



STUDIJŲ KOKYBĖS VERTINIMO CENTRAS

**KAUNO KOLEGIJOS
STUDIJŲ PROGRAMOS
IKIMOKYKLINIS UGDYMAS (653X11004)
VERTINIMO IŠVADOS**

**EVALUATION REPORT
OF *PRE-SCHOOL EDUCATION*
STUDY PROGRAMME (653X11004)
AT KAUNAS COLLEGE**

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DUOMENYS APIE ĮVERTINTĄ PROGRAMĄ

Studijų programos pavadinimas	Ikimokyklinis ugdymas
Valstybinis kodas	653X11004
Studijų sritis	Socialiniai mokslai
Studijų kryptis	Pedagogika
Studijų programos rūšis	Koleginės studijos
Studijų pakopa	Pirmoji
Studijų forma (trukmė metais)	Nuolatinė (3), Iššęstinė (4)
Studijų programos apimtis kreditais	180
Suteikiamas laipsnis ir (ar) profesinė kvalifikacija	Ikimokyklinio ugdymo pedagogikos profesinis bakalauras; Pedagogas
Studijų programos įregistravimo data	2003/05/29

INFORMATION ON EVALUATED STUDY PROGRAMME

Title of the study programme	Preschool education
State code	653X11004
Study area	Social Sciences
Study field	Pedagogy
Kind of the study programme	College Studies
Study Cycle	First
Study mode (length in years)	Full-time (3), Part-time (4)
Volume of the study programme in credits	180
Degree and (or) professional qualifications awarded	Professional Bachelor in Pedagogy of Preschool Education; Pedagogue
Date of registration of the study programme	29/05/2003

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This evaluation is conducted in accordance with the Law on Higher Education and Research of the Republic of Lithuania (30 April 2009 No XI-242) which established the “principles of quality assurance in higher education and research” and in accordance with the “Procedure for the External Evaluation and Accreditation of Study Programmes” approved by Order No. ISAK-1652 of 24 July 2009 of the Minister for Education and Science of the Republic of Lithuania (*Official Gazette*, 2009, No 96-4083). It takes due cognisance of the Order of the Minister for Education and Science approving the general requirements of the first degree and integrated study programmes (9 April 2010 No V-501) pursuant to Articles 47.8, 48.3 and 48.7 of the Law on Research and Higher Education of the Republic of Lithuania (*Official Gazette*, 2009, No. 54-2140) and also takes due account of the Order of the Minister of Education and Science “Concerning Approval of the Pedagogues’ Training Regulations” No. V-54 of 8 January 2010 and subsequent amendments (12 December 2012 No. V-1742).

An External Evaluation Team (hereinafter EET) has conducted an Evaluation of the Pre-school Education Study Programme (653X11004) at Kaunas College. In conducting their evaluation of the Study Programme, the EET have acted in compliance with the “Methodology for Evaluation of Higher Education Study Programmes” (Order No 1-01-162 of 20 December 2010 of the Director of the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education) as well as being guided by the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area*.

The External Evaluation was conducted in the period August 2013 to October 2013 with in-country evaluation taking place during the period 14 September 2013 to 21 September 2013. The Evaluation included a one-day field visit to Kaunas College on Monday, 16 September 2013.

This report does not paraphrase or re-present the range of information presented in the Report of the Self-Assessment Group (hereinafter SAG). Instead, it focuses on issues raised in the Self-Assessment Report (hereinafter SER) as well as raising some issues not addressed in the SER but which came to the attention of the EET during the course of the Team’s time in Lithuania, and, specifically, during the course of the field visit.

In addition to its examination of the SER, the EET collected information, data and evidence on which to base its conclusions in the course of the field visit through meetings and other means:

- Meeting with administrative staff of Kaunas College
- Meeting with the staff responsible for the preparation of the Self-Assessment Report
- Meeting with teaching staff
- Meeting with students
- Meeting with graduates
- Meeting with employers of those who have graduated from the programme
- Visiting and observing various support services (classrooms, library, computer services, staff developments, laboratories, etc.)
- Examination and familiarization with students’ final works, examination material.

At the end of the field visit, the initial impressions of the team were conveyed to the teaching staff of the programme.

We would like to express our appreciation to the authorities of Kaunas College for the manner in which we were made welcome and for the manner in which our queries and our exploration of

various key issues were addressed in a professional and positive way by those with whom we came in contact at the College.

The EET would like to pay tribute to the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education in Lithuania and most especially to Agnė Tamošiūnaitė for all of the support given to EET before and throughout the visit to Lithuania.

I. INTRODUCTION

According to the SER, Kauno Kolegija (hereinafter KK) is one of the largest State institutions of higher education in Lithuania. It was founded in 2000 with its Statute approved in 2011. The Self-assessment Report (hereinafter SER) states that the College has more than 7400 students following first cycle studies of biomedical, humanitarian, social and technological sciences as well as arts which award the degree of Professional Bachelor.

The Department of Preschool Education (DPsE) is one of eight Departments within the **Justinas Vienožinskis Faculty of Arts** (hereinafter JVFA). The SER (Introduction) traces the history of teacher education in Kaunas back to 1918,

when a Teacher Seminary was established on the basis of the former teacher training courses organised by the Educational Society *Saule*. In the period of 1941-1957, Kaunas Teacher Seminary (later called Kaunas Pedagogical School) trained 1500 teachers. Teacher training in Kaunas was renewed in 1983, when Marijampole Pedagogical School opened its department here and started training specialists of preschool education. On 1/09/ 2001, the school in Marijampole became a College, and in 2003, the Kaunas division of the Faculty of Education Sciences and Social Work was integrated into KK¹.

Including joint pre-school and primary programmes, Pre-school Educators are prepared at Colleges (5 study programmes) in Kaunas, Klaipėda, Marijampole, Panevėžys and Vilnius as well as at Universities (7 programmes) in Klaipėda, Šiauliai and Vilnius, giving a total of twelve such programmes.

The SER outlines the process of self-assessment, indicating that the Self-Assessment Group (hereinafter SAG) was established by order of the Director on 05 February 2013. The membership of the SAG included two third-year students and the Principal of a crèche/kindergarten.

Table 1.1 of the SER is reproduced here as it gives the names and areas of specific responsibility of the various members of the SAG. What is not clear from the Table is the status, role or function of those named in the central column. Individuals are named as being responsible for various sectors, but they are not listed as members of the group which conducted the assessments in those sectors.

¹ Regarding integration into the net of colleges, regulation of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Lithuania, 04/02/2003, No. 21-05-R-305.

Table 1.1**Self-assessment group of the study programme of PsE**

The sector assessed	Responsible for the sector	Group members
Aims of the study programme of PsE and anticipated learning outcomes	Raimonda Sadauskiene	dr. Sigita Sauleniene, dr. Genute Gedviliene, Nijole Meskeliene
Curriculum design of the study programme of PsE	Raimonda Sadauskiene	dr. Sigita Sauleniene, dr. Giedre Adomaviciene, Nijole Meskeliene, Juste Kairyte
Academic staff	Nijole Meskeliene	dr. Sigita Sauleniene, Jolanta Sturonaite
Material resources	dr. Sigita Sauleniene	Raimonda Sadauskiene, Laimute Ramanauskiene, Jadvyga Simaitiene
Study procedures	Nijole Meskeliene	Raimonda Sadauskiene, Asta Kochanskiene, Gita Mykolaityte, Ruta Laurinaviciute
Management of the study programme of PsE	Algirdas Saulenas	Ina Jankauskiene, Gita Mykolaityte

Table 1.2 of the SER indicates that some of the essential activities of the group (introductory seminar, data collection etc.) had been conducted prior to February 2013, (in September and November of 2012) and, while individual members of the SAG are associated with that work and were responsible for it, it is not clear that they did this work as members of the Self-Assessment Group as this was not officially established until February 2013.

Table 1.2**Timetable of the Self-assessment group of the study programme of PsE**

The activity	Date	
Seminar for those who prepare self-assessment surveys	14/09/2012	Raimonda Sadauskiene, Asta Kochanskiene
Collecting the data necessary for self-assessment (descriptions of study subjects and the performance of academic staff, the list of the titles of graduates' final theses, etc.)	Due on 15/11/2012	Jolanta Sturonaite, Jadvyga Simaitiene, Asta Kochanskiene, Gita Mykolaityte, Juste Kairyte
Analysing the data	Due on 01/02/2013	Raimonda Sadauskiene, dr. Sigita Sauleniene, Nijole Meskeliene, Asta Kochanskiene, Gita Mykolaityte, Ruta Laurinaviciute
Discussing the results of the self-assessment	08/02/2013	dr. Sigita Sauleniene, Raimonda Sadauskiene
Translation of the self-assessment survey and annexes	18/03/2013	Raimonda Sadauskiene, Violeta Kamantauskiene
Sending the Lithuanian e-version of the self-assessment survey to KK Study Quality Management Office	15/03/2013	Raimonda Sadauskiene
Delivering the translation of the self-assessment survey for editing	20/03/2013	Raimonda Sadauskiene
Delivering the self-assessment survey to KK Director	26/03/2013	Raimonda Sadauskiene
Sending the self-assessment survey to the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education and KK Study Quality Management Office	29/03/2013	Raimonda Sadauskiene

When both Tables are looked at together, it is surprising how much responsibility was placed on a single individual for a very broad range of activities with a single name ((Raimonda Sadauskiene) appearing no less than twelve times across both tables. This suggests that the work conducted was not as collegial as might be expected. While the SER notes that the work was

supported by the KK Study Quality Management Office and the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education, there is no indication of what this might mean.

When this issue was raised with the SEG in the course of the institutional visit, members of the SEG assured the EET that training had been provided by SKVC. Furthermore, the Dean pointed out that there are eight study programmes, so that staff are constantly involved in self-evaluation for various study programmes which is a long term process of learning how to prepare such evaluations. Furthermore, EET was assured that there is an Office of Quality Assurance within KK and that the SEG team got training from the Office as well.

In this context, it is not at all clear to EET why, in very many instances, the format, followed by those who prepared this SER for KK, does not match the format of the assessment template, provided by SKVC, which the EET is expected to use. This has created considerable difficulty for the reviewers who have had to go back and forth through the SER to find evidence in relation to the particular topic under analysis. It also creates a difficulty for the reviewer who wants to be fair to the study programme under review when the evidence is not presented in a manner or in the sequence which is expected.

