



STUDIJŲ KOKYBĖS VERTINIMO CENTRAS

**MARIJAMPOLĖS KOLEGIJOS
VEIKLOS VERTINIMO IŠVADOS**

**INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW REPORT
OF MARIJAMPOLĖ COLLEGE**

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. This report describes a review of Marijampole College (the College) carried out in autumn 2013 by a team of experts from Lithuania and other European countries (the team). The review was conducted in accordance with the prescribed methodology according to the Procedure for the External Review in Higher Education approved by Government Resolution No 1317 of 22 September, 2010.
2. The College provided the team in advance with a Self-Evaluation Report (SER) supported by detailed annexes. The SER covered the information required to prepare the team for its visit to the College and was presented in a clear and accessible format..
3. Before visiting the College, members of the team reviewed the SER with its annexes, commenting on the points it made and the questions it prompted. They were able to request additional documentation in advance of the visit. The team was provided with other background documentation in advance of the visit and met for training on the review process, including an overview of the Lithuanian higher education system immediately before the visit to the College. An external assessment of the College's learning resources was provided for the Institutional Review by Lithuania's Research and Higher Education Monitoring and Analysis Centre (MOSTA).
4. The visit to the College took place over three days from the 12th to 14th of November, 2013. The visit commenced with a tour of the College buildings to review facilities, resources and view samples of students' work. It was followed by 13 meetings with staff, students and other representatives of relevant groups associated with the College, such as external members of the College Board and social partners. After the visit the team spent reviewed the information received and prepared its report and conclusions.
5. The review team consisted of the following members:
 - Prof. Colin Raban (team leader): United Kingdom
 - Orla Hanratty (secretary): Ireland
 - Prof. Dr. Francisco Carreiro da Costa: Portugal
 - Prof. Dr. Richard Mischak: Austria
 - Linas Pučinskis: Lithuania
 - Tautvydas Marčiulaitis: Lithuania
 - The team was supported by an SKVC evaluation coordinator.

II. BACKGROUND INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSTITUTION

6. Marijampole College is the only higher education institution in the Southwestern region of Lithuania. The College was established in 2001 and registered on August 31, 2001 (No. 15AK, Certificate No. M 000380) when the former Marijampole Advanced Pedagogical School and former Marijampole Advanced Agricultural School were amalgamated. It was registered as a public entity at the State Enterprise Centre of Registers on the 3rd of September, 2012. The Research and Higher Education Assessment Council reviewed the College in November 2006 and gave a positive evaluation.

7. There are two faculties in the College: the Business & Technology Faculty, and the Education Studies and Social Work Faculty. There are 34 programmes currently being taught and represent a range of subject areas from both faculties. However, it is expected that six of the programmes will be discontinued and removed from the register. In the academic year 2012/13 the student population was 1,093 with the largest number of students in Law (143), followed by Social Work (132). There is an approximately equal proportion of full-time (548) and part-time (545) students. 147 staff were involved in teaching and/or research in 2012-13. This is a quarter less than the figure for 2006-07 (207). However, the number of teaching staff with higher qualifications e.g. a research doctorate has doubled from five to ten (one at professor level) within the same period.

III. STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT

8. The team recognized that the College and its staff are working in a difficult environment. This includes all the challenges that are recorded by the College's Strategy as external threats and as weaknesses of the institution. In particular, there was a 27% decline in student enrolments between 2009 and 2012 reflecting demographic factors that have resulted in a weakening regional market for the College's 34 study programmes. Staffing levels and income have dropped accordingly, with the latter being compounded by reduced state funding for students and by the low level of funding provided to the regional colleges in support of their applied research activities. The College is required, nevertheless, to comply with national policies and with the principles of the European Higher Education Area.
9. The mission of the College is to be a creative and responsible provider of higher education; to act as an 'open and confident partner' for national and global business, and for cultural and social institutions'; to cherish tradition and citizenship, and 'promote culture in a respectful and tolerant way'; to be a dynamic institution, striving for professionalism and learning in cooperation with others; and to improve quality by adopting a quality management system that conforms to the ISO 9001 Standard. Each element within the College's mission is broken down into a number of more specific and, in the view of the team, assessable commitments.
10. The Marijampole College Strategy for 2013-2016 was approved by the College Council in July 2013, having been considered and approved previously by the Academic Council. In its meetings with teaching staff, the team learned that the College had taken care to ensure that the views of staff in departments and students were considered in the preparation of the Strategy. The College's annual report is published on the website and this is the primary means by which information on the implementation of the Strategy is made available to a wider public. In addition, the active involvement of social partners as members of College bodies and their routine engagement in the institution's applied research and study programme activities ensures that information on the Strategy and its implementation is widely disseminated.
11. The College's mission and strategy are consistent with the Law on Higher Education and Research, relevant national policies, and the expectations of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). The College has been restructured, and a new team of senior managers has been appointed. Since 2010 nearly half the current portfolio of study programmes has been submitted for accreditation, resulting in a re-balancing of the College's curricula in accordance with national requirements and the Marijampole Regional Development Strategy for 2014-15. For some time the College has also been working to align its study programmes with the EHEA Qualifications Framework and with the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS), recognizing the

