STUDIJŲ KOKYBĖS VERTINIMO CENTRAS
CENTRE FOR QUALITY ASSESSMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION

ENVIRONMENTAL ENGINEERING FIELD OF STUDY

VILNIUS KOLEGIJA

EXTERNAL EVALUATION REPORT

Expert panel:

1. Panel chair: Prof dr. Iveta Šteinberga …….. (signature)
2. Academic member: Prof. dr. Toomas Tamm;
3. Social partner representative: Ms Lina Šleinotaitė- Kalėdė;
4. Student representative: Ms Ernesta Salapėtienė

SKVC coordinator: Dr. Ona Šakalienė

Report prepared in
Report language: English

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I. INTRODUCTION

1.1. OUTLINE OF THE EVALUATION PROCESS

The field of study evaluations in Lithuanian higher education institutions (HEIs) are based on the following:

- Procedure for the External Evaluation and Accreditation of Studies, Evaluation Areas and Indicators, approved by the Minister of Education, Science, and Sport;
- Methodology of External Evaluation of Study Fields approved by the Director of the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education (SKVC);
- Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG).

The evaluation is intended to support HEIs in continuous enhancement of their study process and to inform the public about the quality of programmes within the field of study.

The object of the evaluation is all programmes within a specific field of study. A separate assessment is given for each study cycle.

The evaluation process consists of the following main steps: 1) Self-evaluation and production of a self-evaluation report (SER) prepared by an HEI; 2) A site visit by the review panel to the HEI; 3) The external evaluation report (EER) production by the review panel; 4) EER review by the HEI; 5) EER review by the Study Evaluation Committee; 6) Accreditation decision taken by SKVC; 7) Appeal procedure (if initiated by the HEI); 8) Follow-up activities, which include the production of a Progress Report on Recommendations Implementation by the HEI.

The main outcome of the evaluation process is the EER prepared by the review panel. The HEI is forwarded the draft EER for feedback on any factual mistakes. The draft report is then subject to approval by the external Study Evaluation Committee, operating under SKVC. Once approved, the EER serves as the basis for an accreditation decision. If an HEI disagrees with the outcome of the evaluation, it can file an appeal.On the basis of the approved EER, SKVC takes one of the following accreditation decisions:

- **Accreditation granted for 7 years** if all evaluation areas are evaluated as exceptional (5 points), very good (4 points), or good (3 points).
- **Accreditation granted for 3 years** if at least one evaluation area is evaluated as satisfactory (2 points).
- **Not accredited** if at least one evaluation area is evaluated as unsatisfactory (1 point).

If the field of study and cycle were **previously accredited for 3 years**, the re-evaluation of the field of study and cycle is initiated no earlier than after 2 years. After the re-evaluation of the field of study and cycle, SKVC takes one of the following decisions regarding the accreditation of the field of study and cycle:

- To be accredited for the remaining term until the next evaluation of the field of study and cycle, but no longer than 4 years, if all evaluation areas are evaluated as exceptional (5 points), very good (4 points) or good (3 points).
- To not be accredited, if at least one evaluation area is evaluated as satisfactory (2 points) or unsatisfactory (1 point).

1.2. REVIEW PANEL

The review panel was appointed in accordance with the Reviewer Selection Procedure as approved by the Director of SKVC.

The composition of the review panel was as follows:

1. Panel chair: Prof. dr. Iveta Šteinberga, Head of Environmental Science department at University of Latvia, Latvia;
2. Academic member: Prof. dr. Toomas Tamm, Professor at Estonian University of Life Sciences Faculty of Water Management, Estonia;
3. Social partner representative: Ms Lina Šleinotaitė- Kalėdė, Managing Partner, Director of UAB "EKOKONSULTACIJOS" - environmental research and consulting company, Lithuania;
4. Student representative: Ms Ernesta Salapėtienė Graduate of Vilnius Gediminas Technical University, Environmental Engineering Technology Management programme, Lithuania.

1.3. SITE VISIT

The site visit was organised on 24 March 2025 onsite.

Meetings with the following members of the staff and stakeholders took place during the site visit:

- Senior management and administrative staff of the faculty(ies);
- Team responsible for preparation of the SER;
- Teaching staff;
- Students;
- Alumni and social stakeholders including employers.

There was a need for translation during the meeting.

1.4. BACKGROUND OF THE REVIEW

Overview of the HEI

Vilniaus Kolegija (hereinafter referred to as VK, VIKO, College, Kolegija) is a state higher education institution established in the Republic of Lithuania in 2000. Since June 5, 2024, Vilnius College of Technology and Design has been admitted to Vilnius College and is Lithuania's largest higher education institution. VK's role is to provide modern, European-standard higher education studies, develop national and international research in cooperation with partners. Studios are held in 10 faculties (Agrotechnologies, Economics, Electronics and Informatics, Arts and Creative Technology, Pedagogy, Health Care, Business Management, Construction, Design and Technology). Fifty-eight study programs are offered in 12 different field groups and 34 specific study fields. The number of students in professional undergraduate and short-cycle programs exceeds 6500, of which about 8 % are full-time international students. The ratio between the number of employed and students is 1 to 8 (respectively), most of the academic staff are senior lecturers and lecturers, the number of professors is relatively small, 19 %. Totally 280 cooperation agreements with 42 countries have been concluded to promote international cooperation, the closest cooperation is with European countries, while successful cooperation is also implemented with the Asian region. Building scientific competence is also implemented in international projects; 20 different international projects are implemented annually in various cooperation programmes (e.g., COST, Interreg, etc.), or active activities are taking place in international cooperation networks (e.g., UAS4EUROPE, BUSINET, etc.).

Overview of the study field

In 2012, the study programme “Landscape Design” (previously called “Landscapes and their Design”) was accredited for 6 years. The change in the title of the study programme was carried out following employer surveys and discussions with students. Since 2016, the study programme has been included in the field of Engineering (H900) and Landscape Design (H930). Currently, the programme belongs to the group of study fields of Engineering Sciences (E) Environmental Engineering (E03) study field. Last accreditation in 2022, according to external experts, was prolonged for three years. The evaluation process was organised only remotely (TEAMS solution) due to the COVID-19 pandemia.

The objective and expected learning outcomes of the Landscape Design study programme are harmonised with the strategic goals of the VK; specialists/professional bachelors are prepared to compete in both the local and global labour market. A functioning system to support academic growth and international collaboration via projects is established.

Previous external evaluations

The previous assessment of the visit of accreditation experts recommends harmonising the content of studies with the title of the study programme, and based on discussion and survey, it is decided to incorporate the study programme in the direction of engineering studies, increasing the proportion of subjects. The increase is not considered sufficient. The recommendations recommend to increase the scientific activity of lecturers and professional didactic development, which has been successfully implemented in recent years, administrative support is also provided.

The evaluation team within previous assessment made major recommendations in it's report which were as follows:

- "*The curriculum should focus more on architecture and design and less on engineering. Students and employers are interested in the landscape design, horticulture and gardening aspects of the study programme, but there is little interest in the engineering part of the programme, and the are not enough competent lecturers specifically in the field of civil engineering. It is considered that it is inappropriate to classify the study programme as an Environmental Engineering study field programme and that could be better classified as a Landscape Architecture study field programme or, possibly, an Urban Green Infrastructure study field programme*". **The recommendation was implemented based on a survey of 49 respondents (employers) carried out in 2022, in which the majority (66.7%) of respondents indicated that Landscape Design specialists comply with the competence group of Environmental Engineers. In addition, meetings have been organised with students, employers, and social partners to obtain recommendations for improving the study programme and harmonising content and results according to the field of Environmental Engineering studies. The programm`s learning outcomes and study plan was updated by increasing the proportion of engineering subjects (e.g. Environmental Engineering)*. *It is expected that the changes introduced will be demonstrated by linking the study programme's objectives and the study results, as described in SER Annex 3B, where a detailed pathway for achieving the results should be outlined in the study subject descriptions. For example, the study course "Environmental Measurement Technologies" is associated with the study result "A2. Understand the key concepts and content of the environmental Engineering field of study", however, the content of subject description, with special emphasis on results, shows that two resultative outcomes were expected (ability to perform geodetic measurements and understanding of coordinate systems) that could not be considered equivalent to basic engineering concepts formulation.* **Proposed activities are not considered as sufficient (recommendation is implemented partly) as Order No. V-948 of the Minister of Education, Science and Sport of the Republic of Lithuania of 5 May 2023 "Descriptor of the group of study fields of engineering sciences" in 14.3. states that "Environmental Engineering (E03) is an interdisciplinary scientific and practical field of engineering which aims <u>to develop</u> tools, instruments and systems ….."**.**while in VIKO SER stated that programme aims <u>only participating in the design of engineering systems</u> (chapter** 1.1., under Study field analysis). Bachelor's papers reveal that the main skills are acquired in **gardening and landscape design, but in engineering calculations, justification of the chosen methods, use of calculation results to make choices, and understanding of the functioning of the engineering system are lacking. However, the students' final theses show that the purpose of the calculations, the proper input data and constraints required to achieve the result, the chosen calculation methods, and the understanding of how the entire system works are incomplete or even flawed. Unfortunately, those projects have not shown to practical engineers who could inform about major problems in teaching and supervising. The identified deficiencies in environmental engineering skills during the development of the final works indicate deficiencies in the acquisition of engineering skills and knowledge throughout the study process.**

- "*The amount of research carried out by lecturers should be increased. This would only be possible if the number of PhD holders in Kolegia increased*". **The recommendation was successfully fully implemented by increase (from 5 to 7) of academic staff with doctoral degree.**

- "*Removing the programme from the engineering study field could reduce the importance of the maths performance factor for admission to the study programme. This in turn could contribute to an increase in the number of students enrolled*." **The action ("stay as it is") taken to fulfil recommendation was explained by Study Field Committee decision (September 12, 2022) based on opinion that Engineering Sciences were closely linked to technological sciences,**

IT, physics, chemistry et al. The position of VIKO is explained by stable number of applicants and need for specific maths knowledge in studies. This recommendation is not implemented, but sufficient explanation is given.