II. PROGRAMME ANALYSIS

2.1 Programme aims and learning outcomes

The SER is divided into two parts, one dealing with the analysis of the full-time programme and another dealing with the analysis of the part-time programme. While the logic is clear, this is not the optimal way in which to present a SER because this is a single programme, although it is offered in two different study modes. All of the programme elements (aims, learning outcomes, study processes, assessment, staffing etc.) are common to both modes. In presenting the SER in this manner, there is a risk that the staff of KK will come to see (if they are not already doing so) both elements as being different entities for which they will have different approaches to delivery as well as different expectations of the students and the standards they are expected to attain. While it is valuable to draw attention to salient differences that come from the analysis of both cohorts of students, EET is of the view that it should always be remembered that this is a single programme with a single set of goals and common learning outcomes.

It should also be noted, at the outset, that this Study Programme carries 180 credits, with the studies lasting for three years in the case of full-time students or for four years in the case of part-time students.

2.1.1 In relation to the **definition, clarity and accessibility of the programme aims and learning outcomes** of the study programme, the Introduction to the SER states that the mission of DPSE is to train a pedagogue for educating children of preschool and pre-primary age and who understands his/her mission and roles he/she plays in the educational context of Lithuania and Europe. The SER, in the Introduction, defines these children as being

up to five years of age and those who are 6 or 7;

At EET's meeting with the Teaching Staff, they responded that all of pre-primary is a very specific way of learning. They responded that they have 'up to 3 years of age' as one category with those aged from 4-6 including maturing children who are either at kindergarten or even in a pre-school setting within the building of a primary school are the second category. Needing one title for all they had called the age cohort "Pre-school education".

EET does not understand why such an awkward terminology has been used. It also has some concerns that the target population (the children) is seen as falling into two separate categories, as this could undermine the seamless development of the child as s/he grows older.

When we read the mission of the Study Programme on p. 7 of the SER, we find that it is virtually identical with the mission of the Department that offers the programme.

The mission of the study programme of PsE is to train pedagogues of preschool and pre-primary education who are able to competently educate children of preschool and pre-primary age groups in all types of state and private institutions of preschool and pre-primary education as well as foster homes.

One significant difference arises from the addition of the final five words which indicate that this is not just a programme providing pedagogues for preschool and pre-primary education but that it is also seen as a source of staff for foster homes. The reason for this additional purpose is not explicitly stated or explained. It seemed to EET that staff in such a setting would have a greater need to be prepared for care-giving than for pedagogy.

The SER presents both aims and learning outcomes. The first three aims identified are

- to know the child and acknowledge his/her individuality
- to model the content of education
- to improve the professional competences and performance

The SER indicates that these aims are based on the anticipated learning outcomes. The links between the aims, the anticipated learning outcomes and the subjects of the study programme of PsE are presented in Annex 5.1. However, Annex 5.1 gives very little insight into how the programme modules successfully deliver the expected learning outcomes. In fact when the third column (on the right hand side of Annex 5.1) is examined, it is clear that it is simply a listing of traditional areas of content knowledge. There is no indication that modules relating to the particular learning outcomes are on offer or that the programme has been rewritten in the form of modules designed to meet specific learning outcomes. This is a serious lacuna in the rationale and structure of the programme.

The SER (p. 7-8) gives a list of eleven learning outcomes which students “should be able to” achieve as a consequence of their studies. The SER (p. 28) notes that the aims of the part-time mode are identical to those of the full-time mode of delivery and that the learning outcomes of the study programme are directly related to the implementation of the aims of the study programme, reflecting a consistent, progressive change of the complexity of knowledge and understanding, as appropriate to first-cycle studies.

In relation to the **accessibility of the aims and learning outcomes** of the study programme, p. 8 of the SER notes that both the aims and the learning outcomes are posted on the websites of the College and of the Faculty (www.kauko.lt, www.studijos.lt, www.aikos.smm.lt, www.jvmf.lt) as well as being presented along with other promotional material on the Internet and in publications. In addition, they are promoted during school visits and at Open Days and Educational or Career Fairs.

2.1.2 In relation to the extent that the **programme aims and learning outcomes are based on the academic and/or professional requirements**, it is difficult to find where, in the

documentation provided, this issue is explicitly addressed. There is no reference either to national or European standards in the field of early childhood education or care on which this programme is based although, as will be seen later, there is extensive reference to the regulatory framework (p.10 of SER and **Section 2.2.1** below).

In relation to the extent that the **programme aims and learning outcomes are based on public needs**, the SER (p. 6) highlights the fact that this is the only study programme in Kaunas and its region that trains specialists of preschool and pre-primary education.

In relation to the institutional mission, the SER notes (in a Footnote at the end of p. 6), that the mission of KK is

“to prepare specialists of the field of arts who have higher professional education and are ready to meet the social and economic demands of the region and the whole country”.

In light of this statement and the fact that the other seven Departments within the Faculty are a Clothing Department, Art Education Department, the Department of Conservation and Restoration of Works of Art, the Department of Decorative Plastic, Design Department, Photography Department, the Department of Image Design, it is not immediately clear nor is it made explicit in the text how the Department of Preschool Education (DPsE) meets this institutional mission.

The SER also makes the case that the programme takes into account the perspectives of the development of the education system in the Republic of Lithuania, the mission of collegial studies, and labour market demand. However, the data and documentation on which this statement is based relate back to studies published in 2001/2006.

In making a case based on the extent to which this programme can contribute to the “development of the whole country, region and the city of Kaunas”, the SER relies on two external Strategic Plans, one for the Region, commencing in 2003 and one for the City, commencing in 2005.

At a time of rapid labour market changes as well as wider economic turbulence, such data do not offer a solid foundation for decision-making in 2013 nor does EET consider that they offer sufficient substance for the case that needs to be made in respect of justifying the Study Programme at this time.

2.1.3 In regard to the extent to which the **programme aims and learning outcomes are consistent with the type and level of studies and the level of qualifications offered**, it is difficult to find where this topic is explicitly addressed in the SER.

During the course of the visit, the EET had the opportunity to discuss this issue with the SEG and with the staff of KK. The Teaching Staff explained that aims and learning outcomes are considered in their assessment of practical tasks and in the final exams. In response to a query about “Engage the Family in...” staff said that this is assessed during the practice when the students have to engage the family members of their children, meeting with them and trying to involve them in the process. The supervisor who is observing the practice makes an assessment of how well this is done. The supervisor is methodologist who is working with a group of students. Physically, they cannot go with every student as they are in different locations but there are trained people in the kindergartens who can make these assessments. These tutors were trained at a seminar in KK. The people in the kindergarten, who supervise the practice of the

students, make recommendations that they give to the methodologist in the College who generates the grade that is awarded. This methodologist may have seen the student 3 to 5 times in the course of a practice. EET was reasonable satisfied with staff responses on this matter.

2.1.4 In relation to the **name** of the programme (Pedagogy of Pre-school Education), it is surprising that the SER does not offer KK's definition of "Pre-school Education". While recognising that the phrase "pre-school" is widely used in Lithuania in descriptions of programmes such as this, this is a negative way of defining the area, as it is a description based on something else ("School Education") from which it seeks to distinguish itself. It would be best if the title of this and similar programmes were to define itself in terms of its focus, possibly describing itself as "Early Years Education", as "Early Childhood Studies" or possibly as "Early Childhood Education & Care" as all of these areas come within the ambit of the programme.

In relation to the requirement that **the name of the programme, its learning outcomes, content and the qualifications offered are compatible with each other**, it is not immediately clear where, within Section 2.1 of the SER, these issues are addressed.

2.1.5 The **strengths** identified are set out in three sentences within a summary Table on page 8. To the outside reviewer, these 'strengths' seem to be the opinions of the authors. They are not supported by any evidence to show how they are strengths and, in reality, the statements are what might be expected at this level. For example, to say that "The process of updating the study programme and the content of studies involves stakeholders" seems to be nothing more than would be expected and necessary.

In relation to the **weaknesses** identified in the SER, there is only a single one, related to the fact that only 15% of programme content is available in English for the benefit of external students.

Finally, the "Actions for Improvement" offer only one single action, which focuses on making a greater range of subjects available through English. However, it is not clear that this means that the content is even to be delivered through English as, elsewhere, (p.8 of the SER) we are given to understand that this simply means that those elements of the Study Programme "most often chosen by Erasmus students are translated into English". The mere provision of a greater volume of translated material will do little to enhance the Study Programme, or to enhance the learning experience of those Erasmus students who are subject to this approach.

In essence, by confining their proposals for action to this item, the SER are indicating that they have not managed to find any other aspect of the programme which be (or might need to be) improved.

In the view of EET, the strengths of the programme lie in the fact that there is a clarity about its aims and the expected learning outcomes and in the fact that they are widely disseminated. A further strength lies in the level of national and regional need for such practitioners although EET was concerned that much of the data adduced to show demand dated back to 2006 or even earlier. EET also had concerns about the name of the programme and the risk of breaking the target population into different age categories.

2.2 Curriculum design

With regard to Curriculum Design, it is noted in the SER (p.28) that the "structure of the part-time study programme of PsE and its volume in credits are the same as those of full-time studies (Annexes 5.2, 5.3)".

2.2.1 The extent to which the curriculum design meets legal requirements is addressed, in the first instance, under the heading of “Logic of the curriculum design” (p. 8 of the SER). SER (p. 7) notes that the programme is subject to annual review and offers an example of how it has been recently reviewed to meet the needs of a new credit system.

The aims and learning outcomes were adjusted in accordance with the updated *Standard of Training Pedagogues of Preschool Education*² and *Regulation on Teacher Training*³. In May, 2010, the programme was updated following *The description of the general requirements for degree providing undergraduate and consecutive study programmes*, approved by order of the Minister of Education and Science of the Republic of Lithuania 09/04/2010 No. V-501. From 01/09/2011, while implementing the study programme of PsE a shift was made to the new credit system that is based on ECTS philosophy.

Elsewhere (on p. 10/11), there is an extensive catalogue of the laws, requirements, regulations and orders etc., which form the framework within which this programme is offered. There is also, on p. 11, a most useful Table (Table 2.2.2.1, reproduced below) which details the manner in which the programme is compliant with the regulations in respect of credit allocation for the various programme components and which course elements are compulsory as well as those which can be selected by the student.