- associated need to implement a new 'study model' with a focus on intended learning outcomes and an emphasis on student-centred learning.
12. The review team concluded that the College had set itself an appropriate vision and change agenda, as set out in its Strategy 2013-16. It also considered that the elements of the Strategy were mutually consistent and achievable. However, the agenda is challenging and the team had some reservations about some of the indicators or targets for the implementation of the Strategy; in particular, the College may find it difficult to achieve some of the financial targets whilst there are other targets that remain quite modest. The latter include the planned proportion of study programmes accredited for the maximum period of six years. Finally, the team considered that the 'opportunities' listed in the Strategy's SWOT analysis might be better described as 'objectives' rather than a considered review of the College's external environment. In view of this, the team was reassured to learn that the College had undertaken such an analysis and that it had identified two main areas for the future development of its portfolio of study programmes and applied research activities. The team also learned that staff are aware of and are managing the tensions between the College's commitment to internationalization and its accountability for addressing national priorities and regional needs.
 13. The team considered that the Strategy and the meetings with staff provided evidence that the College had undertaken a commendably frank analysis of its current weaknesses, and of the progress that it has (and, in some cases, has not) made in achieving its objectives. These include the slow pace with which the College as a whole has responded to ECTS and the full implementation of the new study model, and the difficulties that have been encountered in improving the mobility and foreign language skills of staff and students. There are, nevertheless, some significant success stories and these include the College's investment in learning resources and infrastructure in the face of quite severe resource constraints, the publication of the College's own scientific journal (*Homo Societas Technologiae*) and the successful introduction of the new management structure. The Strategy also provides a realistic and credible analysis of some of the internal barriers to change, and the team was afforded several opportunities to discuss this further with the staff of the College. In general, it was apparent to the team that the College is carefully monitoring the implementation of its Strategy and that this process is well served by its procedures for annual reporting and management review which draw *inter alia* on student feedback and internal audit.
 14. The College's mission includes a commitment to 'improve quality' by developing a quality management system that conforms to the ISO 9001: 2008 standard. ISO 9001 is intended to be applicable to all organisations irrespective of their type and size, and its purpose is to achieve customer satisfaction by enhancing the consistency and quality of a service. The new system was approved in 2011 by the Council and Academic Council and the team was able to confirm that it had been introduced in a manner that is compliant with the ISO standard. The team also learned that the effectiveness of the quality management system is itself subject to annual review by the Academic Council.
 15. The team considered that in meeting the ISO 9001 standard, the quality management system is consistent with the College's commitment to 'process management' and that it provides a useful means of monitoring the implementation of the College's strategy and of ensuring compliance with management requirements. However, the team was not convinced that a generic system, and in particular one in which the primary measure of quality is 'customer satisfaction', would be fully effective in assuring the quality and standards of the College's study programmes, and in promoting the active engagement of teaching staff in enhancing the quality of students' learning opportunities. The team's reservations on this matter were partly informed by the apparent failure of the quality management system to secure consistently successful outcomes from the planning, preparation and Academic Council approval of the College's study programme

