



CENTER FOR QUALITY ASSESSMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION

OVERVIEW REPORT FOR NUTRITION STUDY FIELD

2021 year of the evaluation

Expert panel:

1. Prof. dr. Fiona McCullough, *academic;*
2. Prof. dr. Francisco J. Barba, *academic;*
3. Prof. dr. Suzana Rimac-Brnčić, *academic;*
4. Prof. dr. Edita Gaveliene, *representative of social partners;*
5. Miss Pegi Pavletić, *students' representative.*

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I. INTRODUCTION

The overview is based on the external quality evaluation of the Nutrition study field in the following Lithuanian Higher Education Institutions (HEIs): *Klaipeda State University of Applied Sciences, Vilnius University of Applied sciences and Kaunas University of Applied sciences*.

The external evaluation was organised by the Lithuanian Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education (SKVC).

Comprehensive external evaluation reports including strengths and weaknesses and concluding with recommendations were prepared separately for first and second cycle field studies and included evaluation marks. This overview focuses on the main findings of the external evaluation of the Nutrition field from a general point of view.

Based on the findings of the evaluation, the expert panel has come to a decision to give a **positive** evaluation to the following HEIs: *Klaipeda State University of Applied Sciences, Vilnius University of Applied sciences and Kaunas University of Applied sciences*.

On the basis of external evaluation report of the study field SKVC takes a decision to accredit study field and cycle for 7 years for all 3 Colleges, based on the strong scores achieved.

BRIEF BACKGROUND

Nutrition study field is important in Lithuania, for various reasons. These are mainly the Health concerns of the population and also on a national and regional level, well-trained specialists in this field are in demand. One of the main directions of the strategy is to prolong productive and healthy life expectancy, improving the training of healthy lifestyle skills for the population, including the improvement of nutrition habits and the management of harmful health factors (excessive alcohol consumption, smoking). Hence, management of health concerns of the population and also on a national and regional level, well-trained specialists in this field are in demand. The benefit of graduates' involvement in the treatment of diet related diseases and in public health and disease prevention has become more apparent from clinical research and developments. This has resulted in an increased number of students being trained across Lithuania in the last 10 years, with an expansion to the current 3 programme offered in different regions, from the initial programme in Vilnius.

II. STUDY FIELD OVERVIEW BY EVALUATION AREAS

Overall observations by the expert panel regarding the most positive aspects of the study field in Lithuanian HEIs as well as areas in need of improvement. The analysis covers all 7 evaluation areas.

3.1. Intended and achieved learning outcomes and curriculum

The 3 programme are all executed and systematically updated following the national and international strategic documents and plans governing the policy and development of nutrition specialists for a range of roles. The aims and outcomes of the programmes are based on the objectives set out in Government legislation. The organisers of the study programmes update the programme content and learning outcomes accordingly.

The existing coherence between the programme content and qualification awarded enables the specialists prepared under the Nutrition study field to work in the health, food industry, kindergarten and sport nutrition sector. A strength at Klaipeda College was that the mapping provided of the course content was comprehensive and is very easy for students and other stakeholders to access and understand.

Strengths at Vilnius included:

1. The learning outcomes of the programme are comprehensive and support development of graduates with both nutritional science and clinical nutrition expertise.
2. A varied range of theses are completed by students providing useful research outcomes to further inform and develop the teaching and practice of the graduates.

3.2. Links between science (art) and studies

All 3 programmes provided evidence of ongoing development and progress in the area of linking the science and students, for both students and staff development.

Strengths at Klaipeda include:

Collaboration with a broad range of social partners and well established ongoing contact with alumni, utilising their feedback and involvement which enhances the quality of the study program and keeps the content updated.

Organisation of Scientific Conferences benefits students from involvement and also academic staff professional development.

Involvement of students in research activities enables them to gain useful understanding of the research process, as well as experience and confidence in this key area.

Vilnius:

Well established and effective research projects and collaborations, resulting in a commendable number of peer reviewed scientific publications.

Researchers maintain formal and informal collaborations with research groups from abroad. The number of involved students within research activities/projects increased in last period and is projected to further increase in the future.