Table 2.2.2.1

Compliance of the study programme of Preschool Education with legislation

The part of the programme	Allocated in the programme	Legal requirements
1. General collegial studies	15 credits	Not less than 15 credits
2. Pedagogical studies of the main field	150 credits	150 credits
<i>2.1. pedagogical studies:</i>	60 credits	60 credits
2.1.1. theoretical part	27 credits	27 credits
2.1.2. the final thesis of pedagogical studies	3 credits	Not more than 3 credits
2.1.3. pedagogical internship	30 credits	30 credits
<i>2.2. the module of pedagogical specialisation:</i>	90 credits	90 credits
2.2.1. subjects on the basis of which the qualification of an educator is granted	81 credits	81 credits
2.2.2. final thesis	9 credits	Not less than 9 credits
3. Subjects elected by the student	15 credits	15 credits
The number of subjects in the study programme per semester	7 subjects in the 1 st -5 th semesters; 6 subjects in the 6 th semester	Not more than 7 subjects
Scientists teaching the subjects of the study programme	6 scientists (10 % of subjects)	Not less than 10 % of subjects
Academic staff working in the study programme having not less than 3- year practical experience in the field of the subject taught	90 %	Not less than 80 %
Total volume of the study programme	180 credits	Not more than 210 credits

The SER also shows the extent to which the regulatory framework has driven change. For example, Annex 5.2 presents the curriculum as it had been for 2011-2012 and 2012-2013. This curriculum has now been revised and for the future, the following three-part structure will apply:

² *Standard of Training Pedagogues of Preschool and Pre-primary Education*, approved by Order of Minister of Education and Science of the Republic of Lithuania and Minister of Social Security and Labour of the Republic of Lithuania 26/06/2008, ISAK-1872/A1-209.

³ *Regulation on Teacher Training*, approved by Order of Minister of Education and Science of the Republic of Lithuania 15/05/2012 No. V-827.

- I. General subjects of collegial studies (15 study credits)
- II. Pedagogical studies of the main field (150 study credits).
- III. Subjects chosen by the student (15 credits).

(The content and rationale of each of these areas is presented in SER, p. 9).

2.2.2 The spread of study subjects/modules is discussed on pp. 8/9 of the SER. The logical structure and the manner in which topics of increasing depth and complexity are introduced to the students is set out at the end of p. 5 and top of p. 6. The SER notes that the programme is subject-based and consecutive with the various subjects being distributed successively and integrally.

It is understood that the delivery of the part-time programme meets a different rhythm and requires a somewhat different spread of study subjects/modules, due to the different mode of delivery where there is a greater dependence on “distance communication, e.g. virtual learning environment Moodle, and individual consultations” (SER, p. 29) in the case of the part-time students.

In relation to the **themes delivered in the subjects**, the SER does not explicitly discuss the themes involved, although it does note that “separate structural parts of the study programme have internal interdisciplinary links”. Despite this reassurance, EET had some concerns that the programme looks rather like a collection of content or subject areas more than giving a sense of its being a holistic programme designed specifically to meet the needs of those who will work with young children and planned so that the programme is child-centred.

2.2.3 As to whether the content of the subjects and/or modules is consistent with the type and level of the studies, this topic is not explicitly addressed in the SER. However, the EET is pleased to note the practical orientation of the programme and the fact that pedagogical practices start during the first year of studies and continue up to the sixth semester (in accordance with Order No. V-827, 15 May 2012), thereby helping to ensure the integrity of theory and practice. In its meetings with students, alumni and employers, there was considerable agreement that the weight placed on the practical component of the programme was considerable (although employers seemed to favour a longer period of practice, arguing that eight weeks would provide students with a deeper learning opportunity and a wider range of practical skills).

2.2.4 The issue of the extent to which the content and methods of the subjects/modules are appropriate for the achievement of the intended learning outcomes is not addressed under that heading in the SER but is addressed by implication in the discussion of the programme structure and the feedback from those who have taken the programme. Annex 5.3 gives considerable detail on the modular content, goals or learning outcomes and on the manner in which “Links between study programme learning outcomes, subject learning outcomes, study methods and methods of student’s achievement assessment” are achieved and taken into account in assessment. While the “Study achievement assessment criteria” are stated to meet the recommendations of the Ministry of Education and Science of Lithuania, there are, in fact, very considerable differences in the manner in which learning outcomes are assessed across the various subjects, with some being very clear that the assessment modes actually address students’ abilities to demonstrate mastery of the desired learning outcomes while others are present very traditional modes of assessing traditional content and knowledge. It is difficult to find consistency of assessment across modules. For example, in a core subject such as “Preschool and pre-primary education”, (Annex 5.3, pp. 107-109) one of the most common modes of assessment is “Oral Reflections” which is used (with other methods) for the assessment of every single one of the six “study programme learning outcomes” which are set out for this

module whereas the module “Education management” (Annex 5.3, pp. 186-187) is almost entirely dependent on “Topic Presentation” as its student achievement assessment method.

2.2.5 As to whether **the scope of the programme is sufficient to ensure learning outcomes**, the EET came to the view that, in general, the scope of the programme is adequate to ensure that the learning outcomes are achieved although more consistent models for the assessment of learning outcomes are desirable.

2.2.6 The EET did not have a lot of evidence on which to decide whether **the content of the programme reflects the latest achievements in science, art and technologies** as this topic is not specifically addressed in the SER. Appendix 5.2 gives details of the programme in Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) followed by all First Year students of the programme. In the course of the institutional visit, EET was disappointed to find that the training given to students in ICT was largely confined to such packages as Word, Excel and PowerPoint, which could be used by the students in their own work and presentations but with no evidence that students were being introduced to the professional uses of ICT in the Classroom (for Art, Music, Robotics, Games, either by way of commercially available learning programmes or through the use of the enormous catalogue of educational materials which are available free on the Internet.

2.2.7 In relation to the **strengths and weaknesses of the section regarding curriculum design of the programme and actions for improvement**, the SER identifies two strengths, one of which says that the study programmes (as though there was more than one) allows learners to acquire the necessary competences. It scarcely needs pointing out that this is a fundamental purpose of the programme and its achievement is hardly to be considered a strength. The second ‘strength’ identifies the fact that the programme can be offered in both full-time and part-time mode as a strength, going on to raise the possibility of its being delivered through “partial studies” as well (although no further explanation of this is offered).

On the other hand, the SEG has identified as a **weakness** the fact that the “Methodology for composing the final papers of pedagogical studies is defined (a project)”. As a consequence, the “Action for Improvement” is given as being “to prepare and approve the methodology for composing the final papers of pedagogical studies according to the *Regulation on Training Pedagogues* (15/05/2012)”. This is a surprise in light of the statement on p. 9 of the SER that “Following the new *Regulation on Training Pedagogues*, the curriculum was updated in 2012-2013”.

From its perspective, EET is pleased to note the extent to which the College has been responding to changes in the regulatory framework and legislative requirements and is pleased to note the practical orientation of the programme and the fact that pedagogical practices start during the first year of studies and continue up to the sixth semester (in accordance with Order No. V-827, 15 May 2012).

EET would expect greater consistency in the manner in which learning outcomes are assessed. EET was very concerned at the lack of evidence on which to decide whether the content of the programme reflects the latest achievements in science, art and technologies as this topic is not specifically addressed in the SER.

2. 3. Staff

Four pages of the SER are dedicated to an evaluation of the academic staff. In accordance with the Methodological Guidelines (2012: Paragraph 60 and following) under “Staff”, the criteria which the EET has been asked to consider are

- 2.3.1 *the study programme is provided by the staff meeting legal requirements;*
- 2.3.2 *the qualifications of the teaching staff are adequate to ensure learning outcomes;*
- 2.3.3 *the number of the teaching staff is adequate to ensure learning outcomes;*
- 2.3.4 *teaching staff turnover is able to ensure an adequate provision of the programme;*
- 2.3.5 *the higher education institution creates conditions for the professional development of the teaching staff necessary for the provision of the programme;*
- 2.3.6 *the teaching staff of the programme is involved in research (art) directly related to the study programme being reviewed.*

However, the headings used by the SAG in the SER are as follows:

2.3.1. *The composition of the academic staff, its turnover and academic load.*

- *Reasonableness of the composition of the academic staff.*
- *The ratio between the academic staff working in the programme and students.*
- *Turnover of the academic staff according to age groups.*
- *Academic load.*

2.3.2. *Qualification of the academic staff*

- *Participation of the academic staff in applied scientific research, projects and scientific performance*
- *Participation of the academic staff in social activities.*
- *In-service training.*
- *Data about lecturers' participation in mobility programmes.*

It is not immediately clear to EET why the replies of KK were given in such a different sequence and using quite different headings to those on which this evaluation is based.

2.3.1 There is a list of twenty-three (23) staff members in Annex 5.4 which presents both the qualifications and the research interests of these staff. SER (p. 28) notes that “the academic staff of the study programme of PsE is the same for both full-time and part-time studies”.

In regard to the extent to which **the study programme is provided by the staff meeting legal requirements**, the SER (p. 12) states that

The qualification of the academic staff working in the study programme of PsE is sufficient in order to achieve anticipated learning outcomes. The field of the scientific and pedagogical performance of the staff corresponds to the subjects taught and the requirements set in the *Regulation on Training Pedagogues*⁴ and *Description of the general requirements for degree providing undergraduate and consecutive study programmes*⁵. 10% of the subjects of the study programme are taught by scientists. 90% of the academic staff have not less than 3-year practical experience in the field of the subject taught (Annex 5.5). The lecturers have acquired Master or at least Equivalent to Master Degree. In 2012 -2013 the subjects of the study programme are taught by 6

⁴ *Regulation on Training Pedagogues*, approved by Order of the Minister of Education and Science of the Republic of Lithuania 15/05/2012 No. V-827.

⁵ *Description of the general requirements for degree providing undergraduate and consecutive study programmes*, 09/04/2010 No. V-501.

Doctors of Sciences (4 associate professors and 2 lecturers), 14 lecturers and 3 assistants.

The requirements are set out in Article 9, Section 3 of the Law on Higher Education and Research of the Republic of Lithuania (30 April 2009 No XI-242) which states that

More than a half of the teaching staff of a college must have at least three-year practical work experience in the sphere of a subject they teach. The qualification in the sphere of a taught subject must be improved in accordance with the procedure laid down by the college. Subjects which must be taught at colleges by the teaching staff members with a scientific degree shall be determined by descriptions of a study field, a set of study fields or a study area.

Despite the reassurances contained in the above statements, EET was concerned about the small number of staff teaching the Pedagogy of Pre-school Education who were themselves qualified as pre-school educators. At a meeting attended by thirteen members of the Teaching Staff only a single person claimed to have a qualification at this level although many others claimed to have experience of teaching at this level!