- submissions for SKVC accreditation, and by the possibly inevitable difficulties encountered by the College in aligning its programmes with ECTS and in implementing the new study model. It was concluded therefore that the College should undertake a critical review of its quality management system to ensure that it is and that it continues to be fit for the full range of its intended purposes.
16. In 2011 there was a change in the leadership of the College and this was followed by the creation of a new post at Vice Principal level and the restructuring of academic departments. The College now has two Faculties, one for Education Studies and Social Work, and the other for Business and Technology. The Faculties are led by Deans and they comprise five and four departments respectively. In the view of the College, these structural changes have assisted in centralizing the management of resources and optimising the deployment of facilities and of learning and human resources. The College has also created three 'research clusters' to support its applied research activities.
 17. The most recent MOSTA report concluded with a positive assessment of the College's learning resources. This outcome is due partly to the College's investment of an average of 1m Lt per annum in its estate and the commitment of more than 900,00 Lt over a five year period to the improvement of IT and other equipment. The College recognizes, however, that its library provision does not meet modern requirements, and that there is a need for investment in electronic media. The team learned that the enhancement of the College's learning resources and infrastructure was largely the product of an investment programme that had commenced before the recent decline in its income, and that senior staff planned to sustain this investment partly by finding alternative sources of income and partly by introducing efficiencies in its use of premises.
 18. In accordance with the Law on Higher Education and Research, there is a Council (which serves as the College's governing body) and an Academic Council. The terms of reference and membership of the Council and Academic Council are laid down by the College's Statutes. In addition to these bodies, there are two Faculty Boards and nine Study Programme Committees that share with the Academic Council, the responsibility for the delivery and quality assurance of the College's taught programmes, including the preparation of new proposals for accreditation by SKVC. In its discussions with staff, the team learned that the Study Programme Committees are accountable to their respective departments, rather than to the relevant Faculty Board and through that body to the Academic Council.
 19. There is a Code of Ethics which includes clear statements of the College's policy in dealing with cases of academic dishonesty. The Code and its enforcement, including the hearing of complaints, are overseen by a Commission for Monitoring Marijampole College Code of Ethics. The team concluded that the College's arrangements in this area are appropriate and effective.
 20. The Academic Council is 'the managing body of the College's academic affairs'. Both for this reason and for the reasons discussed earlier, it is recommended that the College considers how it might strengthen its Academic Council to enable it to more effectively discharge its responsibilities for the management, evaluation and approval of study programmes. This could be achieved in part by securing the formal and direct accountability to the Academic Council of both Faculty Boards and their Study Programme Committees. This action should bring the added benefit of consolidating the corporate identity of the College and its ability to adapt and respond to rapidly changing external conditions at a time when the two Faculties continue to reflect the cultures and traditions of the separate institutions that merged to form Marijampole College in 2001.
 21. In recent years, and in particular since 2008, the staff of the College have had to cope with rapidly changing conditions, both within and outside the institution. The internal changes include restructuring, the introduction of new arrangements for staff workload accounting and remuneration, the implementation of the new study model with

significant implications for the role of teachers and the nature of their relationship with students, the adaptation of existing study programmes to new requirements and the development of programmes in new areas and for new markets. In these circumstances, the team concluded that the College should be commended for the action that it had taken to maintain the apparent enthusiasm and commitment of its staff. This action will have included the investment made by the College in the provision of training and staff development opportunities for its members. Staff development priorities are currently determined by the Deans and the Head of Personnel. However, in order to ensure that the College's investment in staff development is fully and effectively aligned with the academic strategy of the institution as a whole, it is recommended that ultimate responsibility for the approval of the annual staff development plan should be assigned to the Academic Council.

22. The team has confidence in the capacity of the College, and in its Council and staff, to pursue the change agenda set out in its Strategy 2013-16. team was concerned, however, about the relatively high number of new programmes that have not received SKVC accreditation and by the difficulties that the College has encountered in revising its programmes to align them with ECTS. The team concluded therefore that the sustainability of the College and the viability of its Strategy would be assisted by:
- Strengthening the Academic Council so as to enable it to more effectively fulfil its responsibilities for the evaluation and approval of programmes, and for the approval of the College's annual staff development plan. This should include a more general strengthening of the College's deliberative structure by securing the accountability of Study Programme Committees and Faculty Councils to the Academic Council.
 - Undertaking a critical evaluation of its quality management system to ensure that it is and that it continues to be fit for the College's purposes.