Kaunas:

An adequate number of papers is published in respectable journals.

Weaknesses

Klaipėda:

The Academic staff have no publications in Web of Science and research activity is less well developed at international level.

The level of participation of staff and students within EU programmes is limited, although this has been impacted by Covid recently.

Kaunas:

The number of published papers with international researchers is limited.

The number of publications was limited in the specialist area of clinical nutrition.

More domestic scientist teaching staff should be encouraged to participate within EU and other international projects.

Vilnius:

Participation in international funding programs should be more encouraged since scientific research is important, a clear strategy should be defined showing the expected income in the coming period. It is therefore a strong recommendation to adopt a research funding strategy to ensure the sustainability of scientific research.

It is recommended to include as many new technologies as possible in the curriculum to increase student interest in scientific activities consistent with their study cycle

3.3. Student admission and support

For all 3 programmes the admission process is appropriate and transparent. The criteria are clearly stated, as well as the student selection process based on their competitive score and the enrollment process. Information on admission requirements, competitive score and support services is available to the students online, through the webpage of the institution. The procedure for awarding additional points to all entrants is established and approved by the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Lithuania. Significant investment has occurred in the areas of student support.

Strengths

Klaipėda:

Staff across the College consistently support the proactivity of the students which enhances the student experience.

Diverse and well resources student support and counseling services.

Kaunas:

Staff are committed to providing diverse and broad mobility opportunities.

Broad and well-implemented network of support services.

Well developed and functioning system of recognition of non-formal and informal competencies.

Vilnius:

Consistency in providing a relevant range of services to the students.

Weaknesses

Klaipėda:

Low mobility rates and the diversity of mobility opportunities.

Kaunas:

Less established inclusion of underrepresented (LGBTQI+, students-young parents etc.) and vulnerable students' groups in students' activities

Vilnius:

A lack of diversity of the provided opportunities for students (in terms of mobility programs, scholarships from non-governmental sector, student-led initiatives and programmes).

A lack of inclusion of vulnerable and underrepresented groups into the academic communities at the institution.

3.4. Teaching and learning, student performance and graduate employment

Academic staff interviewed at all 3 Colleges were committed teachers, reaming knowledgeable in their subject area and student focused.

Strengths

Klaipėda:

The staff are committed to being flexible and making timely changes within the study program, enabling agile adaptation to external requirements and helping maintain the high quality of student experience

Excellent conditions for learning, especially the facilities available for student learning, such as the comprehensive library base.

Kaunas:

Flexible change of the study program, adapting to external requirements.

Excellent conditions for learning, such as the excellent library facilities

Vilnius:

Flexible model which allows timely change of the study program in order to adapt to external requirements.

Excellent conditions for learning such as library facilities and number of books and journals available.

Weaknesses:

Klaipėda:

Limited focus (related to amount of staff expertise available as noted in 3.5) to support the development of skills and abilities of a clinical dietitian amongst the students. This is particularly relevant since more jobs in the area of health are emerging in Lithuania.

Kaunas:

Some, but limited, attention to the development of skills and abilities required by a clinical dietitian.

3.5. Teaching staff

All 3 Colleges are committed to recruiting high quality teachers to deliver the varied content of the nutrition programme.

Strengths

Klaipėda:

Teachers have supportive conditions for enhancing their teaching practice and ongoing improvement.

Teachers have a strong knowledge through substantial experience and training in the subject areas of food technology and public health issues.

Kaunas:

Academic staff feel very supported by the College, especially through the in house training provided.

Vilnius:

There are several opportunities for mobility at a national and international level.
Strong collaboration remotely with other universities, even during the pandemic
Not only students and staff mobility between universities, but also at a professional level.

Weaknesses

Klaipėda:

A smaller number of teachers are specialist in the area of clinical nutrition.

Kaunas and Vilnius:

There is a need for further networking and internationalisation to acquire more knowledge and background from international institutions.

3.6. Learning facilities and resources

At all 3 Colleges adequate facilities and resources were reported by students and also staff and there has been appropriate investment in specialist equipment and laboratories.