2.3.2 In relation to the requirement that **the qualifications of the teaching staff are adequate to ensure learning outcomes**, 150 of the required 180 credits (more than 80% of the total) are for pedagogical work in the field of early childhood education (0-7 years). When the staff profiles and research interests are examined, it is clear that nothing like 80% of staff have expertise or extended experience in the field of pre-school pedagogy or education. While the SER (Section 2.3.2, p. 13) notes that staff offer international and national seminars (some of which are income-earning or contracted) as well as inservice training in this field and that many of them have themselves been students of pedagogy (Annex 5.5), not a single staff member has specifically named “Pedagogy” as an area of scientific interest to them (although many work in “educational sciences”). Whereas Annex 5.4 indicates that staff members, collectively, have more than 530 years of “pedagogical experience”, no effort has been made in the SER to state how many of those years were involved in gaining experience in the field for which they are now preparing pedagogues or how recent that experience is nor to quantify the number of years that the staff collectively have clocked up while teaching within KK. This is a matter of considerable concern to EET.

2.3.3 As to whether **the number of the teaching staff is adequate to ensure learning outcomes**, it is not immediately clear from the SER that the answer to this is in the affirmative. This question seems to be addressed in the SER under the heading of “Academic load” which states, rather cryptically, that

In 2008, the average number of contact hours was 866 for tenure (FTE). In 2009, a new model of financing studies was introduced in higher education in Lithuania. The funds are allocated to the student, and not to the institution. This had a direct impact on the number of lecturers working in the programme.

Table 2.3.1.1 (reproduced here) offers evidence of an extraordinarily generous staffing level with a student: staff ratio of 4.9 : 1. The data presented in SER (p. 29) shows that the ratio for part-time studies has been slightly less favourable (e.g. a high of 6.7 in 2008/2009) but it has been moving closer to the full time ratio in recent years (4.9 in 2011/2012).

Table 2.3.1.1

The ratio between the number of lecturers and students

Academic year	The number of lecturers	The number of students	Ratio
2007-2008	19	93	4.9
2008-2009	19	93	4.9
2009-2010	21	95	4.5
2010-2011	20	90	4.5
2011-2012	20	92	4.6

On the occasion of the institutional visit, EET was provided with up-to-date figures on the intake level for 2013/2014, showing that a total of 29 full-time students and 21 part-time students had been admitted, giving a grand total of 50 students for this year.

While the SER (p. 12) states that “such a ratio ensures a possibility to allocate more attention to each of the students and more effectively organise the process of teaching and learning” it is exceedingly difficult for an outside observer to understand how such a staffing level can be sustainable in the current economic climate. This is especially so when Table 2.3.1.1 and Table 2.3.1.2 (note that they don’t cover the identical academic years) are looked at together where we find that when student numbers are static (or falling slightly) the level of staffing is increasing. Looking more closely at the teaching staff during the five year period we find that the number of assistants (cheaper to employ) was decreasing but the number of more highly paid staff had increased (Associate Professors had doubled while Drs. Sc. had increased by a factor of six).

While the SER is clear that the academic load is now 1440 working hours per year, there is no clear statement as to the adequacy (or otherwise) of the current **teaching staffing numbers for the achievement of the expected learning outcomes**.

2.3.4 The question of how **teaching staff turnover impacts upon the provision of the programme** is addressed in the SER p. 12). Table 2.3.1.2 (SER, p. 12) purports to set out the turnover of the academic staff but actually presents overall staffing numbers on the study programme. As it gives no data on the numbers of staff leaving or the numbers coming to teach in the institution during the years under study, the issue of turnover is avoided.

The SER also includes a short section headed “Turnover of the academic staff according to age groups” and, under this heading, the composition of the academic staff according to age groups is presented in Table 2.3.1.3. What this Table actually shows is the number of staff in various five-year age cohorts, as well as a calculation of their average age (50 years). It does not contribute to an understanding of levels of turnover in the institution. EET has concerns that a lack of staff turnover can affect the development and forward growth of the programme, in particular, in areas such as the pedagogical use of ICT and students’ introduction to ideas generated by research in other countries.

2.3.5 As to whether **the higher education institution creates conditions for the professional development of the teaching staff necessary for the provision of the programme** Section 18 of the Pedagogues’ Training Regulations (No. V-54 of 8 January 2010 as amended by the Order of 12 December 2012 No. V-1742) states that

Teachers delivering the pedagogical studies shall continuously improve their pedagogical qualifications and qualifications in the study field and shall take part in the activities of the placement school according to the procedure established by the higher educational establishment. The field of research conducted by the teachers

of the study subject in the adjacent study field shall correspond to the teaching subject or the pedagogical specialisation.

The SER (Table 2.3.2.2) shows that a high proportion of lecturers (between 55 and 80% of the total) have engaged in some form of inservice leading to either professional or pedagogical qualification within the past five years. The nature of those qualifications is not specified in the SER nor is the success rate or completion rate of those who participated. However, the SER does highlight the fact (p. 14) that “In the period being assessed, 2 lecturers of the Department improved their qualification in a formal way, i.e. in doctoral studies.” The listing in Annex 5.4 indicates that six out of the total of 23 teaching staff now have doctoral qualifications. Clearly, if significantly more than one-quarter of teaching staff are to have scientific degrees, greater support or encouragement, including stricter enforcement of this requirement as a basis for tenure, will be necessary.

In regard to the extent to which staff “shall take part in the activities of the placement school according to the procedure established by the higher educational establishment”, the SER does not show how this regulation is being met. Neither does it give an insight into the institutional policy on this matter. There is no indication as to how this engagement with the placement schools is structured.

2.3.6 The SER does not directly address the extent to which **the teaching staff of the programme is involved in research (art) directly related to the study programme being reviewed**. Under the heading of “*Participation of the academic staff in social activities*”, there is a statement to the effect that the high qualification of the academic staff is testified by the fact that they are invited to assess study programmes of other institutions of higher education and write reviews for handbooks, teaching aids for higher education. They are members of various associations and societies”.

There is also an analysis of the mobility of staff (incoming and outgoing). It is acknowledged “that lecturers are not active enough in international mobility” and that having “greater numbers in such mobility could be preconditioned by lecturers’ deeper knowledge and skills in using foreign languages”.

In discussions with staff, it became clear that the greatest barrier to further engagement in international affairs and exchanges lay in linguistic barriers. It may be that the institution could do more to support the development of greater foreign language competence among current staff and to ensure that, when recruiting new staff, this area is included as one of the essential criteria.

2.3.7 As in previous analyses of “Strengths and Weaknesses” the strength presented here seems to be what should be expected of an academic community and its members (participating in project and applied science activities etc.). On the other hand, the weaknesses identified are real (poor level of involvement in mobility programmes and lack of professional internships). Therefore the suggested “Actions for Improvement” are more grounded in reality than other similar lists. The question arises as to how the institution intends to address these issues.

EET is concerned that only a small proportion of the staff on this study programme are themselves qualified as pre-school educators. It also sees, as a **Weakness** the low rates of staff mobility, exacerbated by poor foreign language skills.

2.4. Facilities and learning resources

2.4.1 The **premises which are available for studies** include classrooms, specialised rooms, a gymnasium, a swimming pool etc. The SER expresses the view that these facilities are adequate.

In the course of the field visit, the EET had the opportunity to examine these facilities and agrees that they are adequate for the needs of this programme.

2.4.2 In regard to the adequacy and suitability of **the teaching and learning equipment (laboratory and computer equipment, consumables)** the SER, in Table 2.4.1.1, gives details of the locations, accommodation and equipment available in the various settings.

The SER emphasises that a good virtual learning environment has been created, that extensive use is made of Moodle and that the level of computers with up-to-date software, as well as a well-resourced Library give adequate support to the effective teaching of the programme.

EET considers that the equipment available is adequate both in size and quality, although it would like to see a greater richness and diversity in the library holdings for this programme, most especially in relation to the availability of foreign –language materials and journals as a way of engaging the students with the broader literature in this field.

2.4.3 As to whether **the higher education institution has adequate arrangements for students' practice**, the SER (in Section 2.4.2, p. 16) emphasises that all students have the opportunity for professional internships placements, including the possibility of international placements through ERASMUS. The SER emphasises that these settings are selected with care and that eleven cooperation agreements underpin this work. Section 2.4.2 does not describe the diversity of placement undertaken by the individual student nor does it give any information on the manner in which the student is supervised by College staff during the course of the placement. In the course of the visit to KK, these issues were explored further. Although students and employers were generally happy with the level of practice, employers favoured a longer practice period.

2.4.4 In regard to **teaching materials (textbooks, books, periodical publications, databases)**, the SER notes that in addition to a Central Library, each faculty has its own Library and Reading Room, all with Internet access to various publications. There are 106 Computers in the Central Library but just 4 computers in the JVFA Library. The SER details the level of holdings and of subscription to various online journals and resources. Of 29 periodicals available 15 titles are in Lithuanian, 14 in foreign languages, (11 in English, 1 in French, and 2 in Russian).

Table 2.4.3.1 of the SER presents the annual expenditure on publications required for the PsE. This shows a very considerable and unexplained variation from year to year. The Table which follows (adapted from the original Table 2.4.3.1) shows the annual expenditure as a percentage of the overall five-year spend and highlights the very considerable swings in expenditure with more than 40% of all expenditure taking place in 2011-2012 while less than one-twelfth took place in 2009-2010.

Table 2.4.3.1 (adapted)

Annual Expenditure as a Percentage of overall five-year expenditure

Year	2008-2009	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012/13	Total
Assets spent (Lt)	1885.62	1118.11	3293.13	5932.69	1981.83	14211,41
Assets spent (% of Total)	13.27%	7.87%	23.17%	41.75%	13.95%	100%

2.4.5 The SER (p. 17) sets out the **strengths and weaknesses in relation to material resources of the programme together with proposed actions for improvement**. It claims that there is a strong institutional base of institutions providing professional placements for the students and presents the adequate funding available for methodological resources as a second strength.

EET is satisfied that the first of these is a genuine strength of the study programme. From its visit, it had a doubt about the second claimed strength.

In relation to **weaknesses**, the SER presents a single weakness relating to the use of databases by staff and students. EET saw some evidence to indicate that this is a true weakness of the programme.

In regard to the proposed **action for improvement**, EET considers that more robust action is required than simply “encouraging” a greater use of databases. Activities which will require staff and students to avail of such resources will need to be incorporated in the programme.