- "*Lecturers should be encouraged to use innovative teaching methods, in particular by giving them the opportunity to share practical knowledge and good teaching practice with each other.*" **The recommendation was implemented by providing special qualification courses for lecturers, increase (from 2 in 2021/2022 to 7 in 2023/2024) of practitioner lecturers who should share practical experience, introduce innovations in the study field, also help to develop labour market needs oriented skills. A description of the learning outcomes, study courses, and methods is given in the SER Annex 3B. And, in some cases (study subjects Landscape Management and Maintenance, and Machinery for the Installation and Maintenance of Landscapes), the assessment method refers to a self-test, which, however, would not be the preferred assessment method for learning the basics of engineering (study result A1).**

- "*The choice should be whether to raise the level of curriculum content with engineering-trained lecturers or to focus on horticulture, which is also a desirable and relevant study field for students and graduates of the programme*". **The recommendation was implemented by expanding academic staff by three (3) engineering-trained lecturers, also workload of them was increased.**

- "*As landscape design is part of the built environment (keywords: sustainable urban drainage systems (SuDS), heat island effect), there is a need to raises level of teaching of hydraulics and environment physics, and to acquire appropriate study stands*". **The recommendation was partly implemented, while ornamental plant training area was complemented by modules for rooftop planting and features a rain garden (as written in SER, chapter 6.2.)**, **according to Annex 4 (Logic of the content layout of the Landscape design study programme) topics covered hydraulics and environment physics didn't mentioned.**

- "*The process of selecting students to participate in the surveys needs to be clarified and the opportunities for feedback need to be expanded more generally. Relaying only on surveys and questionnaires to provide feedback does not ensure a sufficient broad involvement*". **This recommendation was fully implemented, such as survey methods were expanded, electronic surveys were complemented by round-table discussions, interviews. Additionally, feedback collection methods were improved.**

Documents and information used in the review

The following documents and/or information have been requested/provided by the HEI before or during the site visit:

- *Self-evaluation report and its annexes*
- *Final theses*

Additional sources of information used by the review panel:

The following additional sources of information have been used by the review panel:

- Publicly available information on VK homepage;
- On-site interview results;
- Additionally requested information about Survey of Individuals Providing Landscape Management Services (2022);
- New revised subject descriptions, 2025 (first year, second year; third year).

Subject descriptions:

- Basics of Arboriculture;
- Basics of Landscaping Construction; Engineering Measurement Technologies;
- Landscape Architecture ;
- Landscaping Engineering.

II. STUDY PROGRAMMES IN THE FIELD

First cycle/LTQF 6

Title of the study programme	**Landscape Design**
State code	6531EX029
Type of study (college/university)	College
Mode of study (full time/part time) and nominal duration (in years)	Full-time studies – 3 years
Workload in ECTS	180
Award (degree and/or professional qualification)	Professional Bachelor in Engineering Sciences
Language of instruction	Lithuanian
Admission requirements	Secondary education
First registration date	31/08/2001 No. 1254, Re-registered 26/06/2002 No.1190
Comments (including remarks on joint or interdisciplinary nature of the programme, mode of provision)	

III. ASSESSMENT IN POINTS BY CYCLE AND EVALUATION AREAS

The **first cycle** of the Environmental Engineering field of study is given a **negative** evaluation.

No.	Evaluation Area	Evaluation points[1*]
1.	Study aims, learning outcomes and curriculum	2
2.	Links between scientific (or artistic) research and higher education	3
3.	Student admission and support	4
4.	Teaching and learning, student assessment, and graduate employment	3
5.	Teaching staff	2
6.	Learning facilities and resources	3
7.	Quality assurance and public information	2
	Total:	19

IV. STUDY FIELD ANALYSIS

AREA 1: STUDY AIMS, LEARNING OUTCOMES AND CURRICULUM

1.1.	Programmes are aligned with the country's economic and societal needs and the strategy of the HEI

FACTUAL SITUATION

1.1.1. Programme aims and learning outcomes are aligned with the needs of the society and/or the labour market

The aim of the study programme is to prepare professional bachelor's in engineering who would be capable of developing and implementing landscape projects in residential building territories,

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1 (unsatisfactory) - the area does not meet the minimum requirements, there are substantial shortcomings that hinder the implementation of the programmes in the field.
2 (satisfactory) - the area meets the minimum requirements, but there are substantial shortcomings that need to be eliminated.
3 (good) - the area is being developed systematically, without any substantial shortcomings.
4 (very good) - the area is evaluated very well in the national context and internationally, without any shortcomings.
5 (exceptional) - the area is evaluated exceptionally well in the national context and internationally.

developing small-scale landscape architectural objects, designing the planting, including the planting of ornamental plants, and ensuring the management of greenery territories (SER, chapter 1.1).

The survey on the development direction of the study program was carried out in autumn 2022, in which the opinion of cooperation partners (public and private enterprises) was ascertained. The SER provides information that the majority of respondents (66.7%) suggest the study program is in line with the direction of environmental engineering. However, the necessity of the study program in the SER is justified by the results of the meeting in which students, employers, and social partners.

According to the additional information requested regarding the survey carried out in 2022 among employers, 49 respondents participated in the survey, assessing the suitability of graduates for the labour market in several respects – knowledge and use thereof, research skills, specific skills, social skills, and personal skills. Respondents were asked to reply to what group of competencies the study programme corresponds to: environmental engineering, agriculture, or art. The structure of respondents – 29 respondents from commercial institutions, 15 from private companies and five from public institutions were not homogenous. The list of respondents does not provide complete information regarding the sectors of activity and relation to the professional activities of engineers. Therefore, it is impossible to judge respondents' motivation in selecting the direction of the study programme. **The results of the survey show that the addition of engineering knowledge to the curriculum was recommended for better marketing purposes, which means that the respondents do not consider the curriculum to be an engineering curriculum, because that would be very strange to give a recommendation to the engineering curriculum that it is necessary to add engineering knowledge.**

The growing population in the Vilnius region justifies the need for study program graduates. Thus, sector professionals should plan accordingly for the necessary real estate for the future. The knowledge, skills, and competencies acquired during studies ensure that graduates will successfully implement the process of planning the outdoor environment. In general, the aim and learning outcomes are in line with the need for social partners, which mostly represent landscape designers, but linkage to environmental engineering is missing. This point could be marked as weakness as the study program is qualified as Professional Bachelor in Engineering Sciences.

1.1.2. Programme aims and learning outcomes are aligned with the HEI's mission, goals, and strategy

Vilniaus Kolegija Strategy was developed for 2021-2025 and aims to ensure high-quality higher education in accordance with European standards, develop national and international research, and effectively cooperate with industry. A mapping of study results (Annex 3A) shows that the most significant focus in the study process is on knowledge acquisition and practical application, as well as the ability to organize and conduct research independently, which is entirely in line with the strategic objectives of the higher education institution.

However, cooperation with social partners, including industry, is successfully implemented during practice and in the development of the final thesis. Since 2021, on average, 55% of the final theses are developed and defended annually directly in cooperation with social partners.

According to the analysis of the study programme aim and learning outcomes (Annex 3B), 19 outcomes were postulated, 47 % of which belong to Special skills, e.g., assessing growing conditions, ideas and solutions for landscape composition, project development, and sustainable

design of green space structures. The study programme aim is broadly formulated, and links between specific tasks and outcomes are missing. This point was also mentioned recommendations given within previous accreditation. The program's learning outcomes and study plan was updated since 2022 by increasing the proportion of engineering subjects (e.g. Environmental Engineering). Proposed activities are not considered as sufficient (recommendation is implemented partly) as Order No. V-948 of the Minister of Education, Science and Sport of the Republic of Lithuania of 5 May 2023 "Descriptor of the group of study fields of engineering sciences" in 14.3. states that "Environmental Engineering (E03) is an interdisciplinary scientific and practical field of engineering which aims to **develop** tools, instruments and systems …..", while in VIKO SER stated that programme aims only **participating** in the design of engineering systems (chapter 1.1., under Study field analysis) what couldn`t be counted as equality. ***It is expected that the changes introduced will be demonstrated by linking the study programme's objectives and the study results, as described in SER Annex 3B, where a detailed pathway for achieving the results should be outlined in the study subject descriptions. For example, the study course "Environmental Measurement Technologies" is associated with the study result "A2. Understand the key concepts and content of the environmental Engineering field of study", however, the content of subject description, with special emphasis on results, shows that two resultative outcomes were expected (ability to perform geodetic measurements and understanding of coordinate systems) that could not be considered equivalent to basic engineering concepts formulation.***

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 1.1.)

The expert group notes that the objective of the study programme and the results to be achieved are satisfactory, and according to the interest of employers, there is a need for such specialists in the labour market. However, the relevance of the study programme to the engineering programme is unclear and unjustified; since such a choice was made solely on the basis of employer surveys, such a criterion of choice cannot be regarded as an appropriate argument. The acquisition of specific knowledge dominates the set of results to be achieved by studies, mainly related to the acquisition of knowledge in the fields of Botanics and Environmental planning.

Environmental Engineering studies typically requires a deeper understanding of engineering tools, instruments and systems development, which is not clearly seen according to program analysis. The title, the study aims, and the intended learning outcomes of program should be fundamentally revised , as the focus of the study program is weekly related to Environmental Engineering. The names of programme should be clear, not misleading, and linked to the intended learning outcomes of the field of study in accordance with the Order of the Minister of Education and Science of the Republic of Lithuania No. V-1075 of 01-12-2016 "On the Approval of the List of Fields of Study and Groups of Fields of Study in Higher Educational Institutions, the Procedure for Canging the List of Fields of Study, the Framework of Qualification Degrees, and the Principles of Titles of Degree Programmes" (*Švietimo ir mokslo ministro 2016-12-01 įsakymas Nr. V-1075 , Dėl studijų krypčių ir krypčių grupių, pagal kurias vyksta studijos aukštosiose mokyklose, sąrašo, jo keitimo tvarkos, kvalifikacinių laipsnių sąrangos ir studijų programų pavadinimų sudarymo principų patvirtinimo"*).

1.2.	Programmes comply with legal requirements, while curriculum design, curriculum, teaching/learning and assessment methods enable students to achieve study aims and learning outcomes

FACTUAL SITUATION

1.2.1. Programmes comply with legal requirements

Legal requirements for recent study program structure were described in various legal acts, such as:

- Law of the Republic of Lithuania on Science and Studies (No XI-242 of April 30, 2009 with additions in 2016, 2018);
- General Requirements for the Conduct of Studies (No V-1168 of December 30, 2016 with additions in 2023);
- Descriptor of the group of study fields of engineering sciences (No V-948 of May 5, 2023).