IV. ACADEMIC STUDIES AND LIFE-LONG LEARNING

23. Marijampole College is committed to providing higher education in a creative and responsible way. It demonstrates this, not only by responding to the Lithuanian legislation on higher education, but also by following European standards in relation to curriculum development and learner support.
24. The study programmes and life-long learning opportunities offered by Marijampole College are in line with its mission and with the requirements for Lithuanian higher education (*Law No XI-242, 30 April 2009*), and they are formally aligned with the expectations of the European Higher Education Area. Currently, Marijampole College offers 34 full time and part-time study programmes. However, six study programmes are expected to be discontinued due to lack of demand or non-compliance with legislative requirements.
25. The Self-Evaluation Report (SER) and the College's Strategic Plan state that teachers working in close association with social partners were involved in the preparation of study programmes. In the meeting with social partners it was confirmed that there is an effective and fruitful collaboration between the College and business enterprises and with public sector institutions within the region. In order to adapt the study programmes to local technological needs, the College intends to offer fewer programmes in the area of social sciences and more in technology and in other areas where there is potentially high demand. This relationship with social partners also enables students to benefit from practice placements and the possibility of an early engagement with their future employers, and from the knowledge and expertise provided by the social partners. The benefits provided by practice placements are particularly appreciated by students, the

- enterprises that provide the placements, and by the eventual employers of the College's graduates.
26. The College's respect for the principles of the Bologna agreement is stated, not only in the SER, but also in the Strategy and the College's Quality Manual. The information gathered in the team's meetings with the Academic Council, teachers and students enabled it to confirm that since September 2011, the College's study programmes have been organized in accordance with the principles of the European Higher Education Area. Learning outcomes and teaching, learning and assessment strategies focusing primarily on the students' learning process were also introduced.
 27. The College has not always been successful in obtaining accreditation for its study programmes. Staff recognised the importance of good programme design to support the improvement of the quality of the learning experience, and in securing SKVC accreditation of the College's programmes. The team agreed that the College should continue to give priority to supporting staff in the development of programmes, and promoting staff discussion on the principles of good programme design. The College's Strategy also recognizes the difficulties it has encountered in implementing ECTS. It was evident to the team that the staff of the College have considered carefully how they might overcome these difficulties. It was also noted in the meeting with teaching staff that they have had recent success with a programme accreditation and this was attributed to working more as a team with input from senior management.
 28. The Statute of the College states that the quality of studies shall be assured through the College internal quality assurance system, and various forms of external evaluation and accreditation of the study programmes. Based on discussions in the meetings with staff in relation to the quality of academic studies it was evident that while there are some procedures in place to evaluate programmes and assess their quality, the College might consider whether there is a need for the further development of this aspect of its internal quality management system. Any consideration that the College gives to this issue should be included in its response to the earlier recommendation that it ensures that its quality management system is and continues to be fit for the full range of its intended purposes.
 29. The College's implementation of a more student-centred approach to teaching and the use of a learning outcomes-based model has resulted in a change to the role of teachers, with a greater emphasis on the management and facilitation of learning and with less significance being attached to activities within the classroom itself. This change also has implications for the role of the student with the need for them to become independent learners. Changes in learning culture are not easy to achieve, and the challenge was acknowledged by teaching staff and by students who appreciated the benefits of self-study, self-assessment and reflection. The team would recommend that the College continue to support teaching staff to develop their teaching, learning and assessment strategies to further enhance this student-centred learning approach and the further implementation of the outcomes-based approach and ECTS. This could be achieved by providing more staff development sessions to enable teaching staff to share their experience of implementing these changes.
 30. In their meeting with the team, students expressed their appreciation of their teachers' commitment and the efforts that they had made to create the best learning conditions. With respect to learning resources, however, students reported a desire for access to more up to date literature and to a wider range of electronic databases. Although State funding for the purchase of new books and journals is limited, the team learned that the College is attempting to raise funds from alternative sources, and to make arrangements with other institutions to facilitate students' access to new databases.
 31. The College has organised some staff development initiatives through its Study Development Centre. The initiatives include seminars on coaching and training workshops on interactive learning technologies and the use of Moodle for distance