From its perspective, EET is satisfied that KK has an adequate resource base for offering this programme, although there is considerable room for improvement. It accepts that that is a strong base of institutions providing professional placements for the students and that the students are happy with the practice arrangements.

On the other hand, EET considers that the students need to be exposed to a greater diversity of foreign language materials, both in classes and in the Library as a way of nurturing their ability in languages but also in helping to grow their confidence to that they may decide to participate in mobility programmes.

2.5 Study Process and Student Assessment

2.5.1 The SER (Section 2.5.1, p. 17) addresses the issue of **admission requirements** under the heading of “Selection of Students”, highlighting the fact that, since 2009, the conditions and order of students’ admission into study programmes is defined by the Association of Lithuanian Higher Schools (LAMA BPO) in accordance with the *Terms and Conditions of Students’ Enrolment into Collegial Studies*⁶, *Principles of General Admission*⁷, and *Description of Sequencing Top Applicants*⁸. As this is a pedagogical programme, a motivation test is also applied. The SER explains that

In 2012, the competitive score of the study programme of PsE was comprised of the assessments of school-leaving examinations (in Lithuanian, with the weighting factor of 0.4; History, with the weighting factor of 0.2; a foreign language, with the weighting factor of 0.2) and the annual score (in Mathematics, with the weighting factor of 0.2).

In regard to the **rationality** of this model of selection for pre-school pedagogues, no explanation is offered as to why these three subjects have been chosen as the basis for selection or why others (such as Art, Music, etc.) have been excluded. [It should be noted here that the requirements for enrolment into part-time studies do not differ from those of full-time studies (SER, p. 29)]. When this matter was discussed with staff and students, no one seemed to be able to offer a coherent explanation as to why these particular subjects had been prioritised while all recognised that there were other subjects that might be more relevant to someone commencing a career in early childhood education. EET appreciates that the issue of entry requirements is not entirely in the hands of KK but is partially dependant on other bodies such as the Association of

⁶ *Terms and Conditions of Students’ Enrolment into Collegial Studies in 2011 – 2012*, approved at the meeting of the Conference of Directors of Lithuanian Colleges, 23/09/2010

⁷ *Description of the Order of Enrolment into Undergraduate and Consecutive Studies in Lithuanian Higher Education Institutions in 2011*, approved by President of the Association of Lithuanian Higher Education Institutions for Organising General Admission, 12/05/2011, No. 11-02

⁸ *Description of Order of Sequencing the Best School-leavers in 2011*, approved by Order of the Minister of Education and Science of the Republic of Lithuania, 07/01/2011, No. V-13

Lithuanian Higher Schools (LAMA BPO) and the Lithuanian Ministry of Higher Education and Science. Nevertheless, EET would have welcomed a rational explanation of why these subjects have been selected. EET also suggests that it might be fruitful ground for research to investigate whether these subjects are a reliable basis for selecting pre-school educators.

The SER, in Table 2.5.1.1, gives a very valuable insight into the level of demand during recent years. The SER, in Table 2.5.1.2 and in the accompanying commentary, highlights the fact that “the data of the enrolment in recent years reveal that the study programme was chosen by more advanced applicants with much higher competitive scores than in previous years”.

While it is fair to state that the level of demand continues to be reasonably strong, it seems extraordinary that the authors of the SER should conclude that “This makes it obvious that the general decrease in the number of school-leavers in Lithuania has no negative impact on the number of applicants for the study programme of PsE”. This is simply untrue or inaccurate given that the total number of applications in 2009 for Full-time places (both Sf and Nsf) was 494 whereas the level of demand in 2012 was 274. In 2013/2014, a total of just 50 students (29 full-time and 21 part-time) were admitted to the programme.

2.5.2 As to whether the organisation of the study process ensures an adequate provision of the programme and the achievement of the learning outcomes, this does not appear to be comprehensively addressed in Section 2.5 of the SER. However, pp. 9-10 of the SER did offer an insight into the approach through which it is hoped to achieve the learning outcomes of the programme.

To achieve the aims of the studies, various teaching and learning methods are used: analysis of scientific and practical references, information search in various sources, etc. develop communicative, informational, analytical, and learning abilities as well as improve the competences of using modern technologies of communicating information. Discussions, consultation, demonstration, involving lectures and workshops improve communicative abilities as well as those of critical thinking, problem solving, team work, personality cognition, performance in an organisation, and widen the skills of reflective thinking. Projects and their presentations develop presentational, analytical, creative abilities as well as those of critical thinking and problem solving. The reflection of one's performance is used to develop the abilities of learning, reflective thinking, investigating the performance, and active participation in an organisation. Brainstorming helps to develop team work abilities, develops analytical thinking, etc.

What is not clear from the above quotation is how this organisation of the study programme closely meshes with the achievement of the learning outcomes.

The SER, in Table 2.5.2.1 presents data about “students’ progressiveness”, concluding that “During the period being assessed, the percentage of the progressiveness has been high” and using this conclusion to support the view that “Good learning outcomes reveal students’ motivation to continue studies of the specialty chosen”.

2.5.3 In relation to the extent to which students are encouraged to participate in research, artistic and applied research activities, Table 2.5.2.4 of the SER (p. 20) presents the involvement of students in scientific activities in recent years. However, while this Table highlights the exceptional students (probably no more than 20 students out of more than 450 have had such involvement), it cannot be held that this is the general experience of the students. On the positive side, this shows that some students are rising to the challenge offered, but it also highlights how many other students need to be more seriously engaged in research, artistic and

applied research activities. The SER (p. 32) points out that “students of the part-time study programme of PsE take part in the events, projects, exhibitions, etc. organised in the Faculty and Department. Their participation is integrated into the data about the activities of full-time students”.

At the meeting with academic staff, they claimed to have a policy of student involvement but acknowledged that the figure is as above.

2.5.4 The evidence in relation to **participation in student mobility programmes** is presented in Table 2.5.2.6 on p. 22 of the SER and in the accompanying commentary. On average 6% of students take part in some form of mobility, with many participating in two-week-long intensive programmes. Analysis of the data shows a high level of dependence on intensive programmes and a decreasing engagement in ERASMUS, with no outgoing ERASMUS students in the past two years.

The SER acknowledges that the level of outward mobility could be greater but for “the students lower than average knowledge and communication skills of using foreign languages”. It also acknowledges that the situation is no better among the part-time students (SER, p.32) who “do not participate in mobility programmes as most of them work” pointing to the fact that “there are some students who live abroad and work in nursery schools there (e.g. Norway, UK and Denmark)”.

The SER draws attention to the fact that “during the recent five years, there was an increase in the mobility of in-coming students”. However, Table 2.5.2.7 shows that there is a significant and increasing dependence on Turkey as the source of these students. It is not clear from the text of the SER that incoming students are following the PsE programme as it seems that they are students of the faculty rather than students of this particular study programme.

2.5.5 In relation to the expectation that **the higher education institution ensures an adequate level of academic and social support**, the SER (Section 2.5.3) has a lengthy account of the kinds of multi-faceted support which are on offer, and how students are informed about these supports, both face-to-face and virtually. Special support is offered to first-year students by a dedicated tutor, as well as by the Students’ Council. It is noted (SER, p. 32) that “the students of the part-time study programme of PsE are provided the same support as those of the full-time study programme”.

The SER (in Tables 2.5.1.3 and 2.5.2.2) shows that the needs and difficulties of ‘drop-out’ students are dealt with in a sensitive manner. Although the levels of drop-out have been close to one-third of all students in the past (2005), the situation has improved considerably since then. The accompanying text (p. 19) says that “surveys conducted revealed that the majority of ‘drop-outs’ terminated their studies due to personal reasons (mostly during the first month of the first semester of studies) because of economic or financial situation in families, changes in the place of work, etc.”. Elsewhere, the SER (p. 20) states that the “greatest number of the enrolled was dismissed in 2008 and 2010 (3 and 4, 8.33% and 13.79% respectively). The most frequent reasons are of personal nature and not related to the quality or implementation of the study programme”. Taken together, these comments suggest that almost all students leave of their own volition with very few being excluded by the system. An examination of Table 2.5.2.2 shows that in the four-year period under review (2008-2012) on the full-time programme, only a single student, out of more than 450, had failed for academic reasons. Even in the part-time programme, there is a very high level of successful completion with the SER (p. 29) noting that “The best result was in 2011, when the studies were finished by all of those who were enrolled”.

The SER (p. 29) acknowledges that, in the case of part-time students, “the number of students dismissed due to academic failure is small”.

In relation to the full-time programme, it is quite extraordinary that only a single student in the period under review was adjudged not to have attained the appropriate academic standards. It is equally extraordinary that every other student is adjudged in personality, temperament and approach to children, to be entirely suitable for the profession of pedagogue at the early childhood level.

The SER, on pp. 24-25 gives long lists of bulleted points to illustrate the supports that are available for students of KK, both academically and socially. It concludes by pointing out that

In order to help students integrate into the community of the Department, Faculty and KK, lessen psychological tension, the academic staff of the Department, group tutors and administration endeavour to know students, provide moral support, and help to solve problems. The cosy environment and immediate communication with students encourages them to be more open. Thus, having encountered psychological, personal problems they can address any member of the community (administrative or academic staff, members of Students' Council, etc.). The students of the Department of PsE are provided consistent and continual assistance. (SER, p. 25)

2.5.6 The SER (Section 2.5.4) addresses the issue of **the assessment system of students' performance**, highlighting the fact that at KK, “while assessing learning outcomes, lecturers follow the principles of clarity, objectivity, impartiality, openness of assessment procedures, mutual respect, and goodwill”. The learning outcomes are assessed by using a cumulative assessment system (IKI). A ten-score criteria scale is applied to assess knowledge and abilities. The assessment of part-time students is “analogous to the assessment of the achievements of full-time students” (SER, p.32).

In relation to informing students of the assessment model, the SER (p.25) states that “at the beginning of a semester, each lecturer informs students about the impact (in %) of each constituent (task) on the final score of his/her subject and sets the criteria for each interim assessment”, emphasising that “assessment criteria are directly related to the anticipated learning outcomes”.

EET had expected that the SER would provide a greater level of detail about the assessment model used in various aspects of the programme. For example, considerable detail is given in relation to the assessment of the Final Thesis. The SER (p. 26) says that this assessment is performed under the scrutiny of a Qualifying Board, appointed by the Director. It is not entirely clear from the SER whether the final thesis being spoken of here is the “final thesis of pedagogical studies” (carrying 3 credits) or the “final thesis of Professional Bachelor” (carrying 9 credits) or both (p.9). However, on other aspects, most especially in regard to the various practices, far less information was given.