General requirements concerning amount of credit points for full study cycle, practice, final thesis, volume of contact hours and proportion of students independent work were achieved and fulfilled. According to the Descriptor of the group of study fields of engineering sciences (No V-948, of May 5, 2023), "14.3. Environmental Engineering (E03) is an interdisciplinary scientific and practical field of engineering which aims **to develop** tools, instruments and systems to meet human and societal needs through the efficient use of natural resources, and the assessment and management of the risks posed by materials and phenomena. It applies the principles of technology and engineering science to the **development, planning, design, and engineering of technological devices, instruments and systems** to improve the quality of life, whether from a technological, technical, safety, environmental, economic, managerial or any other perspective." Expert panel recognizes discrepancies between the study field name, the program's name, and the study program's content, because postulated study program aim states only "**participating in the design of engineering systems**" (SER, chapter 1.1.).

The total amount of study credits is 180, of which 7.2% are related to general study courses, while 90.6% are related to the field of study's specificity, which complies with the normative requirements. **Only 17% of the curriculum is engineering-focused, with key courses like Applied Mathematics, Engineering Graphics, and Environmental Engineering forming a small portion of the programme**. A practice of at least 30 credits should be offered, which is exceeded because practice in VIKO consists of 35 credits. Practical training is also provided in sufficient quantities - accounting for more than one-third of the study volume. The final work amount of 10 credit points exceeds the minimum nine credit points required by regulations. Structurally, studies are balanced, with a duration of 6 semesters, with 30 credit study courses in each semester.

An essential part of the study process is in-person classes (contact hours), which make up 52.7% of the total hours (which should be at least 20%), while students' work is 47.3%, which also corresponds to at least 30%.

1.2.2. Programme aims, learning outcomes, teaching/learning and assessment methods are aligned

In general learning outcomes for first cycle study programs were defined in Order of the minister of education and science of the republic of Lithuania on approval of the descriptor of study cycles (No. V-1569, 14/10/2020), Appendix 3. And they should be reached in diverse ways, eg. through new knowledge, practical and research skills, social, personal and special abilities.

The main focus of the program, defined as an aim, is belonging to landscape projects, design of landscape structure and facilities, design of engineering systems for planted areas, cultivation of ornamental plants and managing greenery maintenance. Totally 19 learning outcomes postulated within 5 structural blocks with outcomes (The Knowledge and its Application; Ability to Conduct Research; Special Skills; Social Skills; Personal Skills). Engineering knowledge is obtained in 7 study courses (covering 26 % of all full programme credits belonging to 46 credits):

- Applied Mathematics (3 credits);

- Engineering Graphics (4 credits);
- Computer Graphics (5 credits);
- Measurement Technology for Engineering (4 credits);
- Machinery for the Installation and Maintenance of Landscapes (4 credits);
- Basics of Environment Management Construction (6 credits);
- Environmental Engineering (20 credits).

The link between study results is described in detail in Annex 3B of the SER report, where study methods are also indicated. Analysis of the study plan (Annex 2) shows that lectures (888 hours) and practical work (1621 hours) predominate. A significant proportion (45%) of studies (both lectures and practical works) take place online (remote), which, in the case of lectures, would be acceptable. Still, engineering skills are to be acquired in practical works in engineering studies, and these activities should be carried out on-site.

Content analysis between programme aims, learning outcomes, teaching/learning and assessment methods, what should be aligned, based on SER Annexes 1A, 2, 3B and provided subject descriptions, indicates formal and also too broad interpretation of environmental engineering subject. For example, the study course "Environmental Measurement Technologies" is associated with the study result "A2. Understand the key concepts and content of the environmental Engineering field of study", however, the content of subject description, with special emphasis on results, shows that two resultative outcomes were expected (ability to perform geodetic measurements and understanding of coordinate systems) that could not be considered equivalent to basic engineering concepts formulation.

Different evaluation methods have been used, including student-oriented methods, e.g., problem-solving methods, practical and case-study situation analysis, tests, questionnaires, written reports, and oral presentations. According to Annex 3B (Links between learning outcomes and subjects, study methods, and assessment methods of the study field programme), self-testing methods (tests) were used in some cases (e.g., Machinery for the Installation and Maintenance of Landscapes; Landscape Management and Maintenance; Ornamental Plant Growing Technology and Engineering), but it should be noted that in the engineering field, this type of evaluation methods should be used with caution.

1.2.3. Curriculum ensures consistent development of student competences

The study plan has been developed in a balanced manner, taking into account the principle of gradual knowledge acquisition. Study courses have been developed in collaboration with academic staff to avoid duplication of content. Annex 4 describes the study courses to be studied, while the course descriptions provide detailed information on topics, tasks, and learning materials to be learnt.

It should be noted that in case of some courses the study plan is not well organized, or study course descriptions were prepared very formally, e.g.:

- Prerequisites for study course “Landscape Architecture” (in 3rd and 4th semesters) was study course “Basics of Green Space Composition”, but such course isn't included in study plan at all;
- Study course Basics of Landscaping Construction (3rd semester, 6 credits); necessary background - physics and chemistry, but such courses weren`t provided;
- Study course Engineering Measurement Techniques (4th semester, 4 credits); necessary background - Landscape Architecture (3rd and 4th semester), Applied Mathematics (2nd

semester, 3 credits). As far as background courses were conducted simultaneously, students were not ready to learn Engineering Measurement Techniques courses.

1.2.4. Opportunities for students to personalise curriculum according to their personal learning goals and intended learning outcomes are ensured

According to SER (Chapter 1.6), students can choose subjects from a list of free elective courses for four credit points. Three different options (Web Development Tools and Management; Customer Behaviour and Communication; Wellness and Physical Activity) were offered, or students may choose courses from other faculties. Students were not offered any other specialisation.

1.2.5. Final theses (applied projects) comply with the requirements for the field and cycle

According to SER Annex 5, during the 2022-2024, in total 53 final thesis were defended (in average 17 yearly); and about 54 % of these theses were prepared in accordance with the requests of social partners (Annex 6A). List of the final thesis were provided; it should be noted that in 2021/2022 all final thesis were devoted to landscape and floriculture topics; and almost 86 % of them (12 from 14) were supervised by 2 persons from academic staff. More diverse and balanced situation is observed in 2022/2023, totally 8 supervisors were handled final thesis works, but one of them participated in supervising of 9 final thesis (it belongs to 43 % of all theses). Looking forward to 2023/2024 situation is very similar, dominate just few supervisors, about 65 % of final theses (11 of 17) leaded by two academics.

For the whole analysis included period (2021/2022; 2022/2023; 2023/2024) 93% of the final thesis was devoted to landscape topics.

Final theses were prepared according to Requirements for the preparation and defence of final theses (Annex 6B). Students start their final work in the last (sixth) semester of study; they are prepared and defended in accordance with Collegia's procedures for the Preparation and Defence of final theses (projects) and the methodological guidelines for the Preparation and Defence, which set out the preparation steps and deadlines for the development of the work and the conditions for the Commission for Defence.

All above mentioned facts indicates not well-balanced workload between supervising of final thesis and within meaning of content, there is no final thesis defended belonging to Environmental Engineering topic.

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 1.2.)

The study programme complies with the legislative requirements regarding its structure and the amount of credits, structured in 5 different blocks, the amount of which is not balanced equally (e.g. ***Special Skills*** consists of nine outcomes concerning plants growing technologies, landscape composition ideas, green space and landscape management, sustainable design, application of engineering skills while ***Knowledge and its Application*** consist only of three learning outcomes belonging to fundamentals of environmental engineering and knowledge of plants biological characteristics and adaptability . The "Special skills" block dominates the field of study results. Freedom of choice of study courses is offered to students in the amount of 4 credits (free choice course); specialisation of the study field is not offered. It has been determined that descriptions of individual study courses have been prepared formally because the acquisition of the necessary

preliminary knowledge is not offered or it takes place concurrently with the study course to be studied.
The aim and learning outcomes are in line with the need for social partners in field of landscape designers, but linkage to environmental engineering is missing. Since previous accreditation in 2022 program's learning outcomes and study plan was updated, proportion if engineering subjects was increased and 26 % of subjects could be related to engineering. According to Order No. V-948 of the Minister of Education, Science and Sport of the Republic of Lithuania of 5 May 2023 "Descriptor of the group of study fields of engineering sciences" in 14.3. states that "Environmental Engineering (E03) is an interdisciplinary scientific and practical field of engineering which aims to **develop** tools, instruments and systems, this important point is missing in Landscape Desing study program formulated aim, because it focuses only on participation in the process. Environmental Engineering studies requires a deeper understanding of engineering tools, instruments and systems development, which is not clearly seen according to program analysis. This also means, that name of programme should be clear, not misleading, and linked to the proper learning outcomes. Expert panel strongly suggest that the title, the study aims, and the intended learning outcomes of program should be fundamentally revised, as the focus of the study program is weekly related to Environmental Engineering. The form of the study should be also revised, as 45% of the studies are carried out in remote form, including practice.

Analysis of final theses shows that substantial part of them are prepared in close cooperation with social partners, but as they represent Landscape architecture field, all final theses belong to it, there is no final thesis defended within Environmental Engineering topic. And it`s very evident that since 2021/2022 almost all (43 % to 86 % depending on year) final theses supervised by few academics, indicating not well-balanced workload and leading to narrow topicality.

AREA 1: CONCLUSIONS

AREA 1	Unsatisfactory - 1 Does not meet the requirements	Satisfactory - 2 Meets the requirements, but there are substantial shortcomings to be eliminated	Good - 3 Meets the requirements, but there are shortcomings to be eliminated	Very good - 4 Very well nationally and internationally without any shortcomings	Exceptional - 5 Exceptionally well nationally and internationally without any shortcomings
First cycle		x			

COMMENDATIONS

1. Close cooperation with social partners in developing the final thesis ensures the search for solutions to current problems based on the work environment already during studies.
2. Very diverse student-centred teaching and assessment methods were used.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To address shortcomings

1. Study programme Landscape Design not fully corresponds to the Environmental Engineering standard requirements predefined by national *Descriptor of the group of study fields of engineering sciences*.
2. The relevance of the study programme to the engineering field is unclear and unjustified; The proportion of engineering courses is low, and the final theses in this area are also undeveloped. The opinion of the social partners in engineering was not represented during the site visit, so it is not possible to identify the pre-qualification of graduates as engineering specialists
3. The link between the study objective and the results is not specified, so it is not possible to identify specific study courses that will ensure the achievement of the objectives
4. Although descriptions of study courses have been prepared formally, they should be updated to ensure the implementation of the developed study plan.
5. Environmental Engineering study courses covering not more than 1/3 of total courses offered, and 45 % of that is realized in remote form.
6. Supervising of final theses is not well balanced between academic staff and topics chosen by students.