- learning. There are also courses to support the improvement of English language proficiency and in the past three years 300,000 litas was allocated for the development of teaching skills. It was also noted in the SER and in meetings that staff have participated in European funded projects and that teachers have the opportunity to develop their English language skills by participating in the many international projects in which the College is involved. The development of teachers' skills in English language is one of the key issues in the further development of international partnerships and it is for this reason that special attention is being given by the College to this area.
32. The Study Development Centre, also organises lifelong learning programmes for external clients of the region. The target groups have included employees of social institutions, social workers, civil servants, farmers, museum workers and entrepreneurs. These programmes are prepared in close consultation with the Programme Study Committees, and take into account the needs of social partners and business sectors of the region. The lifelong learning programmes have focused predominantly on the teacher training, agriculture and engineering sectors.
 33. The College is a member of LieDM (Distance Teaching in Lithuania) network consortium. Currently eleven courses are delivered through the Moodle platform and supervised by the College's Distance Study Centre. Part-time students may use this means of learning. The College has also demonstrated its commitment to lifelong learning by being an active member of the University of the Third Age of Lithuania. It offers a range of activities and the use of the Moodle virtual learning environment can enable further development of activities in a variety of forms.
 34. The employment and career paths of graduates are monitored and analysed. This monitoring is undertaken by the College's Careers Centre and is supported by enquiries made by academic staff to their graduates. The results of the investigations are made public and they are used to inform the revision of programmes to enhance the employability of students. By comparing the results of the last three years, employment increased by 8% in 2013 compared to 2011, and 4% compared to 2010. The number of students who have continued their studies in universities has also increased.
 35. The College management and staff are conscious of the need to enhance the international mobility of teaching staff and students. The international mobility of teachers and students (outgoing and incoming) has been supported by the Comenius, Erasmus, Grundtvig, Leonardo da Vinci, NordPlus programmes and by study visits. In the period 2010-2012, 19 foreign teachers visited Marijampole College and 21 College teachers visited other institutions. As for students' mobility over the same period, six students came to study at the College, and 26 Lithuanian students left for foreign institutions. Staff and student mobility is greater outwards than inwards, in part possibly because the Lithuanian language is a barrier to inward mobility. Economic reasons and a lack of mastery of a second language such as English have been identified by the College as obstacles to internationalization. The difficulties in increasing the mobility of staff and students are identified in the SER and the team acknowledges the efforts that have been made by the College.

V. RESEARCH AND (OR) ART

36. The Statute (2012) clearly states the College's mission in terms of its applied research and art activities. The Strategic Plan (2013-2016) provides an insight into the potential for, and the College's commitment to the development of applied research and art activity and the SER provided the team with further details on the implementation of these aspects of the College's strategy. The SER notes that tools have been established to support the planning, implementation and dissemination of applied research and art