The Practical Component (SER, p. 9) of the PsE Study Programme carries 30 credits. Yet, it is not clear that the same level of care and scrutiny applies to the practical component of teacher education (Pedagogical Practice 1, 2, 3 and the Practice of Educational Activity) as is applied, by tradition, to the Final Thesis. EET favours far greater attention being given to the practice period and a greater level of involvement by College supervisors in the grading. EET was particularly concerned to find that, when the results of all 24 students, who had completed their first practicum in the second Semester, were examined the grades were as follows. (One student dropped out of the programme and so the grades are given for only 23 students).

Grade Awarded	Number of students to whom this grade was awarded
10	8
9	2
8	7
7	5
6	1
5	0
4	0
3	0
2	0
1	0

EET was very concerned about this distribution of grades. It had concerns that so many students on a first practice could be awarded the optimum grade (allowing no space for subsequent improvement on later practices) and that three-quarters of the students were in the top three grade levels. EET was also concerned about the fact that no student at all merited less than 60%. The fact that all students were bunched in the upper grading echelons caused to EET to have deep concerns about the grading procedures in use, as well as about the standards being applied.

Although the content of the practical elements is outlined on p. 9 of the SER, there is no evidence in the SER of the mode of assessment (how students are assessed, by whom, how frequently, for how long, how these assessments are cross-standardised from one supervisor to another or from one setting to another or indeed across Lithuania). It may be that KK has a very comprehensive systematic approach to this assessment and its standardisation but it has not been described.

EET was concerned that the titles of many of the Final Theses were such that they could have been objects of research for a Ph. D. because of their breadth. EET is concerned that students may feel under pressure to come up with a major piece of research, which is unrealistic given the constraints on their time and capabilities. Furthermore, EET is concerned that students are under the impression that they have done some form of advanced research when, in reality, their research is pitched at a very low level. For example, rather than exploring the research literature, EET noted that, in a number of their theses, students referenced local news portals, such as www.delfi.lt, www.15min.lt or even wikipedia. EET also noted the general paucity of foreign references in these papers, suggesting that students (and perhaps also the staff supervising or guiding their studies) do not have the language skills to allow them to engage with the wealth of research published in other languages. This is a serious deficit and there was little evidence of any initiative being taken to try to overcome the language difficulties for many staff and students. Neither did EET find evidence to show that the research supervisors took account of these low research standards in their grading of their students' works.

EET also found little evidence that students had been alerted to the ethical issues which can arise when conducting research on young and/vulnerable subjects. EET could not find any theses which contained statements addressing the ethical challenges that might have arisen for a researcher or the steps taken to ameliorate the risks involved (such as easy identification of the subject child/family). Finally, in relation to the Final Theses, there was little evidence that the third chapter was devoted to a comprehensive and thorough engagement and reflection on the research findings. In many cases, a list of conclusions, often not more than a page or two, were presented with little effort to reconnect to the literature search or to comment on how the

particular findings either reinforced or raised questions about the research conducted by others. Student researches seemed to be motivated by a page count rather than a word count leading many to fill pages with illustrations, graphs and bar charts.

The SER states (p. 26) that the volume of a study credit is 26 students' working hours (half for contact and half for self-study). It is not clear how this applies to the practical component of the study programme.

These issues were discussed in some detail with staff, students and employers in the course of the institutional visit. One College supervisor described how she has 16 students in her unit spread over four different settings. When she visits the students, because different parts of the day are different, she checks the plan of the student for the day, she checks whether the mentor has checked the plan already and while studying the plan she can also observe how the student is working. Typically, when she is in a setting, she could take an hour to observe, although very often it might only require 15 minutes. She has adopted two different approaches, sometimes telling the students in advance when she will visit but at other times dropping in without prior warning. In the course of meetings at KK, the employers expressed the view that they would like to see greater attention being paid to the practicum so that it could be perceived as having a status similar to that of the Final Thesis.

On the basis of its description in the SER, together with the evidence collected in the course of the field visit, the EET is satisfied that **the assessment system of students' performance** at KK is adequate but that there is scope for improvement, especially in relation to grading of the practice and of the final thesis. EET was not satisfied with the standard of assessment applied to the practice or to the final thesis. EET considers that both would benefit from a system of internal cross-moderation as well as from external supervision to ensure comparability of grades across the various institutions.

2.5.7 In relation to the extent to which the professional activities of the majority of graduates meet the programme providers' expectations, this can be assessed both in terms of learning outcomes and also in relation to graduate employment. Earlier sections have considered the manner in which the learning outcomes are assessed and the fact that so very few students fail to achieve the expected outcomes (which might be seen either as a strength or as a weakness!).

In relation to graduate employment, this is addressed three times in the SER, firstly in relation to "the demand, mission and aims of the study programme" on p.6 and also in Section 2.5.5, (p. 27) as well as on p. 32 in relation to part-time students. The SER, on p. 6, notes the good rates of graduates' employment according to the specialty acquired, the extent and nature of the feedback obtained from the employers, their on-going commitment to the programme and to its graduates and the requirement, introduced by the Ministry of Education and Science for those working in pre-school settings to have such a qualification.

Section 2.5.5 of the SER commences with a discussion of the predicted demands for graduates in this area, noting the inaccuracy of such predictions made in the past. The "new" research in this area dates back to 2006 when an effort was made to anticipate demands up to 2015. It would be interesting to know how accurate the 2006 predictions now are. That said, it is to be welcomed that, according to the data of the Lithuanian Labour Exchange, only 5 graduates of the year of 2012 are registered as unemployed⁹ (there were 22 full-time and 30 part-time graduates).

⁹ Notification of the Lithuanian Labour Exchange, 21/01/2013. Annex of the notification dated 21/01/2013 about the distribution of KK graduates of the year of 2012 registered in Kaunas Labour Exchange according to study programmes.

The SER notes that data relating to *the employment and other occupations of the graduates' of the study programme* are registered every January. The analysis of the data (Table 2.5.5.1) reveals that 76%) of graduates work in the field for which they have studied. It is surprising that the rate of employment among part-time students is somewhat lower in light of the fact that “the part-time study programme of PsE is chosen by the applicants who have strong motivation of studying the selected area and who work in the institutions of preschool education”. (SER, p. 32).

In relation to the employability of graduates, the SER (p. 32) notes that

Current economic conditions determine huge dynamics of the labour market, so it is very complicated to estimate the duration of time needed for the graduates of the study programme of PsE to establish themselves in it. Employment rates constantly vary, which makes it impossible to provide explicit data. However, there are a lot of graduates of this study programme who work in the institutions of preschool education in Kaunas region and other Lithuanian districts. (SER, p.32)

Despite this claim and the comments in Section 2.1 of the SER in relation to the key strategic role which this programme plays both in the Kaunas Region and City, being the only such programme available, it is surprising to read that only “about 30% of graduates and students find vacancies in nursery schools of Kaunas and its region”.

[Note: Subsequent to the circulation of this Report in draft form, KK expressed concern about EET's comments on this matter, drawing attention to data presented on p. 27 and to Table 2.5.5.1 of the SER. Most of the explanation offered relates to levels of employment, about which EET did not express a view, and about how KK helps to get employment for its graduates. The reason why EET was surprised is because it was told that there was a very great regional need for these graduates. It seems that KK has confirmed EET's conclusion, based on the SER, that only about 30% of graduates find employment in the region. If KK's level of production is designed to meet and match local needs, EET would expect a higher level of local or regional employment].

From the EET perspective, it is acknowledged that the level of demand from applicants with high competitive scores is good. Furthermore, it is recognised that the admission requirements are clear, well advertised and well understood. As a further **strength**, EET found evidence of a high level of multi-faceted student support helped by a very favourable student: staff ratio. EET also found evidence of an institutional and Departmental commitment to conducting students' surveys about the quality of studies, the objectiveness of the assessment, etc. as well as surveys of students' opinion.

In regard to **weaknesses**, EET queried the high priority given to grades in subjects that do not seem to match the requirements of early childhood education at the entrance tests. A further **weakness** lay in the fact that such a small proportion of students engage in research, artistic and applied research activities. EET noted a very low level of involvement with the ERASMUS programme. EET considered that academic standards have to be questioned when virtually no student ever experiences academic failure. EET also had concerns about the failure to describe the approach to assessment and its standardisation in the practicum. Arising from repeated statements about the extent to which KK was meeting regional needs, EET was surprised to learn from the SER that only “about 30% of graduates and students find vacancies in nursery schools of Kaunas and its region”.

2.6 Programme management

2.6.1 The SER, in Section 4.1, gives a picture of the administrative structure relating to the **responsibilities for decisions and monitoring of the implementation of the programme, stating that the** processes of the management of the study programme of PsE are implemented and the decisions are made at the levels of KK, JVFA and the Department of PsE". It is made clear (Section 4.2) that the internal quality systems of KK are in line with the TQM model of quality management. Section 4.1 of the SER gives an account of the role of the seven-person Study Programme Committee in monitoring the quality of the programme and its implementation. Section 4.1 notes that this Committee includes scientists, representatives of employers, lecturers, graduates and students and that it

analyses and improves the content of the study programme, reviews it and, if necessary, provides recommendations for updating the study programme. It also maintains contacts with the students and graduates of the study programme, stakeholders, employers, and follows innovations in the sphere of preschool education. (p. 33)

Section 4.3 of the SER lists in considerable detail the legislative instruments, regulations and orders that must be taken into account in relation to the PsE Study Programme. A key role is played by the Heads of Department but academic study groups are also involved by way of tutors/lecturers. Students, nominated by the Students' Council, are also involved, but it is not clear that they are involved at each level of decision-making. It is emphasised (Table 4.4.1) that stakeholders play an important role in this highly-structured process. What is not clear from this account of the programme management system is how the quality assurance loop is closed. Section 4.1 does not describe how a quality improvement proposal coming from the Study Programme Committee is processed through the other bodies which are responsible for programme management. EET considers that there should be greater clarity on this matter.

2.6.2 Section 4.3 of the SER highlights the fact that **information and data on the implementation of the programme are regularly collected and analysed**. There is an annual analysis of survey findings relating to lecturers', departmental and faculty performance and the procedures which apply to the implementation of the survey findings are presented. The use of Moodle to enhance anonymity in surveying is described. As noted above, (Table 4.4.1) stakeholders play an important role in this highly-structured process. The SER also emphasises that this is an on-going process (p. 34). Section 4.2 of the SER draws attention to the fact that, since 2005/2006, there has been a public presentation of the self-assessment surveys, involving all members of the KK community, staff, students and stakeholders, and leading to a SWOT analysis which helps to identify the actions for improvement (p. 33). The SER points out that, as an outcome of the process, the data emerging from the annual survey of KK are announced publicly on the Internet site of the institution.