For further improvement

1. Study aim, objectives, learning outcomes, study content and methods should be fundamentally revised, in order to ensure conformity to the Environmental Engineering standard requirements.
2. Study course descriptors should be carefully updated, avoiding formal approach in the preparation.
3. It is recommended to expand final theses topics, also including engineering topics. Also more diverse supervising would be suggested.

AREA 2: LINKS BETWEEN SCIENTIFIC (OR ARTISTIC) RESEARCH ANDHIGHER EDUCATION

2.1.	Higher education integrates the latest developments in scientific (or artistic) research and technology and enables students to develop skills for scientific (or artistic) research

FACTUAL SITUATION

2.1.1. Research within the field of study is at a sufficient level

Higher education in the EU and Lithuania is required by law to base all study programs on the highest available research, academic, and creative development work, more commonly referred to as “R&D-based education.” There is a formal legal framework for R&D at Kolegija as the Academic Council approved the *Kolegija R&D and Artistic Activities programme 2022-2025* in 2022. R&D-based education means that students are taught by academic staff who possess the scientific expertise required for the position. Second, students can immerse themselves in the newest research literature and actively participate in research projects in their field of interest.

According to the SER, there are 14 scientific/artistic research groups and 3 artistic research groups, covering 27 study fields (Order No. V-112 dated May 4, 2023, from the Rector of Kolegija, titled “On the Approval of the List of Research Groups and Their Coordinators at Kolegija According to the Scientific/Artistic Fields of Study for 2023-2024”), however, neither SER nor the meeting with the

staff emphasized the affiliation with the aforementioned research groups or existing association with the Study Program.

The evaluation of research activities can be divided into three key areas: international visibility (related to the scientific level of publications), the contribution of own and part-time employees, and the coherence of research topics within the Study Program.

International scientific visibility encompasses participation in international projects (e.g., EU projects) and publication in internationally recognized scientific journals. SER describes Kolegija's commitment to participating in international research projects. In 2024, two applications were filed in two new Horizon calls.

According to the SER, Annex 7B lists 11 publications for the period 2021-2024. Some of the most recent publications listed in WoS are not included in Annex 7B. For example, Removal of Residual Chlorine from Stormwater Using Low-Cost Adsorbents and Phytoremediation, 2024, ENVIRONMENTS, MDPI, and Research on the Reusability of Bentonite Waste Materials for Residual Chlorine Removal, 2024, MATERIALS, MDPI. It should be mentioned that in the last case, the authors' affiliation is Vilniaus Kolegija. Although publishing in conference monographs and selected papers (such as those from Vytautas Magnus University) seems common, the overall scientific level is lower than that of peer-reviewed scientific journals.

Among the list of study field lectures, 4 out of 16 have an h-index larger than 1, all of them have also been denoted with *NMW (non-main workplace). Thus, it reveals that there is a need to "borrow" academic personnel with a scientific background. If researchers are employed to do research projects at the inviting institution, then this kind of borrowing is entirely acceptable. Without understanding the national context, it is challenging to determine if this practice is common in Lithuanian colleges. The addresses of the authors of the publications indicate where the work was done and reveal that Vilnius Gediminas Technical University receives most of the credit. In general, part-time employees at Vilnius Kolegija affiliated with other institutions play a substantial role in scientific activities, according to SER.

Several national initiatives are directly related to the area of environmental engineering, such as "Reuse of Rainwater" (or possibly "Reuse of Stormwater") and "Use of secondary raw materials in the construction of green buildings". Research projects related to arboricultural assessment of planted trees, "Choice of annuals and perennials for growing on roofs" and "Selecting the plants for naturalistic planting" indicate that there is still a strong tendency within this Study Program toward agriculture, gardening, and landscape architecture. Since the curriculum includes a large amount of content related to gardening and landscape architecture, publishing in these fields is understandable. However, given that the curriculum falls under the field of engineering, the proportions should be skewed in favour of engineering.

2.1.2. Curriculum is linked to the latest developments in science, art, and technology

The SER provides several examples of the relationship between applied research and curriculum subjects. For example, "*the research project "Reuse of Rainwater" is integrated into the studies of the Environmental Engineering course. The Basics of Environment Management Construction course incorporates studies on "The Use of Waste in Environmental Management" and "Purpose of Innovative Materials." The course Landscape Structures and Installations includes the study "The*

Use of Secondary Raw Materials in the Construction of Landscaping Structures"." These and the following examples reveal the research activities of lecturers are sufficiently related to the curriculum, but a much more general explanation would be needed, that is, linking the world's best practices to the curriculum. To paraphrase, the curriculum and its development should be more closely tied to global developments, rather than being narrowly focused on the activities of lecturers.

2.1.3. Opportunities for students to engage in research are consistent with the cycle

The SER provides a list of all the students who took part in the research activities, and Appendix 7B confirms this. Along with five other students, one student has participated in five presentations.

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 2.1.)

Research activities related to the curriculum include the fields of engineering, horticulture, and landscape architecture. Curriculum developers must be explicit about their primary objective. Since the vast majority of publications in Annex 7B are not available online, their content can only be assessed by title, which gives the impression that horticultural research constitutes a significant proportion of scientific work.

AREA 2: CONCLUSIONS

AREA 2	Unsatisfactory - 1 Does not meet the requirements	Satisfactory - 2 Meets the requirements, but there are substantial shortcomings to be eliminated	Good - 3 Meets the requirements, but there are shortcomings to be eliminated	Very good - 4 Very well nationally and internationally without any shortcomings	Exceptional - 5 Exceptionally well nationally and internationally without any shortcomings
First cycle			X		

COMMENDATIONS

1. Recent developments indicate an increase in publishing in open-access journals, thereby enhancing international visibility.
2. Students are involved in applied research and have the opportunity to present and publish at the Faculty's international scientific-practical conference, '*Modern Technologies for Sustainable Environment*'. Additionally, there are other opportunities to participate in various public events.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To address shortcomings

1. A significant percentage of papers published in conference proceedings (or similar) have low or missing international visibility, i.e., scientific findings cannot be referenced by other researchers.
2. Evaluation of the direction of research activity is challenging. Is it horticulture or environmental engineering? For example, in some cases while assessing the papers'

substance, it is horticultural research rather than environmental engineering (e.g. doi.org/10.7220/2538-9122.2024 ,,The attitudes and experiences in container gardening"). Most publications categorized under the environmental engineering field are produced only by a single lecturer. Thus, Program Committee need to consider the program's place in the list of study fields as there is not enough coverage for the field of environmental engineering.

For further improvement

1. To increase publication, it is necessary to create a research group(s) and set high goals. Enhance international visibility, as measured by the h-index, joint international projects, and other relevant metrics.
2. If the Environmental Engineering curriculum continues, it should lean more into built environment science and material science. However, the current faculty's expertise is better suited for developing programs in horticulture and landscape architecture.

AREA 3: STUDENT ADMISSION AND SUPPORT

3.1.	Student selection and admission is in line with the learning outcomes

FACTUAL SITUATION

3.1.1. Student selection and admission criteria and procedures are adequate and transparent

Student selection and admission to the *Landscape Design* study programme are in line with the intended learning outcomes and are conducted according to clearly defined, transparent, and legally regulated procedures.

The admission process follows the student admission rules approved by the Academic Council of Kolegija and is administered by LAMA BPO (Lithuanian Association of Higher Education Institutions for General Admission), which ensures centralised and transparent management. Admission criteria are based primarily on applicants' achievements in secondary education, including scores in state matriculation examinations and the calculated competition score. Minimum entry requirements are set by the Ministry of Education, Science, and Sport and are consistently applied.

Starting from 2024, a new national requirement mandates that all applicants pass at least three state matriculation exams, with an arithmetic average that meets the satisfactory level defined in national examination syllabuses. Kolegija has also independently set a minimum competition score of 3.2 from 2024, ensuring applicants possess a baseline academic preparedness aligned with the programme's expected outcomes.

Admission information is publicly available on the Kolegija website and LAMA BPO portal. It is actively disseminated through various publicity channels, including Open Days, study fairs, the "Kur stoti?" magazine, social media, school visits, and science promotion events, ensuring transparency and accessibility for all prospective applicants.

The competition scores of admitted students reflect their readiness to engage with the programme and achieve the expected learning outcomes. Over the period 2021–2023: Highest admission scores remained consistently high (9.20 in 2021; 9.24 in 2022; 9.07 in 2023), showing continued interest from well-prepared applicants. Lowest admission scores adhered to the national minimum (4.32 in 2021 and 2023; 4.56 in 2022), demonstrating compliance and a consistent threshold for entry-level

knowledge. The average entry score declined over the years (6.76 in 2021; 6.46 in 2022; 5.14 in 2023), possibly due to the need of the Math exam for engineering studies.

This score range, and the difference between the highest and lowest admitted students (ranging from 4.68 to 4.88), reflects the diversity in academic preparedness but indicates that all admitted students meet at least the minimum requirement for successful learning outcomes.

Enrolment trends in the Landscape Design programme show relative stability with slight annual fluctuations:

- 2021–2022: 29 students admitted
- 2022–2023: 24 students admitted
- 2023–2024: 28 students admitted

The total number of students enrolled in the programme (as of October 1 annually) decreased from 72 (2021) to 65 (2023) — a 9.7% reduction. This decline is attributed to external factors such as negative demographic trends and the strict enforcement of minimum admission scores, rather than internal programme deficiencies. The stability of admissions across state-funded and non-state-funded places supports the programme's sustainability.

While explicit dropout rates are not provided, the data on signed contracts and total student numbers suggest relatively stable student retention. The consistent enrolment figures and minimal variance in the number of students each year imply that dropouts are not significantly impacting programme sustainability or learning outcomes.

3.1.2. Recognition of foreign qualifications, periods of study, and prior learning (established provisions and procedures)

FACTUAL SITUATION

During the visit it was noticed that Vilnius College has established clear, comprehensive, and procedurally sound mechanisms for the recognition of foreign qualifications, partial studies, and prior non-formal and informal learning. These processes are in line with national regulations and reflect good institutional practice.