- activities in accordance with ISO 9001:2008 and IWA2 standard. The College implemented a cluster model to support their applied research and art activities in June 2012. There are currently two ‘clusters’ for these activities: ‘Social-Humanities’ and ‘Biomedical-Technology-Agricultural Sciences’ and a third is planned.
37. In line with the College’s mission, the Strategy states that the current clusters give priority to commissioned projects. It was noted that academic departments and the Development Study Centre are involved in a diverse range of such activities. The team also became aware of specific examples of applied research through its reading of the SER and its discussions with staff. Applied research currently covers market research activities as well as practical work in relevant communities. Examples include an applied research project on the competences required by an accountancy graduate as identified by potential employers. Another commissioned applied research project involved students working on the image of the city which was commissioned by the Municipality. Students and teachers worked on this together, with results published in the local press, and students also presented their results in Vilnius.
 38. The College Statute includes a statement on the College’s commitment to the national and regional economic, cultural and social development priorities, noting the aim to ‘develop applied research and consult the local government and economy entities in order to meet the needs necessary for the Southwest region of Lithuania’. The SER stated that the College sets the clusters’ objectives in line with the Region’s development strategy. The above examples provide some evidence of the College’s achievements in commissioned applied research, focusing on the region and on the more local environment within the region. Further evidence of the compliance of the College’s applied research and art activities with the priorities of national and regional, cultural and social development is provided by the project, within the ‘Social – Humanities’ cluster, on public growth and development in the Lithuanian Uznemune region and beyond, and by applied agricultural research projects organised within the ‘Biomedical-Technology-Agricultural Sciences’ cluster. The team also noted various examples of art activities provided by staff and by the SER. These include the production of a DVD and the publication of articles on the history of the region.
 39. The SER signals the College’s intention to focus on cultural development as well as the development of science and knowledge, and to do so in line with the strategy for Lithuania 2030. The team commends the publication by the College of a science research journal (‘Homo Societas Technologiae’) that will cater for the region and provide a means of disseminating the College’s applied research outputs. The College also indicated that it plans to increase the number of staff publications in journals and conference proceedings outside Lithuania.
 40. International co-operation is present for scientific research and, while the focus on the agricultural sector is visible within the international community, its commercial value will depend on the development status of Lithuania and the region. The team considered that links with international institutions could be helpful in bidding for funds for joint projects, and that strategic collaboration in the agricultural-technological area might strengthen the College’s position in accessing new funds. The team concluded that the College should consider how it might use its ‘clusters’ to take on such functions as generating income, securing new contracts and commissions and developing new social partnerships, in addition to their current role in providing support for staff engaged in applied research activity.
 41. The team learned of recent successes in competing for research projects. Examples include the application by students and staff from the image stylist study programme to participate in a project in partnership with a prison and an international research project focusing on regional transport and culture and undertaken in collaboration with the border countries of Belorussia and the Ukraine. However, it was noted that there is only

- one applied research project listed in the SER and inadequate co-operation with social partners for applied research is highlighted in the SER as a weakness.
42. Senior management is aware of the tension between addressing regional and national needs and of the challenges facing a regional college in competing with other higher education institutions for research funding and recognition. The team obtained a clear insight into the value placed by the College on its research activities and it was suggested that greater co-operation with universities, businesses and public institutions could further support research activities. The team would recommend that this co-operation with current and potential regional, national and international partners be given greater priority.
 43. Current examples of applied research and art activity demonstrate that students are active participants in many of the projects. There is also evidence that some staff are successfully competing for research and art activity funding and disseminating their work within the region, as well as nationally and internationally. Examples include the organisation of an international conference on accounting and finance with participation from associations and researchers from Vilnius and Kaunas Universities; also lecturers of music pedagogy represent the region and Lithuania at international events; and some lecturers are members of the Lithuania Artists Union and have gained international awards and recognition for their work. The College's new publication 'Homo Societas Technologiae' may enable staff, students and other researchers to publish their research outputs for wider audiences. In 2012, staff scientific publications started to be registered in a nationwide database and five College authors have registered 11 articles in that database.
 44. The team identified the involvement of employers and social partners in research and art activities as a strength. Employers and social partners frequently noted their involvement in students' final year thesis projects, from proposing research topics to being present for the final defence of the thesis and its assessment. The College acknowledged in the SER that co-operation with social partners over the implementation of science applied research could be further developed. The team would support this objective and would recommend that further effort is made to improve the quality, rather than just the quantity, of applied research activities. This would be important if the College is to maintain and enhance its reputation within the Region and nationally.
 45. Overall, the results of the College's applied research and art activities are providing appropriate support for its teaching programmes and are meeting local needs. What is being achieved is reasonable given the current level of investment and resource available to the College. The team felt, however, that a longer-term and more strategic approach should be developed and that this should entail action to:
 - improve the quality (rather than just the quantity) of applied research activities;
 - enable the 'clusters' to take on additional functions – e.g. generating income, securing new contracts and commissions and developing new social partnerships;
 - develop one or more additional clusters that cut across Faculty boundaries thereby assisting in the integration of the College.

VI. IMPACT ON REGIONAL AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

46. Representatives of local and regional authorities reported that the College is important to the Region and that it makes a valuable contribution to its demographic, social, economic and cultural development. The Marijampole municipality makes substantial efforts to retain its young people to ensure the future development of the town and region. The SER discussed the potential for development within the region based on current

construction projects to support the transportation infrastructure. It also referred to the potential strengths of the College in the context of the Marijampole regional development plan (2001-2013) and also the Marijampole region vision to 2020. The team noted that the SER states that the College's own Strategy is closely aligned with the vision and strategic goals of the region and nationally, and that it emphasises as a fundamental aim the training of professionals who have acquired practical skills aligned with the social, economic and market needs of the region and nation. The College Strategy presents these as strategic goals and objectives and future projections based on 2013 estimates are reasonable.

