possible entrants, and – as students commented – could be beneficial for the social environment in the College. The team also heard a suggestion from one graduate that hydraulic engineering would be a useful addition.
44. The team encourages the College to continue to improve its relations with secondary schools and enhance recruitment by its programme of visiting schools to tell pupils about the College and explain about engineering science, alongside the 'Doors Open' days when schools are invited to visit the College for activities to give a flavour of college life. Senior students and recent graduates could talk about how their time at the College had helped them. At present the College's approach to publicity and marketing is rather fragmented between separate staff responsible for the maintenance of facilities, the definition of standards, and the provision of content. Recruitment and awareness of the College generally would be improved by a more integrated approach that gave the College a more modern and consistent image.
45. The SER provides a detailed and persuasive mapping to show that the College follows relevant EHEA and EU provisions, consistent with the recommendation in the 2008 report.

Candidates for Professional Bachelor degrees must achieve 180 ECTS for first-cycle degrees as required both nationally and by the EHEA (Bologna Process). Learning outcomes are used at both programme and module level, with ECTS credits used for all programmes. The College does not require all modules to be of a standard size (e.g. 5 ECTS or a multiple of 5) but may wish to consider the benefits of such an approach in facilitating student choice and transfer between programmes. All graduates are issued with a Diploma Supplement in both Lithuanian and English, in accordance with the template.

46. The College has a policy and associated procedures for the assurance of the quality and standards of its programmes and awards, with roles for students and other stakeholders in the procedures. It has committed itself explicitly to the development of a culture which recognises the importance of quality, and quality assurance, in their work. There are formal mechanisms for the approval, periodic review and monitoring of programmes and awards, and currently all programmes are recognized by SKVC. There are published criteria for the assessment of students, and students who met the panel expressed themselves happy with the arrangements. As noted earlier (paragraphs 17 and 24), the College has satisfactory criteria for the recruitment and appointment of teaching staff but should enhance its arrangements for initial training. The resources available for the support of student learning are adequate and appropriate for each programme offered, and the recent introduction of the Moodle e-learning platform should help all students, especially part-time ones.
47. Students can raise complaints with the student representative on the programme committee, with their mentor (a senior student responsible for a group of students), and ultimately with the students' union. Otherwise students go to the Study Organization Department, and if that does not work they can arrange a meeting with the Director. Students who met the team were satisfied that every student counts because the College is small, and they reported that problems are solved promptly.
48. The College collects and analyses a great deal of data on student and graduate performance, and this information is discussed at Academic Council and other appropriate formal and informal meetings. The College makes information publicly available on its website, but the College needs to ensure that the information is regularly updated to remain current.
49. There is limited outward international mobility of staff, which has been reducing, and the College needs to ensure that members of teaching staff can take opportunities to travel abroad to higher education institutions or companies. There is also a small number of international student exchanges in each direction, in recent years five for academic study and seven for international work placement per annum. This is well short of the Bologna target of 20% per cohort by 2020, but more in line with what the team understands is the current national target of 2,5% per annum. Outgoing students benefit greatly from their time abroad (typically under the Erasmus programme), but incoming students have been almost entirely for practice rather than study. Having analysed the reason for this imbalance, the College plans to redress it by offering courses intended to be more attractive by being given in English or in Russian. The College might also increase the number of incoming students by using agents in target countries.
50. The College has signed a range of international agreements with institutions in countries including the Czech Republic, Hungary, Latvia, Malta, and Portugal, and is investigating the possibility of partnerships with foreign companies that would provide practice placements abroad. The team would encourage this development, as this makes it easier for the curriculum to accommodate overseas experience in addition to the mandatory practice placement. Students who met the team said that the timing of placements was not always

convenient, and the College might usefully discuss with students the best timing, as well as considering whether the curriculum provides enough credits for activities undertaken away from the College.

51. The College is taking steps to offer programmes in a foreign language, but needs to develop English versions of its web-pages, which are currently not accessible for foreign students, except for a welcome page. The team **recommends** that, in order to support its international marketing, the College should ensure that it maintains complete and updated English versions of relevant web-pages. The College's communications in English also risk misleading potential incoming students about the exact status of the College by giving its title as 'University of Applied Engineering Sciences' when direct translation of its official title from Lithuanian does not include the word 'university'. To avoid this risk of confusion, the team **recommends** that the College should explore ways of expressing its name in English and other languages that do not include the word 'university'.
52. In respect of academic studies and lifelong learning, the College believes its strengths lie in its relevant, flexible, high-quality, well-resourced and well-appreciated programmes. Against these, it acknowledges weaknesses in its development of distance learning and recognition of prior informal learning, and inadequate international mobility, made worse by problems over foreign languages. The team broadly agrees with this analysis, while noting that the College is taking suitable steps to address the weaknesses identified, but **recommends** that the College should strengthen its internationalization efforts (see paragraphs 18, 25, 51). Nevertheless, overall the College provides a range of programmes that are suited to its mission and are subject to careful quality assurance.