The procedure for the academic recognition of foreign qualifications is formalised and managed by a designated staff member from the Study Centre, appointed by the Rector. The responsibilities and criteria are detailed in the *Rules for the Academic Recognition of Education and Qualifications Related to Higher Education and Obtained Under the Educational Programmes of Foreign Countries and International Organisations for Applicants to Kolegija*. This structure ensures procedural clarity and readiness to support international applicants. However, it should be noted that, during the period under review, no applications were received in the Landscape Design programme for foreign qualification recognition. While the framework is robust, its actual application in this field remains untested.

The College has also developed a well-defined process for recognising competencies gained through non-formal and informal learning. This is regulated by the *Procedures for the Assessment and Recognition of Non-formal and Informal Learning Achievements at Kolegija*, which specify that applicants must have secondary education and a minimum of three years' relevant work experience.

The process is fair, inclusive, and supports lifelong learning principles. Despite the potential value of this pathway, no candidates from the study field have applied for such recognition. This suggests a need for better awareness-raising among potential applicants about the availability and benefits of this procedure.

In contrast, the procedure for crediting partial studies has been well-utilised and effectively implemented. Defined in the *Learning Outcomes Crediting Procedure*, this process involves a careful assessment of previously acquired learning outcomes based on formal documentation. The decision-making process, involving the Head of Department and final approval by the Dean, ensures academic rigor and alignment with programme learning outcomes.

Documentation supporting the implementation of this process over the past three academic years:

- In **2021–2022**, 35 requests were submitted and all approved, resulting in 200 credits awarded.
- In **2022–2023**, 31 requests were approved, including 4 Erasmus+ mobility cases, totalling 256 credits granted (116 of which were Erasmus+).
- In **2023–2024**, 38 requests were processed and approved, with 52 of the 243 total credits awarded stemming from Erasmus+ activities.

These figures confirm that the process is not only operational but also increasingly supporting student mobility and academic progression. The proportion of students participating in international part-time studies (at least 15 ECTS credits) has increased by 5.71 percentage points over the three-year period an encouraging trend that reflects the institution's growing commitment to internationalisation.

Additionally, crediting is appropriately limited to no more than 75% of the total study programme, and final theses are excluded from crediting, thereby upholding the academic integrity of the degree awarded.

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 3.1.)

The student selection and admission process for the *Landscape Design* study programme at Kolegija is well-structured, transparent, and compliant with national legislation. It is implemented centrally through LAMA BPO, ensuring fairness and consistency in candidate evaluation. Admission criteria, which are clearly defined and publicly accessible, align with the intended learning outcomes and are effectively communicated through diverse outreach channels such as open days, social media, and educational fairs. The programme attracts both high-performing and minimally qualified candidates, as evidenced by consistent maximum and minimum admission scores from 2021 to 2023. While a gradual decline in average entry scores was noted, this appears to reflect broader demographic trends and stricter mathematics requirements rather than programme-related issues. The introduction of higher national and institutional entry thresholds from 2024 demonstrates a proactive effort to maintain academic standards. Enrolment numbers have remained relatively stable, with annual fluctuations deemed minor. Although explicit dropout rates are not provided, the consistency in total enrolments and signed contracts suggests steady student retention. Overall, the evidence indicates that the admission procedures support the recruitment of suitably prepared students and uphold the sustainability of the study programme. According to information in SER student mobility is growing. Over three years, participation in international part-time studies rose by 5.71 percentage points, showing a strong commitment to international experiences. Furthermore, the institution

maintains academic integrity by limiting credit transfers to a maximum of 75% of a program and excluding final theses from being credited.

3.2.	There is an effective student support system enabling students to maximise their learning progress

3.2.1. Opportunities for student academic mobility are ensured

During the site visit, it was observed that the Erasmus+ programme remains the primary instrument supporting student mobility within the institution. The programme is well-structured, and accessible information is consistently provided in both Lithuanian and English through the institution's website, faculty pages, social media, and direct email communication. Regular Erasmus+ information events are organized, and individual consultations for each academic group ensure personalised guidance.

Students have access to a list of partner higher education institutions and apply through a shared electronic platform. A dedicated selection committee, formed by the Dean of the Faculty, ensures a transparent selection process. The preparation for mobility is well-coordinated: accepted students receive detailed instructions from the Project Manager for International Relations, and further support is offered by the Faculty Erasmus+ Coordinator. Department lecturers are actively engaged in encouraging participation and providing academic support.

The procedures for documentation, credit recognition, and follow-up reporting (e.g., descriptive study exchange reports) are clearly defined. Furthermore, good practices are shared publicly, encouraging a positive feedback loop within the student community. Visiting lecturers from partner institutions, as well as returning Kolegija lecturers from mobility visits, actively contribute to creating a supportive international atmosphere.

Beyond Erasmus+, the institution successfully implements Blended Intensive Programmes (BIPs), such as the 2023–2024 programme on sustainable landscaping, which brought together multiple international partners. Students receive academic recognition for these efforts, demonstrating the institution's commitment to diversifying mobility formats.

The number of incoming and outgoing students over the past three academic years shows a generally positive trend, especially in incoming mobility. Notably, 2023–2024 marked a significant increase in incoming students, representing 10.8% of the study field cohort, though outgoing mobility numbers declined slightly. While no full-time international students enrolled during the assessment period, the institution's practices and infrastructure are well-prepared to support internationalisation.

During the discussions with students and alumnus it was noted, that a significant part of the students are working, and seeking the additional diploma in Landscape Design, due to that one semester Erasmus studies would be challenging for them, however, institution finds a way to promote short-time Erasmus exchange studies for one-two weeks.

3.2.2. Academic, financial, social, psychological, and personal support provided to students is relevant, adequate, and effective

The institution provides a comprehensive and well-structured support system, covering academic, financial, social, and psychological dimensions. Throughout the academic year, students benefit from continuous academic support, both during scheduled consultation hours and via the electronic

learning environment. Academic guidance includes orientation on the study structure, course selection, learning outcomes, credit recognition, and appeals procedures.

The library plays an active role in developing students' information literacy skills, particularly in scientific literature search and citation. Erasmus+ participants receive tailored support from the Faculty and International Office, with clear crediting procedures ensuring recognition of learning outcomes abroad.

The Career Centre offers personalised career counseling, which includes assistance with CV preparation, interview skills, and job search strategies. First-year students are well supported through faculty mentorship, dedicated orientation seminars, and structured integration processes, including guidance on research activities, international mobility, and extracurricular engagement.

Students benefit from a broad spectrum of financial support: social and incentive scholarships, tuition fee reductions, installment options, and state-supported loans. Procedures for requesting support are transparent and student-friendly. While the uptake of certain supports (e.g., one-off social allowances and loans) was low during the review period, their availability reflects a comprehensive safety net for those in need.

Cultural and recreational engagement is encouraged through free access to sports and arts activities. Psychological counseling services are available free of charge and actively promoted, with flexible options for access.

3.2.3. Higher education information and student counselling are sufficient

The institution ensures that students are well-informed throughout their academic journey. The introductory information week is effectively used to familiarise students with academic processes, support services, and the virtual learning environment (Moodle, AIS). First-year students are systematically introduced to administrative staff, programme leaders, and essential regulations. Erasmus+ mobility opportunities and participation in the Student Scientific Society are also introduced early on.

A survey conducted in January 2024 confirmed a high level of student satisfaction with the information provided and the support received. First-year students reported positive adaptation experiences, with most indicating high motivation and effective time use. Only one student noted difficulties related to time management and motivation. Academic and administrative support was consistently rated as good or very good.

The survey results were not only collected but also discussed at faculty and departmental levels, with follow-up conversations in academic groups to better understand students' evolving needs. This demonstrates a data-driven and student-centred approach to quality improvement.

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 3.2.)

The expert evaluation of the academic, mobility, and support systems at the college reveals a well-developed and student-oriented infrastructure that contributes positively to the overall quality of the study programme. The Erasmus+ programme is effectively managed and supported by both administrative and academic staff. Clear procedures, active promotion, and diverse mobility formats—such as Blended Intensive Programmes (BIPs)—ensure meaningful mobility experiences. While incoming mobility has increased, outgoing mobility remains modest and could benefit from

more proactive encouragement. The institution is prepared for internationalisation, though currently lacks full-time international students.

The College offers a comprehensive support system encompassing academic guidance, financial aid, psychological counseling, and career services. First-year integration is strong, and students have access to personalized assistance throughout their studies. Financial support is available through various mechanisms, although the uptake of some forms remains limited. Cultural, artistic, and sports engagement opportunities are readily accessible.

Students receive timely and relevant information from the start of their studies. The introductory week, regular consultations, and clear communication channels ensure they are well-informed about academic and extracurricular matters. Survey data confirms high satisfaction levels among students, particularly regarding their adaptation process and the quality of support received. Institutional responsiveness to feedback supports continuous improvement.

AREA 3: CONCLUSIONS

AREA 3	Unsatisfactory - 1 Does not meet the requirements	Satisfactory - 2 Meets the requirements, but there are substantial shortcomings to be eliminated	Good - 3 Meets the requirements, but there are shortcomings to be eliminated	Very good - 4 Very well nationally and internationally without any shortcomings	Exceptional - 5 Exceptionally well nationally and internationally without any shortcomings
First cycle				X	

COMMENDATIONS

1. Very positive feedback from students and alumni about support from Faculty members.
2. Both students and alumni positively evaluated the changes in the study programme and included more engineering topics.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To address shortcomings
None

For further improvement

1. Although the survey results are discussed in departmental meetings, it is not always clear how the feedback has led to concrete changes in teaching methods or curriculum design. During the meeting with students it was clarified, that during the surveys students already has been mentioning the lack of engineering topics, but no further actions were made. Clearly document and communicate the follow-up actions taken in response to student feedback. This could be done through internal quality reports or a “You said, we did” communication strategy to close the feedback loop.
2. The conducted survey summaries use vague terms like “most students” or “a large part of students” without specifying exact response distributions. Future survey reports should

include quantitative breakdowns of responses per statement (e.g., how many students chose each rating from 1 to 5). This would allow for more transparent analysis, enable year-to-year comparisons, and support evidence-based improvements.

3. Student response rates are relatively low and vary significantly across semesters (e.g., only 10 students participated in spring 2022/2023). Implement measures to increase student engagement in surveys, such as explaining how feedback leads to real changes, integrating surveys into regular academic activities, or using digital platforms with reminders and incentives.