47. As the only HEI within the area, Marijampole College has a direct and significant impact on the region. The Mayor of Vilkaviškis informed the team that large numbers of school leavers from his town undertake programmes at the College. This may be due to financial reasons, as many students within the region are unable to afford higher education at the major universities although they are eager to learn and the College provides them with the opportunity to do so. It was noted that this is not only the case for students from Vilkaviškis, but also for individuals from a number of other small towns and villages in the region. The team concluded that the College plays an important role in enabling talented people from low income families to obtain a degree and gain professional careers.
48. A proportion of graduates are willing to stay and live in the region after they have completed their studies. There is also evidence that some of those who leave return subsequently to the region. This might be attributed to the College's mission to nurture local traditions and history and graduates and students have strong bonds with the region and feel a degree of responsibility for their region's future. This is complemented by the fact that the College provides its students with skills they require to create a future in the region. 70% of the employees of all social organisations within the region are graduates of the College.
49. Many of the College's staff are working in the region to support learning and development in areas related to their subjects. Examples of this include staff contributions to the work of the Marijampole Cultural Centre and music schools held by staff for local children. The College also provided evidence of the involvement of teachers in cultural development work and students are working throughout the region and were described as being 'at the heart of communities' through their involvement in singing groups, folk groups and church activities. Staff at the College are engaged in regional affairs and especially in the social services sector in such activities as the provision of professional training. The College is also actively involved in the work of the Third Age University. The Marijampole Third Age University is a strong member of the University of the Third Age of Lithuania and it organizes a range of activities (42 in the last three months) which it advertises on its own website. The College's impact on the region is consistent with its economic and social development priorities.
50. The College's social partners are interested in maintaining strong relationships with the College based on the offer of practice placements and internships. Some also provide jobs for graduates. During their internships, students are involved in regional research activities and those who produce very good work can be recommended for employment once they graduate. It was reported that the local Chamber of Commerce values the College's provision in agriculture and transportation for the way in which it supports graduates starting their own businesses. It is recommended that the College uses its alumni network, not only to give feedback on how it might further enhance the employability of its students, but also as a means of creating new social partnerships.
51. Students of the College are motivated and interested in supporting their community. The team found this to be demonstrated by the ways in which students talked about their Student's Union and the support provided by the College for this organization. The

College provides opportunities for student representatives to engage in various administrative activities (participation in various boards, committees and councils). This not only assists students in developing their administrative skills, but also makes them aware of the fact that changes do not necessarily depend on management initiative. In other words, students are encouraged to be proactive and in some cases this may have positive effects on the region. Instead of fearing that they lack the competence to solve the problems that the region may encounter, graduates may gain enough self-confidence to tackle these problems themselves and seek collaboration with others.

52. Demand for Marijampole College graduates from local private and public sector organizations is relatively high. Some students prior to their graduation work or do internships in such organisations as local primary schools and kindergartens. The Municipality also employs, and declares that they are willing to employ more of the College's students. This is also true of privately-owned businesses and farms. According to the evidence provided by the team's meeting with social partners, the College prepares high quality professionals who are ready to enter the labor market. This suggests that the College's graduates become well respected and highly desirable professionals, who through their work contribute to the community. The College sends questionnaires to its graduates, and they are invited to open table discussions and asked for their views on how academic programmes might be improved.
53. Staff informed the team that they are looking for opportunities to participate in national contests to advertise their own skills and those of their students. The team learned of a successful outcome based on one such contest, with staff and students from the Image Stylist programme now involved in designing new uniforms for prison officers and employees. In the light of this example, the team recommends that the College should consider whether and how it could further enhance its impact by being more proactive in promoting the full range of its activities across the nation and internationally.