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

V. RESEARCH AND ART

53. The College's broad research areas include education, pedagogy and quality assurance; labour market requirements; and engineering topics that include civil engineering, transport engineering, mechanical engineering, and electric power and electronic engineering. These areas and their outputs relate suitably to the College's mission and strategy and to regional and national priorities, as shown by detailed mapping. In future, the College expects the proportion of research related to engineering to increase. The College does not undertake any activities classed as art.
54. Research is disseminated through publications, including the College's own journal, *Engineering and Educational Technologies*, accessible online, and through conferences. This research activity serves to keep teachers up to date, and is also used to enrich curricula. The College produces a steady stream of journal and conference publications, predominantly published in Lithuanian, as would be expected. Although the SER said that publications are disseminated by being made available through Moodle, access appears to be restricted to internal users: from outside, the team was unable to access any research publications on Moodle, although it did find information on the College's website about applied research and consultancy activities and capabilities. Contract research yields reports, and there is a modest amount of consultancy, which the College actively seeks through local partnerships.
55. The College offers various incentives for staff to undertake research activities. It encourages staff to work for a doctorate, and it recognizes research in assessing and rewarding good staff performance. Staff who have a PhD are entitled to become an Associate Professor (Docent).

Research may be facilitated by providing leave and expenses to attend conferences. However, like all colleges the College lacks access to national funding for these various stimulation activities and so for funding relies largely on collaboration with companies.

56. Partners play a significant role in providing contexts and funding for research activity and in attending conferences organized by the College at which the results of its research are disseminated, which the team *commends* as good practice. The College offers less direct evidence about how its partners impact on its research rather than the other way round, but the willingness of partners to support research clearly influences what research is actually done. Social partners who met the team confirmed that the College research did have some impact. The College is also exploring the possibility of three-way research collaborations that involve one partner in Lithuania and another abroad, either of which may be a higher education institution or a business partner, and the team would encourage this approach, which could also lead to more overseas practical placements.
57. Student graduation theses contribute to the research work of the College as well as to the development of the students themselves, and are often implemented in practice (see also paragraph 61 below). Since students constitute a ready supply of research workers – although their skills are necessarily limited at this stage – the team *recommends* that the College should seek ways to optimize the range and impact of graduation thesis work, possibly involving coordinated investigations among groups of students.
58. In respect of research, the College believes that its strengths are the relevance and significance of its research and its effective dissemination. The College identifies weaknesses as too few contracts and consultancies; insufficient research competence of some staff; and the lack of research with international partners and of participation in scientific research projects. However, although improvements in the last two areas may well be desirable, the College's mission is not required to include international research and contracts and it cannot access the same funding as universities.
59. Overall, the applied research undertaken at the College is appropriate in type and scale for its mission. It yields a good number of published outputs and is influential in a modest way, with a direct orientation towards the needs of social partners that will be increased by the intended increase in the proportion of engineering research. The principal constraint on the College's research is the lack of funding to improve staff qualifications and to support research activity itself. A broader funding base is being actively sought but greater success may depend on finding innovative approaches to this problem.

Judgement on the area: Research and Art is given positive evaluation

VI. IMPACT ON REGIONAL AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

60. The SER carefully describes how the College's activities align with regional and national development goals in general terms, but does not describe the impact of its activities or give any ways of measuring the impact. Specific College activities also produce a range of outcomes relevant to regional and national development goals (for example, developing applied research with several companies in the region and providing consultative training for employees of over 100 companies), but it does not appear that the College evaluates these routinely and systematically. However, social partners who met the team strongly confirmed the relevance and importance of the College's activities to regional and national goals in its areas of activity, notably in the broad area of transport, where the Vice-Minister at the

Ministry of for Transport and Communication, the Executive Director of the Lithuanian Roads Association and the Executive Director of the Lithuanian Builders' Association (among others) spoke eloquently in support of what they saw as the College's strategic role.

61. Graduation theses are all related to practice through practical projects, development of training materials for employees, and investigations related to the needs of companies, as confirmed by the extensive list of theses, which show a consistently high level of achievement. However, rather few theses appear to be specifically commissioned by companies, and there may be scope to increase the proportion of these relative to desk-based studies.
62. Staff are involved in a wide range of local and national professional, political and social activities. For example, staff are involved with professional associations including the Lithuanian Confederation of Industrialists, the Lithuanian Electricity Association, the Lithuanian College Library Association and the Lithuanian Adult Education Association; several staff members are involved in activities of political parties (one being an adviser to a member of parliament); and students and teachers were involved in social action on renovation of the embankment of the Nemunas River. As a result, the College is clearly well known and recognized, as the range of social partners who met the team confirms.
63. In relation to this area, the College argues that its strengths are the inclusion of impact on regional and local development in its mission and strategy; the effectiveness of its student practice and thesis work and of its training of specialists; and the active external engagement of its staff. It sees weaknesses in communication and hence translation of research into practice; in links with trade governing bodies; and in the limited use of its facilities to provide services to external bodies.
64. Overall, the impact of the College is substantial considering its small size, though there remains scope for development. Its reputation among its social partners and its orientation towards regional and national needs in the area of engineering together constitute a good basis for further work, such as widening its portfolio of programmes (see paragraph 38) and using its renewed laboratory facilities to provide more lifelong learning or opportunities for companies to conduct their own investigations.