AREA 4: TEACHING AND LEARNING, STUDENT ASSESSMENT, AND GRADUATE EMPLOYMENT

4.1.	Students are prepared for independent professional activity

FACTUAL SITUATION

4.1.1. Teaching and learning address the needs of students and enable them to achieve intended learning outcomes

The SER and site visit revealed that the programme provides full-time studies with flexible scheduling options (daily or sessional) to accommodate various student needs. Teaching combines contact hours with significant independent work (over one-third of total study time) through the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) Moodle. The teaching methods encompass interactive lectures, case analysis, problem-based learning, discussions, teamwork, and project development. Teachers emphasize practical and laboratory work as particularly important. During the site visit, lecturers noted that while both face-to-face and online options are available, students prefer online lectures due to recording capabilities. The institution responds to these preferences by offering various delivery formats. Teacher feedback drives the organization of internal training for methodological improvements.

The assessment system is cumulative and criterion-based, with clear evaluation criteria introduced at the beginning of each course. All course materials are accessible via VLE Moodle, allowing students to learn at their own pace. Final assessments consist of written exams, online tests through Moodle, and project defences.

Professional internships follow institutional procedures and enable students to apply and develop their knowledge and skills. During the site visit interviews, students highlighted their involvement in practical projects such as designing gardens at VIKO and participating in STRUCTUM projects, which engage multiple stakeholders.

Graduates have pathways to continue their education through complementary programmes at Lithuanian universities, with Vilnius Tech frequently mentioned as a destination. The programme successfully attracts and integrates students from various educational backgrounds and specializations across different higher education institutions, which proves particularly valuable in today's interdisciplinary context.

4.1.2. Access to higher education for socially vulnerable groups and students with individual needs is ensured.

The institution has established procedures for individualizing the study process for students with special needs, disabilities, or learning difficulties, as outlined in the Description of the Procedure for the Organisation of the Individualised Study Process Considering Students' Individual Needs.

Financial support measures are available for socially vulnerable groups, including orphans, disabled students, students from large families, and low-income families. These students may receive deferred tuition fee payments, payment in instalments, or 25-50% reduction in dormitory fees.

During the site visit, students confirmed that they receive support when facing vulnerable situations related to illness, family circumstances, or financial difficulties or work related integrations.

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 4.1.)

The programme demonstrates adaptability to student needs through flexible delivery methods and practical orientation. Face-to-face instruction remains predominant despite online options, reflecting the institution's responsiveness to actual student participation patterns. Students enrolled in the updated environmental engineering content expressed satisfaction during interviews regarding more engaging teaching methods, though they still express the need for additional workshops. The teaching approach integrates theoretical knowledge with practical application, as demonstrated through hands-on projects at VIKO and STRUCTUM participation. First-year students adapt well and appreciate the academic support provided by lecturers and administration. Students benefit from accessible faculty guidance and comprehensive support services. The curriculum successfully presents scientific subjects with clear practical value, integrating current sustainability knowledge. The programme's ability to attract students from diverse educational backgrounds enriches the interdisciplinary learning environment.

However, several limitations exist. Students currently work primarily on private projects, though they express big interest in public projects that would enhance their understanding of engineering aspects aligned with programme objectives and the updated curriculum design. Students request more workshops and greater involvement of foreign experts. While international mobility opportunities are available, students seek expanded opportunities to participate in international projects. There is a clear need to increase students' international engagement in both academic studies and applied research or practical activities.

The institution has established appropriate support mechanisms for vulnerable groups and students with special needs.

In conclusion, the programme meets its objective of preparing students for independent professional activity through a balanced combination of theoretical instruction and practical application. However, enhancing international engagement, expanding workshop offerings, and providing practical training opportunities in public projects would better align with the updated programme objectives and address student needs.

4.2.	There is an effective and transparent system for student assessment, progress monitoring, and assuring academic integrity

FACTUAL SITUATION

4.2.1. Monitoring of learning progress and feedback to students to promote self-assessment and learning progress planning is systematic

Student progress monitoring operates at multiple levels: lecturer, student, department, programme, and faculty. At course initiation, lecturers present learning outcomes, assessment methods, and criteria. Cumulative assessment maintains student engagement throughout the study process. Feedback on assessments is provided within 5 working days, and students can communicate with lecturers via email, VLE Moodle, or MS Teams. Students track their achievements through the Academic Information System (AIS), where grades and academic debt information are accessible. Course assessments are published in AIS or Moodle within 5 working days, complying with data protection regulations. The Study Department prepares achievement summaries and identifies students with academic debts, who are notified personally via email. Students with academic debts can re-study subjects and retake examinations within an extended deadline of up to one year. Notably, no programme students repeated subjects during 2021-2024. The Study Coordinator monitors debt clearance throughout the semester, sending reminders as needed. Since autumn 2023, systematic attendance monitoring has been implemented, with lecturers recording attendance twice per semester. The Study Department analyzes attendance patterns, contacts absent students, and develops strategies to improve attendance. A 2024 study on first-year adaptation showed all participants (N=12) were satisfied with their academic performance.

4.2.2. Graduate employability and career are monitored

Graduate employment monitoring is conducted by the Department and the Kolegija Career Centre, which provides individual and group career counseling, labor market information, and guidance on internships and job searches. Career opportunities are regularly shared through multiple channels including social media and faculty websites. Employment rates are calculated based on graduates employed in main occupational groups (0-3) or self-employed within 12 months of graduation. Employment rates for Environmental Engineering field graduates show variation: 64.29% (2022), 46.15% (2021), and 50% (2020).

Annual graduate surveys are conducted at least 12 months after graduation to assess employment status, job search experiences, relevance of qualifications to employment, and applicability of acquired knowledge. Final-year student surveys assess study quality and labor market relevance. The 2022 employer survey included 49 respondents from the landscape design services sector (29 private practitioners, 15 limited companies, 5 public institutions). Social partners provide periodic lectures followed by discussions about program content and industry requirements.

During the site visit, 12 social partners were present both in person and online: 10 of them were from landscape design and architecture or were managers of such companies, and two social partners were from the environmental engineering field, including real estate development and financing. These two indicated they do not directly employ graduates from this programme.

4.2.3. Policies to ensure academic integrity, tolerance, and non-discrimination are implemented

Kolegija operates based on fundamental academic ethics principles: honesty, trust, fairness, respect, responsibility, and equality, as defined in the Code of Academic Ethics. Academic integrity in assessment is regulated by the Statement of Procedures for the Assessment of Study Achievements. Each student signs the Declaration of Student Integrity, committing to the Code of Academic Conduct. The institution's study regulations include provisions on tolerance and non-discrimination, ensuring students' rights to free expression, social and material support, and alternative assessment methods for those with disabilities.

For academic essays, students follow principles outlined in the General Requirements for Academic Essays, which include plagiarism prevention measures. The institution transitioned from “Ouriginal” to “Turnitin” plagiarism detection software on January 1, 2024. During the review period, no instances of overlap irregularities in academic essays were reported. Annual student surveys assess the effectiveness of policies ensuring academic integrity, tolerance, and non-discrimination. The site visit did not specifically address cases of academic dishonesty.

4.2.4. Procedures for submitting and processing appeals and complaints are effective

The procedures for submitting and examining appeals and complaints are defined in The Appeal Regulations of Kolegija. These regulations provide a comprehensive framework covering various appeal grounds including assessment procedures, final thesis evaluation, credit transfers, and recognition of prior learning. The system proved functional during the review period, with one appeal submitted in 2023 regarding thesis assessment. The Appeal Committee properly reviewed the case and upheld the original grade after finding no procedural violations. This demonstrates that the appeal system is operational, transparent, and follows established protocols.

However, the limited number of appeals makes it difficult to fully assess the system's effectiveness across various scenarios.

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 4.2.)

The monitoring system is structured and effectively implemented across multiple organizational levels, with clear procedures for tracking student progress and providing timely feedback. The institution demonstrates proactive engagement with students through regular communication, attendance monitoring, and personalized support for those with academic difficulties. The fact that no students needed to repeat subjects during 2021-2024 indicates the effectiveness of the support system and monitoring procedures.

The monitoring system for graduate employability is formally established with multiple feedback mechanisms including graduate surveys, employer surveys, and social partner engagement. Employment rates show improvement from 46.15% (2021) to 64.29% (2022), indicating positive trends. However, the monitoring system has significant limitations: the 2022 employer survey focused predominantly on landscape management services, not fully representing the environmental engineering field as updated in the programme. During the site visit, 12 social partners were present both in person and online and only two from the environmental engineering field, including real estate development and financing. Neither of these two social partners directly employs programme graduates, highlighting inadequate representation and diversity of social partners within the core engineering field. This narrow scope limits the assessment of how well the updated engineering components prepare graduates for the broader engineering labor market. While the graduate survey process exists, response rates vary significantly (94.21% in 2021-2022 but dropping to 50% in 2023), potentially affecting data reliability. The monitoring system would benefit from expanding employer surveys to include engineering sectors, diversifying social partner engagement to include actual employers of graduates, and improving graduate survey response rates to better evaluate the effectiveness of the updated programme content.

The institution has established comprehensive policies and procedures for academic integrity, tolerance, and non-discrimination. The implementation appears effective, with no reported cases of academic dishonesty during the review period. The transition to Turnitin software demonstrates commitment to maintaining academic standards. Students and faculty are aware of these

procedures, and regular surveys indicate ongoing monitoring of policy effectiveness. The policies are well-documented and systematically implemented, meeting the requirements for this evaluation area.

AREA 4: CONCLUSIONS

AREA 4	Unsatisfactory - 1 Does not meet the requirements	Satisfactory - 2 Meets the requirements, but there are substantial shortcomings to be eliminated	Good - 3 Meets the requirements, but there are shortcomings to be eliminated	Very good - 4 Very well nationally and internationally without any shortcomings	Exceptional - 5 Exceptionally well nationally and internationally without any shortcomings
First cycle			X		

COMMENDATIONS

1. The institution has established a flexible teaching and learning system that accommodates student needs through various delivery formats and practical application opportunities.
2. The monitoring system for student progress is structured and comprehensive, tracking achievements at multiple levels with clear feedback mechanisms.
3. Academic integrity policies and procedures are comprehensive and implemented with no reported cases of academic dishonesty during the review period.
4. High graduate employability rates (93% in 2023 and 95% in 2024) indicating successful career preparation, so far related with landscape design mainly, high number of graduates from landscape design oriented program indicated that.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To address shortcomings

1. Expand and diversify social partner engagement to include actual employers from the broader engineering sector, as current indicated social partners do not directly employ programme graduates.
2. Enhance the graduate employability monitoring system by broadening employer surveys beyond landscape design to include broader engineering sector's representative relevant to the updated programme content.