VII. GOOD PRACTICE AND ENHANCEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

54. Marijampole College has a clear sense of its position in its community and within its region. It has set itself an appropriate vision and change agenda, as set out in its Strategy 2013-16, and the elements of the Strategy are mutually consistent and achievable. The team considered that whilst the College had set itself a challenging change agenda, it had also undertaken a commendably frank analysis of its current weaknesses, and of the progress that it has made in achieving its objectives. There is also a realistic and credible analysis of some of the internal barriers to change. In general, the team concluded that the College is carefully monitoring the implementation of its Strategy and that this process is well served by its procedures for annual reporting and management review.
55. However, the team was not convinced that the College's quality management system, and in particular one in which the primary measure of quality is 'customer satisfaction', was fully effective in assuring the quality and standards of study programmes, and in promoting the active engagement of teaching staff in enhancing the quality of students' learning opportunities. The team's reservations on this matter were partly informed by the apparent failure of the quality management system to secure consistently successful outcomes from the planning, preparation and Academic Council approval of the College's study programme submissions for SKVC accreditation. It is recommended therefore that the College should undertake a critical review of its quality management system to ensure that it is and that it continues to be fit for the full range of its intended purposes.
56. The Academic Council is 'the managing body of the College's academic affairs'. The team recommends that the College considers how it might strengthen its Academic

Council to enable it to more effectively discharge its responsibilities for the management, evaluation and approval of study programmes. This could be achieved in part by securing the formal and direct accountability to the Academic Council of both Faculty Boards and their Study Programme Committees. This action should bring the added benefit of consolidating the corporate identity of the College and its ability to adapt and respond to rapidly changing external conditions at a time when the two Faculties continue to reflect the cultures and traditions of the separate institutions that merged to form Marijampole College in 2001. It is also recommended that ultimate responsibility for the approval of the annual staff development plan should be assigned to the Academic Council.

57. The College is working in a challenging environment and it is striving to broaden its range of programmes and prepare graduates for further studies and employment within and beyond the region. It is also widening local participation in higher education and lifelong learning as well as developing an international dimension to its work. This report has highlighted some of the College's many strengths in particular, its capacity to adapt to change as well as initiate new developments. The commitment, enthusiasm and engagement of the staff are also commended and the strategic efforts of the senior management are acknowledged.
58. The College's provision of study programmes including lifelong learning is responsive to the needs of its community whilst also respecting Lithuanian legislation on higher education and adhering to European standards for curriculum development and learner support. The practice placements which are embedded within the study programmes are considered as a positive feature. There was a strong sense of collegiality and partnership within a College community that includes students, graduates and social partners. This report emphasises the importance of maintaining and further enhancing these strong relationships with alumni.
59. While it is noted that there has been some recent success in securing the accreditation of new programmes, further efforts are required to improve the design and development of programmes. It is recommended that the College's review of its quality management system should include a particular focus on programme evaluation, and that further support should be provided for teaching staff in development their teaching, learning and assessment strategies.
60. Applied research and art activities are areas of significant development in the College's recent history. It is building on the traditions of art activities and showcasing staff and student talent within the region and beyond. It is challenging itself in the area of applied research with a number of notable achievements to date, including the publication of its own journal. The clustering approach which has been adopted is being used effectively to support applied research, and in particular by using established links with social partners within the region. It is recommended that the College establish and develop additional clusters that could cut across faculty boundaries and facilitate the integration of the College Faculties. Consideration could also be given to enabling the 'clusters' to take on additional functions e.g. to generate income and to identify and secure new partners. This may lead to new research contracts and commissions from within the region but importantly access the potential of national and international funding.
61. The College is in a unique position of being the only higher education institution in its immediate region. This brings opportunities to the College which it is exploiting: it is building and maintaining strong partnerships within the region, and it is having a real impact on, and is receiving support from an appreciative community within the region. However, this position is associated with certain risks. It limits the College's opportunities for benchmarking its activities, and for developing collaborative relationships with other institutions. It is recommended therefore that the College considers whether and how it could further enhance its impact, by adopting a more proactive approach to promoting its extensive range of activities across Lithuania and

internationally. Finally, it is recommended that the College strengthens its efforts to maintain contact with its graduates, and that it utilise its alumni network as a means of creating new social partnerships thereby further enhancing its impact.

VIII. ANNEX. HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION RESPONSE TO
REVIEW REPORT