2.6.3 As noted in the preceding sections, **the outcomes of internal and external evaluations of the programme are used for the improvement of the programme** and the EET is satisfied that this is done in a very structured manner involving all members of the KK community both internal and external. The SER (Section 4.2, p. 33) points out that in 2000, a Study Quality Management Office was established in KK but goes on to say that, since 2012, this function is performed by the Committee of Assuring Quality of Management and Studies under KK Academic Council. It is not entirely clear how both of these Committees (Study Programme Committee and the Committee of Assuring Quality of Management and Studies) avoid overlap in their functions. EET was also concerned about other potential overlapping functions. The statement in the SER, mentioned above, seems to indicate that the Study Quality Management

Office is no longer functioning. Yet in its meeting with members of the Administration, the EET was assured that there is an Office of Quality Assurance and, indeed that the SEG team had received training from this Office. While the titles of the Office referred to in the SER is not identical with that mentioned in the meeting with Administration (and this may simply be a matter of translation), EET is concerned that there may be separate bodies fulfilling similar (and overlapping) functions. EET suggests that there be greater clarity on the bodies that play a role in processing the outcomes of internal and external evaluations.

2.6.4 The documentation provided to EET makes it very clear that **the evaluation and improvement processes involve stakeholders**. In the course of the field visit and most especially in the meetings with stakeholders, this was reinforced with stakeholders expressing their satisfaction with their level of engagement. However, in its meeting with graduates and alumni of the programme, a desire for a greater level of involvement in overall programme planning and management was expressed by those attending.

2.6.5 In regard to the issue as to whether **the internal quality assurance measures are effective and efficient**, the EET is generally satisfied with the systems and arrangements which are in place at KK. However, it is not clear that the feedback systems to students are as solid as they might be. Having explored further the arrangements for the **final thesis** and the **arrangements for standardising the assessment of the practicals**, EET considers that greater attention needs to be placed on the assessment of the practice, most especially in regard to grading and the standardisation of grades. Specifically, EET is concerned that the full range of grades are not awarded, no students ever seem to fail while almost all students are awarded grades from 60% upwards and there does not seem to be any internal system of checks and balances, such as double marking, to ensure greater individual accountability and the application of common standards across all of those involved in grading.

2.6.6 In regard to the **strengths and weaknesses of programme management**, the SER (Section 4.4, p. 35) identifies as a strength the fact that members of the community and stakeholders are involved in the process of quality assurance. EET does not see this as a particular strength as it is considered to be an essential element in any such process. On the other hand, in relation to the only weakness identified (insufficient use of *Moodle* for surveys), there is no evidence presented in the SER on which the EET might have arrived at such a conclusion. This is not to say that this is not a real weakness (it probably is, if so identified) but this highlights the fact that Self-Assessment Reports need to be very open and honest documents if the external evaluators are not to be surprised by the identification of a weakness such as this

From the perspective of EET, considered to be a **strength** of this study programme that the internal quality systems of KK are in line with the TQM model of quality management and that the institution has a Study Quality Management Office together with, since 2012, a Committee of Assuring Quality of Management and Studies. EET is also pleased to note that an annual analysis of survey findings relating to lecturers', departmental and faculty performance leading to a SWOT analysis with findings publicly presented is conducted.

On the other hand, EET considers that greater attention needs to be placed on the assessment of the practice, most especially in regard to grading and the standardisation of grades.

III RECOMMENDATIONS

EET **recommends** that consideration be given to giving a more appropriate and positive name to this programme, such as the Pedagogy of Early Childhood Education and Care or the Pedagogy of Early Years Education.

EET **recommends** that there be greater clarity about the target population (ages 0-7) as well as about the setting for which pedagogues are being prepared (preschool and pre-primary education).

EET **strongly recommends** that a major programme review be undertaken at KK with a view to adopting a modular programme structure designed to ensure that modules relating to appropriate learning outcomes are on offer.

EET **recommends** that staff at KK should be encouraged to make their research work in the field of Pedagogy and Early Childhood Education more visible.

EET **recommends** that the management of KK need to be more aware of the fact that the ratio of students: staff is entirely unsustainable and needs to come into line with international norms.

EET **recommends** that Order No. V-1742 be fully implemented at KK in respect of staff engagement with the placement settings as well as in regard to research undertaken by staff.

EET **recommends** that the management of KK, in granting tenure, should seek to maximise the numbers having doctoral qualifications, alongside with placing a premium on competence in foreign language.

EET **recommends** that the Final Thesis be reconsidered in relation to its function and purpose but most especially in relation to the structure and content of the thesis so that there is a sharper focus on research, a longer engagement in the research topic and the drawing of conclusions from findings whether in support of the work of others or contrary to it. More attention also needs to be given to the issue of research ethics where young or vulnerable subjects are involved.

EET **recommends** that greater attention be paid to the importance, role and function of the practices within the study programme, paying particular attention to the assessment of the practice and the role of KK staff in that work, especially in regard to grading and the standardisation of grades.

IV. SUMMARY

Main positive and negative quality aspects of each programme evaluation area and main recommendations for the improving of quality of the study programme.

2.1 Programme aims and learning outcomes

In the view of EET, the **strengths** of the programme lie in the fact that there is a clarity about its aims and the expected learning outcomes and in the fact that they are widely disseminated. A further **strength** lies in the level of demand although EET was **not satisfied** that much of the data adduced to show demand dated back to 2006 or even earlier. EET also had **concerns** about the name of the programme and the risk of breaking the target population into different age

categories. There is a further **potential weakness** arising from a tendency to view the full-time and part-time modes of delivery as separate programme.

[Note: Subsequent to the circulation of this Report in draft form, KK expressed concerns about the latter comment, highlighting the same issue as EET had wished to highlight, namely that both full-time and part-time modes are the same in every way except for the mode of delivery and that changes necessitated by that. KK also pointed out that the decision to analyse both aspects of the programme separately had been taken on foot of a recommendation from SKVC. EET is pleased to acknowledge KK's position that there is a single programme, a view with which EET agrees].

2.2 Curriculum design

EET is pleased to note the extent to which the College has been responding to changes in the regulatory framework and legislative requirements.

EET is also pleased to note the practical orientation of the programme and the fact that pedagogical practices start during the first year of studies and continue up to the sixth semester (in accordance with Order No. V-827, 15 May 2012).

EET would expect greater consistency in the manner in which learning outcomes are assessed. EET was very concerned at the lack of evidence on which to decide whether the content of the programme reflects the latest achievements in science, art and technologies as this topic is not specifically addressed in the SER.

2.3. Staff

EET is concerned that only a small proportion of the staff on this study programme are themselves qualified as pre-school educators. It also sees, as a **Weakness** the low rates of staff mobility, exacerbated by poor foreign language skills.

2.4. Facilities and learning resources

From its perspective, EET is satisfied that KK has an adequate resource base for offering this programme. It accepts that that is a strong institutional base of institutions providing professional placements for the students and that the students are happy with the practice arrangements.

On the other hand, EET considers that the students need to be exposed to a greater diversity of foreign language materials, both in classes and in the Library as a way of nurturing their ability in languages but also in helping to grow their confidence to that they may decide to participate in mobility programmes. EET was not satisfied with the standard of assessment applied to the practice.

2.5 Study Process and Student Assessment

From the EET perspective, it is acknowledged that the level of demand from applicants with high competitive scores is good. Furthermore, it is recognised that the admission requirements are clear, well advertised and well understood. As a further **strength**, EET found evidence of a high level of multi-faceted student support helped by a very favourable student: staff ratio. EET also found evidence of an institutional and Departmental commitment to conducting students' surveys about the quality of studies, the objectiveness of the assessment, etc. as well as surveys of students' opinion.

In regard to **weaknesses**, EET queried the high priority given to grades in subjects that do not seem to match the requirements of early childhood education at the entrance tests. A further **weakness** lay in the fact that such a small proportion of students engage in research, artistic and applied research activities. EET noted a very low level of involvement with the ERASMUS programme. EET considered that academic standards have to be questioned when virtually no student ever experiences academic failure. EET also had concerns about the failure to describe the approach to assessment and its standardisation in the practicum. Arising from repeated statements about the extent to which KK was meeting regional needs, EET was surprised to learn from the SER that only “about 30% of graduates and students find vacancies in nursery schools of Kaunas and its region”.

2.6 Programme management

From the perspective of EET, considered to be a **strength** of this study programme that the internal quality systems of KK are in line with the TQM model of quality management and that the institution has a Study Quality Management Office together with, since 2012, a Committee of Assuring Quality of Management and Studies. EET is also pleased to note that an annual analysis of survey findings relating to lecturers', departmental and faculty performance leading to a SWOT analysis with findings publicly presented is conducted. EET is concerned that there be greater clarity in regard to the roles and functions of the various offices and bodies involved in the programme management process so as to avoid unnecessary duplication.

EET is concerned about the grading model, noting that the full range of grades are not awarded, no students ever seem to fail, while almost all students are awarded grades from 60% upwards and there does not seem to be any internal system of checks and balances, such as double marking, to ensure greater individual accountability and the application of common standards across all of those involved in grading. In particular, EET considers that greater attention needs to be placed on the assessment of the practice, most especially in regard to grading and the standardisation of grades.

V. GENERAL ASSESSMENT

The study programme *Preschool education* (state code – 653X11004) at Kaunas College is given positive evaluation.

Study programme assessment in points by evaluation areas.

No.	Evaluation Area	Evaluation Area in Points*
1.	Programme aims and learning outcomes	2
2.	Curriculum design	2
3.	Staff	2
4.	Material resources	2
5.	Study process and assessment (student admission, study process student support, achievement assessment)	2
6.	Programme management (programme administration, internal quality assurance)	2
	Total:	12

*1 (unsatisfactory) - there are essential shortcomings that must be eliminated;

2 (satisfactory) - meets the established minimum requirements, needs improvement;

3 (good) - the field develops systematically, has distinctive features;

4 (very good) - the field is exceptionally good.