For further improvement

1. Increase opportunities for students to participate in public projects to better align with programme objectives and strengthen engineering competencies.
2. Expand international engagement opportunities through workshops, foreign expert involvement, and international project participation as requested by students.

3. Improve graduate survey response rates to ensure more reliable data for programme evaluation and development.

AREA 5: TEACHING STAFF

5.1.	Teaching staff is adequate to achieve learning outcomes

FACTUAL SITUATION

5.1.1. The number, qualification, and competence (scientific, didactic, professional) of teaching staff is sufficient to achieve learning outcomes

During the previous accreditation, it was found that the curriculum teachers lacked the necessary qualifications in engineering. According to the SER, Annex 8, there are now a four lecturers with engineering background in the curriculum and with qualitative metric based scientific activity. However, these are part-time workers (denoted as *NMW – non-main workplace) with responsibilities to another employer that must be noted, though. Considering how many students require assistance, this number is minuscule, indicating that future bachelor's theses will likely still continue to focus more on landscape and horticulture design. An additional issue is the possibility that non-engineers won't be able to evaluate the quality of work by people with an engineering background.

The number of lecturers with doctoral degrees has also increased. SER: “Seven (7) PhD holders teach in the Environmental Engineering study field, representing more than half of the total lecturers in the field. Lecturers continuously work to improve their research competencies.” According to Annex 8, 7 out of 16 study field lecturers on the list hold doctoral degrees.

Data provided by SER indicate that the dynamics of the number of students and teaching staff are contributing to a decline in the student-to-teacher ratio. In three years, the ratio has decreased from seven to five. The SER views this as an improvement in the quality of teaching, but economically, it translates to an increase in the cost per unit of teaching. Internationally, such a small ratio can only be afforded by universities with large research funding.

The SER did not emphasize employee turnover, nor did the employee meeting. The number of practitioner lectures has increased (from 2 to 7, Table 8), which is a positive trend as it enhances lecturers’ professional skills and potentially generates topics for bachelor's theses. When evaluating the engineering content of bachelor’s theses, there are serious concerns that there is still a significant lack of actual engineering experience, and the concept of a practitioner is not entirely apparent. The panel does not fully agree with the statement ‘*These activities include applied research and the production of reports, the scope and quality of which are equivalent to scientific publications.*’ First, reports are not a substitute for scientific publications; second, international peer review evaluates the quality and calibre of scientific findings. Since it is a College, however, one cannot expect scientific publishing at the same level as a full-fledged university, which has both teachers and researchers in its departments.

Since the majority of lecturers have a background in biology, horticulture, or agriculture, this is also reflected in the final theses, the application of engineering methods is secondary and superficial.

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 5.1.)

There is still a question about the availability of practical engineering experience compared to landscape design and gardening teachers. The 20-credit environmental engineering lecture is not

yet reflected in the 2024 graduation theses, which may also be why students' bachelor's theses are still design-oriented (i.e. landscape design, gardening, horticulture). Although, understandable, the three-year review period is insufficient to implement significant modifications that would increase the focus on engineering, the changes will not be widely implemented if the majority of the engineering responsibility falls on a single lecturer. However, there is a problem – Bachelor theses continue to appear engineering-like rather than practical solutions, even so there is declaration at the end of thesis where is stated that ,,It is noteworthy that the student has properly designed an engineering system with elements of rainwater harvesting, therefore the final thesis (project) has been prepared properly and does not require major revisions" (,,*Pastebėtina, kad studentas tinkamai suprojektavo inžinerinę sistemą su lietaus vandens surinkimo elementais, todėl baigiamasis darbas (projektas) parengtas tinkamai ir nereikalauja esminių taisymų"*), For example, in the final thesis, "The development of a Green Deal-compliant engineering system for rainwater harvesting and irrigation for the located at 20A Kareiviniu street in Kaunas", 2024. There are other examples as well, e.g. when a pump is characterised by its physical dimensions, rather than by flow rate, head, power and efficiency.

The purpose of this report is not to reveal all the methodological shortcomings and engineering flaws of one or selected bachelor's theses, therefore it is recommended for the Faculty to commission an engineering expertise from a qualified hydraulic engineer and take measures to improve the technical level.

Program Committee need to consider the program's place in the list of study fields as the environmental engineering is not enough coverage for the field of environmental engineering.
Given the studies' end product, a bachelor's thesis, it is seen as a field more closely related to horticulture and landscape architecture than environmental engineering.

5.2.	Teaching staff is ensured opportunities to develop competences, and they are periodically evaluated

FACTUAL SITUATION

5.2.1. Opportunities for academic mobility of teaching staff are ensured

Current staff mobility information and instructions are available in both Lithuanian and English on the Kolegija's website. Lecturers in the study field have numerous options to apply for teaching visits or internships and participate in mobility programs. The number of outgoing and incoming lectures varies throughout the evaluation period.

SER informs that between 2021 and 2024, sixteen lecturers from the study field visited foreign partner universities. According to Table 8 there are only 13 lecturers on the study field, some lectures had more than one visit. Since some employees required translation during the meeting, it can be assumed that some employees are more open to mobility, while their language skills may limit the rest.

Mobility is most active with universities in Germany, Poland, and Romania.

5.2.2. Opportunities for the development of the teaching staff are ensured

The 'Staff Competency Development Procedure' of Kolegija outlines the goals, objectives, principles, techniques, forms, and types of competency development for Kolegija employees. It also outlines the processes for organizing, planning, and crediting competency development. It is the lecturers' responsibility to enhance their skills and to be eligible to apply for internship competitions in Lithuania and beyond.
The explanation of self-improvement in the SER is modest. Although there are hours of involvement, no concrete samples of attended courses are provided. Therefore, it is very difficult to evaluate the quality of self-development, for example, by assessing the qualifications of those conducting the training.

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 5.2.)

Language proficiency may be a barrier for many employees, but academic mobility is effective, according to the report and the staff meeting. The SER and the staff meeting indicate that academic mobility is active, but that certain staff members may find language proficiency to be a barrier.

Considering the problems seen in the bachelor's thesis, is it necessary to significantly increase the teaching staff's skills in engineering. An alternative option is to focus on what the majority of the staff is better at, such as landscape architecture and horticulture.

AREA 5: CONCLUSIONS

AREA 5	Unsatisfactory - 1 Does not meet the requirements	Satisfactory - 2 Meets the requirements, but there are substantial shortcomings to be eliminated	Good - 3 Meets the requirements, but there are shortcomings to be eliminated	Very good - 4 Very well nationally and internationally without any shortcomings	Exceptional - 5 Exceptionally well nationally and internationally without any shortcomings
First cycle		x			

COMMENDATIONS

1. Regulations and readily available information are available at the Kolegija to facilitate international exchanges.
2. Teachers with practical experience in gardening and landscape architecture are welcomed by the students as the most of graduates will find the jobs in landscaping and in horticulture.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To address shortcomings

1. The environmental engineering field study program is not sufficiently staffed with lecturers with practical engineering knowledge and skills.
2. The engineering solutions in the students' bachelor's theses were of low quality, descriptive rather than methodical, and occasionally even flawed. This indicates that a quality improvement is not possible with the current teaching staff.

3. Since the majority of lecturers have a background in biology, horticulture, or agriculture, this is also reflected in the final theses, the application of engineering methods is secondary and superficial.

For further improvement

1. It is advisable to focus on the current strengths of the teaching staff in landscape design, gardening, and functional ecosystems, while retaining a basic understanding of environmental engineering, i.e., to shift the study field from environmental engineering to agriculture.

AREA 6: LEARNING FACILITIES AND RESOURCES

6.1.	Facilities, informational and financial resources are sufficient and enable achieving learning outcomes

FACTUAL SITUATION

6.1.1. Facilities, informational and financial resources are adequate and sufficient for an effective learning process

Provision of the study process is mainly carried out at the Faculty of Agrotechnologies (Studentu str. 39A, and Dvaro str. 1), where specialized computer-equipped laboratories, design auditorium and chemistry laboratories, resource research centre, orangery and botanical garden are located. In addition to the Faculty of Construction (Antakalnio str. 54), students work in the Materials science and standardization laboratory, a geodetic laboratory. Students are offered a modern library (opened in 2024), where individual study rooms are also available, as well as facilities for developing group work. Study materials for students are available in an e-study environment, access to e-resources (databases of scientific sources) is ensured, and licences for specialized computer programs are provided for work remotely.

All laboratories and auditoriums are state-of-the-art, and the technical base is sufficient to ensure the realization of the study courses included in the plan.

6.1.2. There is continuous planning for and upgrading of resources.

The information contained in the report on planned infrastructure investments shows that finances are used to improve greenhouses, purchase plants, implement the climate control system, etc., and variable funding is allocated annually (EUR 5000 - EUR 15470, 2021 - 2024) in the development of ornamental plants and planting centre. The second most extensive use of funding is to ensure the operation of IT systems and to purchase computer equipment. Essential resources are also used to provide information in the library. The academic staff shall initiate the necessary details to reinforce the information resources.
The information provided in the report shows that the materials for engineering study courses are not being spent and planned.

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 6.1.)

The infrastructure of two faculties (Agrotechnology; Construction) is mainly used to ensure the study process. Training laboratories are located in several places, and additional possibilities provided by the Botanic Garden are also used during the study process. The main financial resources for the improvement of the study infrastructure are used to improve the greenhouse and ornamental plant centre and provide IT and computer hardware. No renewal is planned for engineering courses. The SER does not include a detailed plan for improving the study field.

AREA 6: CONCLUSIONS

AREA 6	Unsatisfactory - 1 Does not meet the requirements	Satisfactory - 2 Meets the requirements, but there are substantial shortcomings to be eliminated	Good - 3 Meets the requirements, but there are shortcomings to be eliminated	Very good - 4 Very well nationally and internationally without any shortcomings	Exceptional - 5 Exceptionally well nationally and internationally without any shortcomings
First cycle			X		

COMMENDATIONS

1. Very modern and well equipped library.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To address shortcomings

1. Substantial donations for Greenhouse, ornamental plant and planting center. To evaluate and analyse financial investments to improve the material-technical base in all subjects of study on an equal basis.