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

VII. GOOD PRACTICE AND ENHANCEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

May also include part of recommendations for authorities (Ministry, etc.) for improvement

65. The team commends as **good practice** the following
 - The advisory Quality Board, which serves to counterbalance the formality of the system necessary to satisfy ISO 9001 (paragraph 14)
 - The effective use of EU structural funds for improvement of learning spaces, equipment and IT facilities (paragraph 28)
 - The introduction of Moodle as an effective enhancement of learning opportunities for students (paragraphs 30, 37)
 - The strongly practical orientation of the study programmes, which is greatly appreciated by students, graduates, employers and social partners (paragraph 39)
 - The dissemination of research through conferences aimed at partners (paragraph 56)

- The College's excellent links with a wide range of influential social partners (paragraph 60)

66. The team **recommends** that to enhance quality the College should

- make explicit the relationship between its quality system and its procedures with the European Standards and Guidelines (paragraph 16)
- integrate its quality procedures fully within its management procedures (paragraph 16)
- introduce a suitably resourced formal certificated course in higher education pedagogy that is mandatory for all new teaching staff (paragraph 18)
- act promptly to ensure that all its procedures and documentation reflect its new structure (paragraphs 19, 27, 33)
- find a name for study field committees that is more suitable for organizational units (paragraph 23)
- consider the introduction of a personal review and development system that would ensure that all academic, administrative and support staff agree with their manager the priorities for the year ahead (paragraph 25)
- consider its policy on access and support for disabled people (paragraph 28)
- review its policy on library and information services with the assistance of a committee that should include staff and students (paragraph 29)
- consider how best to motivate students early in their programmes in order to counter drop-out (paragraph 38)
- keep under review the balance between the practical and theoretical components in the curriculum (paragraph 38)
- explore the establishment of an alumni association (paragraph 40)
- consider expanding its portfolio to include programmes such as design that might be of more interest to female students (paragraph 43)
- ensure that it maintains complete and updated English versions of relevant web-pages (paragraph 51)
- explore ways of expressing its name in English and other languages that do not include the word 'university' or equivalent (paragraph 51)
- strengthen its internationalization efforts (paragraph 52)
- seek ways to optimize the range and impact of graduation thesis work (paragraph 57)

VIII. JUDGEMENT

Kaunas Technical College is given positive evaluation

Grupės vadovas:

Team leader:

Prof. Robert William Munn

Grupės nariai:

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ANNEX. KAUNAS TECHNICAL COLLEGE RESPONSE TO REVIEW REPORT

ANNEX. KAUNAS TECHNICAL COLLEGE RESPONSE TO REVIEW REPORT

Kaunas technical college has analysed the presented review report and states:

- We haven't noticed any actual discrepancies between the data and facts presented in the self-assessment report and the facts established during the site visit at the College;
- We agree with the experts' findings and recommendations that could be used to increase the efficiency of the services provided as well as the College competitiveness in the education market.
- We state that after the visit the College has implemented some activities related to the findings of the expert group (see Table 1):

Table 1

Kaunas Technical College activities implemented after the expert group visit

Recommendation	Implemented
Make explicit the relationship between its quality system and its procedures with the European Standards and Guidelines	Study quality assurance policy and quality improvement strategy for 2014 – 2015 was developed and approved by the Academic Council.
Integrate its quality procedures fully within its management procedures	<p>The Academic Council performed changes in the following documents that regulate procedures related to management structure changes:</p> <p><i>Order of Kaunas Technical College teachers' practical activity traineeship</i></p> <p><i>Order of Kaunas Technical College course (module) certification</i></p> <p><i>Regulations of Kaunas Technical College course (module) performance and assessment</i></p> <p><i>Description of Kaunas Technical College study programme management order</i></p> <p><i>Kaunas Technical College study regulation</i></p> <p><i>Description of general requirements for practice</i></p> <p><i>Order of opportunity to study according to individual schedule and academic debt recovery by course revision</i></p>

	The regulations and job descriptions of all structural departments were completed.
Consider how best to motivate students early in their programmes in order to counter drop-out	Student motivation program was developed. The first event (a week of engineering popularisation „Open the World of Engineering“) will take place on 3-7 of March, 2014.
Consider expanding its portfolio to include programmes such as design that might be of more interest to female students	A summary of the intended to implement study programme „Building Restoration Technologies“ was presented for the Academic Council assessment.
Ensure that it maintains complete and updated English versions of relevant web-pages	A publicity project is implemented which aim is to update the College website completely, including the English version.
Seek ways to optimize the range and impact of graduation thesis work	At present the study programme committees together with labour market representatives update the methodological guidance of graduation thesis work.

- We think that the recommendations provided by the expert group are reasoned and useful for the further College development. The College community thanks the international expert group and the representatives of Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education for the competent performance during the visit and the recommendations.

Director

Nerijus Varnas