Grupės vadovas:
Team leader:

Dr. Gillian Lesley Scott Hilton

Grupės nariai:
Team members:

Prof. dr. Peadar Cremin

Kelly Van Driessche

Doc. dr. Tomas Butvilas

Sandra Kaleininkaitė

<...>

V. APIBENDRINAMASIS ĮVERTINIMAS

Kauno kolegijos studijų programa *Ikimokyklinis ugdymas* (valstybinis kodas – 653X11004) vertinama teigiamai.

Eil. Nr.	Vertinimo sritis	Srities įvertinimas, balais*
1.	Programos tikslai ir numatomi studijų rezultatai	2
2.	Programos sandara	2
3.	Personalas	2
4.	Materialieji ištekliai	2
5.	Studijų eiga ir jos vertinimas	2
6.	Programos vadyba	2
	Iš viso:	12

* 1 - Nepatenkinamai (yra esminių trūkumų, kuriuos būtina pašalinti)

2 - Patenkinamai (tenkina minimalius reikalavimus, reikia tobulinti)

3 - Gerai (sistemiškai plėtojama sritis, turi savitų bruožų)

4 - Labai gerai (sritis yra išskirtinė)

IV. SANTRAUKA

Pagrindiniai teigiami ir neigiami kiekvienos programos vertinimo srities kokybės aspektai ir pagrindinės rekomendacijos dėl studijų programos kokybės gerinimo.

2.1 Programos tikslai ir studijų rezultatai

EG požiūriu, programos **stiprybės** yra tos, kad jos tikslai ir numatomi studijų rezultatai yra aiškūs ir apie juos plačiai teikiama informacija. Kita **stiprybė** –,programos paklausa, tačiau EG **nepatiko** tai, jog daug paklausą įrodančių duomenų buvo 2006 m. ar dar ankstesni. EG taip pat **kilo klausimų** dėl programos pavadinimo ir rizikos, suskaidant tiksline populiaciją į skirtingas amžiaus grupes. Kita **potenciali silpnybė** kyla iš tendencijos nuolatinių ir iššęstinių studijų formas traktuoti kaip atskiras programas.

[Pastaba: po to, kai buvo pateiktas šių Išvadų projektas, KK išreiškė nuomonę dėl pastarojo komentaro ir pabrėžė tą pačią problemą, kurią ir EG norėjo išryškinti, būtent – kad abi nuolatinių ir ištęstinių studijų formos yra vienodos visais lygmenimis, išskyrus teikimo formą ir to sąlygotus skirtumus. KK taip pat nurodė, kad sprendimas analizuoti abu programos aspektus atskirai buvo priimtas vadovaujantis SKVC rekomendacijomis. EG sutinka su KK pozicija, jog tai – viena programa].

2.2 Programos sandara

EG teigiamai vertina tai, kaip Kolegija reaguoja į pokyčius reglamentavimo sistemoje ir teisinių reikalavimų pokyčius.

EG taip pat pastebi tą faktą, kad programa yra orientuota į praktiką ir tai, jog pedagoginė praktika prasideda pirmaisiais studijų metais bei tęsiasi iki pat šešto semestro (kaip nurodyta 2012 m. gegužės 15 d. Įsakyme Nr. V-827).

EG norėtų, kad studijų rezultatai būtų vertinami nuosekliau. EG kėlė didelį susirūpinimą įrodymų, pagal kuriuos būtų galima nustatyti, ar programos turinys atspindi naujausius mokslo, meno ir technologijų pasiekimus, trūkumas, kadangi ši tema Savianalizės suvestinėje nekomentuojama.

2.3. Personalas

EG kelia nerimą, tai, kad tik maža studijų programos personalo dalis turi ikimokyklinio ugdymo specialistų kvalifikaciją. Grupės manymu, **trūkumas** taip pat yra ir tai, jog personalo judumas yra žemas, tai dar pablogina faktas, kad užsienio kalbų įgūdžiai yra labai silpni.

2.4. Materialieji ištekliai

Iš savo pusės EG gerai vertina tai, kad KK turi atitinkamą materialinę bazę šiai programai teikti. Ji sutinka, kad tai yra stipri institucinė profesinės praktikos vietų bazė, ir kad studentai yra patenkinti praktikos galimybėmis.

Kita vertus, EG mano, kad studentams reikia siūlyti naudoti daugiau medžiagos užsienio kalba, tiek paskaitų metu, tiek bibliotekoje, taip skatinant jų kalbų gebėjimus, tuo pačiu padedant jiems įgauti pasitikėjimo, ir taip padėti priimti sprendimą dalyvauti judumo programose. EG nebuvo patenkinta praktikai taikomais vertinimo standartais.

2.5 Studijų eiga ir jos vertinimas

EG manymu, programos paklausumas tarp stojančiųjų su aukštais konkurencingais pažymiais yra geras. Be to, pripažįstama, kad stojimo reikalavimai yra aiškūs, pakankamai reklamuojami ir suprantami. Kita **stiprybė** – EG rado svarių įrodymų, kad studentams teikiama įvairiapusiška parama, ją sustiprina labai palankus studentų – personalo santykis. Taip pat EG rado įrodymų, jog institucija ir fakultetas yra įsipareigoję atlikti studentų apklausas apie studijų kokybę, vertinimo objektyvumą ir kt., taip pat vykdyti studentų nuomonės apklausas.

Kalbant apie **silpnybes**, EG kilo abejonių dėl stojamuosiuose testuose aukštų prioritetų skyrimo, pažymiams už tuos dalykus, kurie, kaip manoma, neatitinka ankstyvosios vaikystės ugdymo reikalavimų. Kita **silpnybė** yra ta, kad labai maža dalis studentų įsitraukia į mokslinių tyrimų, meninę ar taikomųjų mokslinių tyrimų veiklą. EG pastebėjo, kad labai mažai asmenų dalyvauja ERASMUS programoje. EG manymu, kyla įtarimų dėl akademinų standartų, nes faktiškai nė vienas studentas nėra neišlaikęs akademinų atsiskaitymų. EG kelia nerimą ir tai, kad nėra aprašyti praktikų vertinimo metodai ir jų standartizavimas. Dėl pasikartojančių teiginių, kad KK atitinka regioninius poreikius, perskaičiusi savianalizės suvestinę EG nustebo sužinojusi, kad tik „apie 30 % absolventų ir studentų įsidarbina Kauno ir jo regiono vaikų darželiuose“.

2.6 Programos vadyba

EG manymu, šios studijų programos **stiprybė** yra ir ta, jog KK vidaus kokybės sistemos yra suderintos su visuotinės kokybės vadybos modeliu (angl. TQM model) ir kad institucijoje veikia Studijų kokybės valdymo tarnyba, o nuo 2012 m. – ir Vadybos ir studijų kokybės užtikrinimo komitetas. EG taip pat teigiamai vertina tai, kad atliekama metinė apklausų išvadų analizė, susijusi su dėstytojų, katedrų ir fakultetų darbu, o vėliau iš to atliekama SSGG analizė, kurios išvados skelbiamos viešai. EG manymu, siekiant išvengti nereikalingų pasikartojimų, reiktų aiškiau nurodyti įvairių su programos vadybos procesu susijusių tarnybų ir organizacijų vaidmenis bei funkcijas.

EG kelia susirūpinimą pažymių skyrimo modelis, grupė pastebi, kad ne visų lygių pažymiai yra rašomi, nė vienas studentas nėra gavęs neigiamo įvertinimo, o beveik visi studentai gauna 60 % ir aukštesnius įvertinimus, taip pat manoma, kad nėra sukurtos jokios vidinės patikrinimo ir palyginimo sistemos, tokios, kaip dvigubas vertinimas, kuri naudojama užtikrinti didesnę asmeninę atskaitomybę ir visų vertinančiųjų bendrų standartų taikymą. EG manymu, itin didelį dėmesį reikia skirti praktikos vertinimui, ypač pažymių skyrimui ir pažymių standartizacijai.

III. REKOMENDACIJOS

Ekspertų grupė (toliau EG) **rekomenduoja** atkreipti dėmesį į tai, jog programai reiktų suteikti tinkamesnį ir pozityvesnį pavadinimą, tokį, kaip Ankstyvosios vaikystės ugdymo ir priežiūros pedagogika arba Ankstyvųjų metų ugdymo pedagogika.

EG **rekomenduoja** aiškiau nurodyti, kokio amžiaus vaikams (0–7 m. amžiaus) ir kokios tipo pedagogai bus rengiami (ikimokyklinio ugdymo ir priešmokyklinio ugdymo).

EG **labai rekomenduoja** KK atlikti plačią programos peržiūrą, siekiant pritaikyti modulinės programos struktūrą, sukurtą užtikrinti, kad siūlomi moduliai būtų susiję su atitinkamais studijų rezultatais.

EG **rekomenduoja** skatinti KK personalą labiau viešinti savo atliktą mokslinių tyrimų darbą Pedagogikos ir ankstyvosios vaikystės ugdymo srityje.

EG **rekomenduoja** KK vadovybei labiau įsigilinti į studentų – personalo santykį, kuris yra visiškai netvarus ir turėtų labiau atitikti tarptautines normas.

EG **rekomenduoja** KK visiškai įgyvendinti įsakymą Nr. V-1742 turint omenyje tiek personalo įsipareigojimus dalyvauti praktikos mokyklų veikloje, tiek personalo vykdomus mokslinius tyrimus.

EG **rekomenduoja**, kad KK vadovybė skirdama etatus turėtų siekti padidinti personalo, turinčio daktaro kvalifikaciją, skaičių, tuo pačiu skirdama premijas už užsienio kalbų mokėjimą.

EG **rekomenduoja**, kad baigiamieji darbai būtų iš naujo svarstomi aptariant jų funkcijas ir tikslą, bet labiausiai jų struktūrą ir turinį, kad būtų labiau koncentruojamasi į mokslinius tyrimus, daugiau dirbama su mokslinių tyrimų temomis ir išvadų, paremtų gautais rezultatais, formulavimu atsižvelgiant į tai ar tie rezultatai paremia kitų tyrimų rezultatus ar jiems prieštarauja. Daugiau dėmesio taip pat turėtų būti skiriama mokslinių tyrimų etikos klausimui, jei tiriami jauni ar pažeidžiami subjektai.

EG **rekomenduoja** daugiau dėmesio skirti praktikų svarbai, jų vaidmeniui ir funkcijai studijų programoje, ypač atkreipiant dėmesį į praktikos vertinimą ir KK personalo vaidmenį šiame darbe, ypatingai tą, kuris susijęs su pažymių skyrimu ir pažymių standartizacija.

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