For further improvement

1. Develop a detailed long-term financial investment plan for study field programme.

AREA 7: QUALITY ASSURANCE AND PUBLIC INFORMATION

7.1.	The development of the field of study is based on an internal quality assurance system involving all stakeholders and continuous monitoring, transparency and public information

FACTUAL SITUATION

7.1.1. Internal quality assurance system for the programmes is effective

All the duties and responsibilities were described in the Kolegia Quality Manual, but procedures for monitoring and self-assessment were described in the Internal Quality Assessment Procedure. Progress and/or critical points (incl appeals, shortcomings) were critically analysed and evaluated in line with the strategic goals, legal acts, within annual reports, also proposals for improvements

(study, material) were expected (from Study Field Committee). The duty of the Study Field Committee is related to the elimination of the shortcomings observed during the previous accreditation period and monitoring the conformity of the study quality with the requirements of the norms. Given that only part of the recommendations from the previous accreditation in 2022 have been implemented, and the shortcomings identified in the preparation of the current report have been long-standing, it can be concluded that the work of the Study Field Committee has not been effective, nor have inadequate monitoring methods been used.

Practical activities - yearly study subjects surveys, evaluation of external internships, student preparedness for professional activities, final-year student feedback, employer feedback. All results in general form were available at web page: https://atf.viko.lt/studentams/apklausu-rezultatai/ (inspected at March 23, 2025).

According to SER (Chapter 7.1), at the end of each academic year, the Study Field Committee, keeping in mind all evaluations, prepares conclusions and recommendations for improvement and presents them to the Faculty Council. At the beginning of the academic year, the SFC outlines actions for improvement. There are no procedures for monitoring progress, and improvement plans are not elaborated.

7.1.2. Involvement of stakeholders (students and others) in internal quality assurance is effective

SFC coordinates collaboration between education institutions, students, alumni and social partners, also manages analysis of survey results, study resources, development and research projects applications, internship programmes as well. Students were involved in SFC, in the Faculty Council, and they also were invited to participate in meetings with the Dean.

Social partners (as referenced in SER, Chapter 7.2.) are involved in the internal quality assurance process (making proposals, participating in decision-making in study evaluation, staff selection and other study quality assurance matters) primarily represent landscape and floriculture fields (e.g. UAB Herbela, Lithuanian Association of Plant Breeders and Ornamentals Plant Producers etc.) what could be mentioned as week point as study program is represented in Environmental Engineering field. But, social partners actively participate in final thesis evaluation and supervision, also given public lectures, competence improvement activities.

Alumni were not included in the internal quality assurance system.

7.1.3. Information on the programmes, their external evaluation, improvement processes, and outcomes is collected, used and made publicly available

Publicly available information about the study program on the website: https://www.viko.lt/studentams/studiju-programos-lietuviskai/krastovaizdzio-dizainas/ (checked March 23, 2025):

- professional opportunities for graduates (all mainly belongs to landscape management and design);
- expected professional activities that the graduate will be able to do;
- information about study plan in details - what kind of course/subject will be learned, amount of credits and evaluation method.

Additionally on the College web page following information is available:

- information about admission;
- tuition fees;
- about available study programmes;
- admission statistics;
- social events and support for accommodation;
- study documents;
- study schedule;

Information regarding the study programme is also provided using other information resources, co-operation with social partners. Positive examples of information transfer: one of the representatives of the academic staff regularly publishes in newspapers (e.g., “Gimtasis Rokishkis”), various Internet portals (e.g., “www.delfi.lt”), participates as an expert in different TV programs (e.g., “Laba diena, Lietuva”).

7.1.4. Student feedback is collected and analysed

After each semester students participate in surveys in order to evaluate courses and according to results improvements in collaboration with lecturers were promoted. General feedback of surveys is published on the website. There is no statistical analysis of the conducted surveys and at least some examples of improvements what was done after the analysis.

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 7.1.)

The VK Quality Manual outlines duties and responsibilities, while internal monitoring and self-assessment are described in the Internal Quality Assessment Procedure. Annual reports critically assess progress and issues, with improvement proposals expected from the Study Field Committee. Feedback is gathered through various surveys and evaluations, with general results published online. Based on evaluations, the Study Field Committee provides annual recommendations to the Faculty Council and sets improvement actions. SFC coordinates collaboration among VIKO, students, alumni, and social partners, also managing surveys, study resources, project applications, and internships. It should be mentioned that alumni are not involved in the internal quality assurance system.

However, there are no formal procedures to monitor progress or develop detailed improvement plans. Consequently, not all recommendations from 2022 evaluation is fully implemented (see chapter 1.4. Background of the review), and substantial reasons and explanations for partial implementation was not given. Expert panel recognizes that SFC personnel includes social partners landscape and floriculture fields and partners from environmental engineering is not included in this group. That could lead to the situation that the name of programme mismatch to the content and learning outcomes (see detailed description in Area 1: Study aims, learning outcomes and curriculum).

AREA 7: CONCLUSIONS

AREA 7	Unsatisfactory - 1 Does not meet the requirements	Satisfactory - 2 Meets the requirements, but there are substantial shortcomings to be eliminated	Good - 3 Meets the requirements, but there are shortcomings to be eliminated	Very good - 4 Very well nationally and internationally without any shortcomings	Exceptional - 5 Exceptionally well nationally and internationally without any shortcomings
First cycle		X			

COMMENDATIONS

1. Information about studies and relevant topics were available online (on the web page), information is well represented.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To address shortcomings

1. Most intensive inclusion of social partners from environmental engineering field would be essential.
2. Improved systematic action plan for SFC is needed to monitor improvement action results, work on accreditation recommendations, follow-up to regulation rules concerning specific study field.

For further improvement

1. Develop a study field improvement plan with specific measurable actions, deadlines and responsible persons.
2. Develop the procedure for progress monitoring.

V. SUMMARY

The external evaluation of the Landscape Design programme at Vilnius Kolegija (VIKO), categorized under the Environmental Engineering study field, was conducted according to national and European standards. The review process included analysing self-evaluation documents, a site visit, and interviews with stakeholders. The program aims to prepare professionals capable of designing and managing green areas and small-scale landscape architecture projects. While the programme strongly aligns with landscape design and horticulture, its classification under Environmental Engineering has been questioned due to the very limited presence of core engineering content.

The study aims and learning outcomes meet minimum legal requirements and align partially with VIKO's strategic goals. However, significant issues were identified regarding the integration of engineering competencies. Only 17% of the curriculum is engineering-focused, with key courses like Applied Mathematics, Engineering Graphics, and Environmental Engineering forming a small portion of the programme. Many course descriptions (e.g. Landscape Architecture; Basics of Landscaping Construction; Engineering Measurement Techniques) lack coherence, with several prerequisites either missing from the curriculum or scheduled concurrently with dependent courses, which undermines the logical sequence of knowledge acquisition. Additionally, most final theses focus on landscape and floriculture topics rather than engineering challenges, further indicating a misalignment with the programme's declared field.

Scientific research conducted by staff and its integration into teaching is modest. Although the College has participated in national and international research initiatives, much of the research output remains within horticulture and landscape design rather than environmental engineering. The SER highlights a reliance on part-time lecturers from other institutions for research contributions, which may obscure the programme's research identity. Students are involved in applied research and have opportunities to present their work at conferences, yet the connection between current global scientific developments and the curriculum remains limited. The creation of dedicated research groups and the enhancement of international visibility were recommended to bolster the scientific depth of the programme.

Student admission processes are transparent and centrally coordinated via the national system. The programme attracts high and minimally qualified candidates, with overall admission trends remaining stable. The College has introduced higher entry thresholds to maintain academic standards. Student support services are comprehensive, covering academic advising, career counselling, psychological support, and financial aid. Erasmus+ opportunities are well-structured, though outgoing student mobility remains modest, partially due to many students being employed during studies. Nonetheless, the institution promotes short-term exchanges and blended mobility programmes to encourage participation.

Teaching methods are varied and student-centred, incorporating both face-to-face and online formats. Assessment practices are transparent, cumulative, and aligned with learning outcomes. The programme demonstrates a practical orientation, with students participating in applied projects. However, engagement with public sector projects is limited, and students expressed a desire for more hands-on workshops and greater international exposure. Graduate employability rates are relatively high, but most employment is in the landscape design sector, reflecting the programme's strengths and limited engineering orientation. The graduate monitoring system could be improved by expanding employer surveys and diversifying social partner involvement.

The teaching staff is generally qualified, with an increasing number of lecturers holding doctoral degrees. Nonetheless, most lecturers come from biology, horticulture, or related fields, and only a few have engineering expertise. This imbalance affects the curriculum's ability to develop a strong engineering component. Staff development and academic mobility are supported, although language proficiency may limit broader participation. The college is encouraged to either strengthen its engineering teaching capacity or consider reclassifying the programme under a more suitable academic field, such as agriculture or landscape architecture. And this recommendation is already given in 2022.

Learning facilities are modern and well-equipped, particularly in areas supporting horticulture and landscape design. Investments have been directed primarily towards greenhouses and plant cultivation centres, while little has been allocated to engineering-related infrastructure. The newly developed library offers excellent resources and individual study spaces. Students benefit from digital access to academic resources and specialized software. Still, the expert group recommends a more balanced investment strategy and formulating a long-term development plan for infrastructure that includes engineering components.

The quality assurance system is formally in place, with clear responsibilities and regular evaluations conducted through surveys and feedback mechanisms. However, the follow-up on student feedback lacks transparency and statistical analysis. Alums are not actively involved in internal quality assurance processes, and improvements resulting from evaluations are not always documented or communicated. The college publishes relevant programme information online and provides adequate public access to study content and outcomes, but stakeholder involvement—especially from engineering professionals—needs to be expanded.

In conclusion, while the Landscape Design programme at Vilnius Kolegija effectively supports student learning, employability, and engagement in practical projects, its classification under Environmental Engineering is problematic. The programme would benefit from either reorienting more firmly toward engineering by enhancing its technical content and staff qualifications or reclassifying under a more fitting study field. Quality assurance processes should be strengthened, with better feedback implementation and broader stakeholder participation. With these changes, the programme could better align with its objectives and provide a more robust educational experience within its designated field.