Strengths

Klaipėda:

Collaboration with the external partners in providing practical competencies for the students.

Dedication to providing student support.

The availability of numerous international databases of full-text scientific articles.

Virtual electronic learning environment with teaching material is in place.

Kaunas:

Substantial variety of electronic services offered by the Library ensuring that the students are fully supported, especially when studying remotely due to placement or other reasons.

The availability of numerous international databases of full-text scientific articles.

Vilnius:

The steady and progressive quality enhancement of the Library services and literature.

Collaboration on students' practical competencies with the external partners.

The availability of numerous databases of titles that support high level research and teaching.

Weaknesses

Vilnius:

Quality of the students' accommodation facilities is variable. Ongoing upgrading should continue and this relates mainly to the age of the buildings.

Kaunas:

Windows software in the Library is quite old (Windows XP Professional, Microsoft Office 2003 Professional).

3.7. Study quality management and public information

All 3 Colleges have appropriate quality processes in place to collect targeted data on study compliance and analyses feedback information obtained from annual social participant surveys. Information on final thesis and other quality assurance data is available to the public.

Strengths

Kaunas:

Effective links between University and the range of key stakeholders.

Vilnius:

Feedback procedure for improving the quality of studies is well established. The learning outcomes of the programme, study subjects and their arrangement in semesters, qualification degree and professional qualification are named and transparently advertised.

III. EXAMPLES OF EXCELLENCE

At all 3 Colleges the academic staff teams were impressive in their enthusiasm for delivering and further developing the programme in the future.

In addition, at Vlinius College, the high quality research outputs of the academic staff are worthy of recognition.

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

MAIN STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE IMPROVEMENT IN NUTRITION STUDY FIELD

- **Strategic recommendations for the Higher Education Institutions (at institutional level):**
- **VILNIUS**

Evaluation Area	Recommendations for the Evaluation Area (study cycle)
Intended and achieved learning outcomes and curriculum	Continue to update these as required.
Links between science (art) and studies	Continue to develop noble research areas to involve students in the research process and conference presentations.
Student admission and support	Consider how students requiring additional support can have their needs met.
Teaching and learning, student performance and graduate	Continue to support students to progress to a varied range of employment opportunity and postgraduate study

employment	
Teaching staff	Encourage staff to broaden collaboration networks and international mobility opportunities
Learning facilities and resources	Ensure all accommodation meets student expectations.
Study quality management and public information	Continue to publish performance data transparently

➤ **KLAIPĒDA**

Evaluation Area	Recommendations for the Evaluation Area (study cycle)
Intended and achieved learning outcomes and curriculum	Continue to update these as required.
Links between science (art) and studies	Increase staff support to improve the publication record of staff and collaboration within and beyond the EU.
Student admission and support	Encourage student mobility and the recognition of formal and informal learning on admission.
Teaching and learning, student performance and graduate employment	Increase the focus on clinical dietetics within the curriculum.
Teaching staff	Encourage staff mobility, increase the number of clinical dietitian specialists on the staff.
Learning facilities and resources	Continue to upgrade facilities as required.

Study quality management and public information	Continue to audit and present findings transparently.
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➤ **KAUNAS**

Evaluation Area	Recommendations for the Evaluation Area (study cycle)
Intended and achieved learning outcomes and curriculum	Continue to update learning outcomes as required.
Links between science (art) and studies	Encourage staff to develop research networks and collaborations to enhance evidence based teaching provided.
Student admission and support	Continue to develop inclusion of under represented groups.
Teaching and learning, student performance and graduate employment	Continue to develop support to students with learning difference and other challenges.
Teaching staff	Encourage staff mobility.
Learning facilities and resources	Continue to upgrade facilities and resources as required, especially in the area of information technology.
Study quality management and public information	Continue to audit and publish findings transparently.

- **Strategic recommendations for the Ministry of Education and Science and Sport (at national level):**

1. Continue to monitor employment rates of the Nutrition graduates, especially in the area of clinical nutrition and ensure that number of students trained meets the demand.

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