TARPTAUTINĖS TEISĖS IR VERSLO AUKŠTOSIOS MOKYKLOS
VEIKLOS VERTINIMO IŠVADOS
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INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW REPORT OF
INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL OF LAW AND BUSINESS

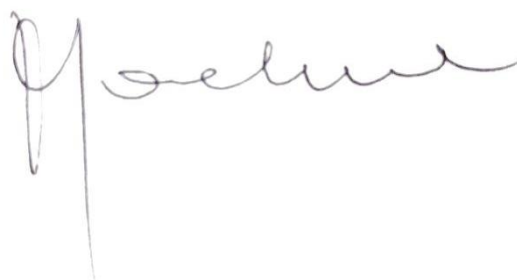|	
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Vertinimo sekretorius: Review secretary:	Dr. Mark Frederiks
Grupės nariai (kategorija): Panel members (category):	Dr. Eneken Titov (academic)
	Prof. Dr. Teresa Paiva (academic) Mr. Gediminas Kazlauskas (social partner) Ms. Skaistė Kairytė (student)
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2022

Report language – English

CONTENT

I hereby certify that this is the final text of the institutional review report of the International School of Law and Business.

Prof. Dr. Mieczyslaw W. Socha

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. The purpose of the external review is to determine the quality of the performance of a higher education institution based on the findings of the external review, to create prerequisites for the improvement of the performance of a higher education institution, to promote a culture of quality, and to inform founders, academic community and the society about the quality of higher education institutions.

2. This review report is based on the evidence given in the self-evaluation report, additional evidence requested by the panel, information provided by the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education (hereinafter – Centre, SKVC) and a site visit, where meetings with a wide range of audiences were held.

3. The Panel was composed of the reviewers, following the Experts Selection Procedure, approved by the Director of Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education on 31 December 2019 Order No. V-149 and included the following members:

> Prof. Dr. Mieczyslaw Socha (panel chairperson)
>
> Dr. Mark Frederiks (review secretary)
> Dr. Eneken Titov (academic)
> Prof. Dr. Teresa Paiva (academic)
> Mr. Gediminas Kazlauskas (social partner)
> Ms. Skaistė Kairytė (student)

4. As a result of external review **International School of Law and Business** is given a **negative evaluation**.

5. Judgment by the area:

Area	Assessment with points*
MANAGEMENT	2
QUALITY ASSURANCE	2
STUDIES AND RESEARCH (ART)	1
IMPACT ON REGIONAL AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT	1

*5 points - **excellent**– the area is rated exceptionally well in the national context and internationally;

4 points – **very good** – the area is rated very well in the national context and internationally, without any drawbacks;

3 points – **good** – the area is being developed systematically, without any major drawbacks;

2 points – **satisfactory** – the area meets the minimum requirements, and there are drawbacks that must be addressed;

1 point - **unsatisfactory** – the area does not meet the minimum requirements, there are fundamental drawbacks.

6. **Four** examples of good practices were found; **twenty-eight** recommendations were given, and seven suggestions for improvement were made.

II. INTRODUCTION

2.1. Background of the review process

7. The external review of the International School of Law and Business (hereafter referred to as ISLB or the College) was organised by the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education and carried out in December 2021 by an Expert Panel of international experts (hereinafter – the Panel). It was conducted in accordance with the Procedure for the External Evaluation and Accreditation of Higher Education Institutions and Branches of Foreign Higher Education Institutions, Evaluation Areas and Indicators (hereinafter – the Procedure) approved by the Minister of Education, Science and Sport of the Republic of Lithuania on 19 of December 2019 Order No. V-1529 and the Methodology for Conducting an Institutional Review of a Higher Education Institution (hereinafter – the Methodology) approved by the Director of SKVC on 9 March 2020 Order No V-32.

8. According to the Procedure the external review consists of the following stages: submission of a self-evaluation report prepared by a higher education institution to the Centre; formation of an expert panel and analysis of the self-evaluation report; expert panel visit to the higher education institution; preparation of the external review report and publication thereof; follow-up activities aimed at improving the performance of the higher education institution, taking into account the external review report.

9. At the preparatory stage of the external review, the Panel received the Self-Evaluation Report (hereinafter – SER) with 11 annexes. SKVC provided to the Panel additional information about the College, as set in the Methodology (Chapter 26), including statistical data on students and staff; financial data; findings from the ex-ante and ex-post programme reviews, institutional reviews and evaluations of research and development activities; State-budget allocations for research activities; information on academic ethics from the Office of the Ombudsperson for Academic Ethics and Procedures of the Republic of Lithuania. The Panel requested from ISLB additional information, such as the new Strategy 2022-2026, the updated organisational structure, the English translation of the statutes, the procedure for the establishment of new study programmes, an overview of the lecturers, the number of foreign students and their countries of origins in the last 5 years, the list of international partnerships, some examples of final theses and the number of responses to ISLB surveys.

10. The site visit was undertaken after a training session organized by SKVC staff and preparatory Panel meetings. The Panel reviewed the college on 14, 15, and 16 December 2021, where it had meetings with the Director, Shareholder, the SER group, College Council, Academic Council, domestic students, student representatives, international students, teaching and research staff, study programme committees, Quality Department, administrative staff, graduates and social partners. **Due to the worldwide pandemic situation, the review visit was organised online using the video-conferencing tool Zoom.** Subsequently, the Panel met to review and agree on conclusions and recommendations. The review report was finalised by correspondence and submitted to the SKVC.

11. In line with the Proceure, the external review focused on four areas covered by the evaluation indicators (and related criteria): **Management**, **Quality Assurance**, **Studies and**

Research (Art) and **Impact on Regional and National Development**. In analysing the evidence collected, the Panel also gave due consideration to the principal recommendations of the previous review in 2012:

- The need to prioritise the School's key performance indicators. The sheer number of indicators used by the School requires their prioritisation to ensure it meets its strategic targets in an orderly and timely manner.
- Greater clarification of the School's concept of internationalisation. The School's strategy for greater internationalisation will be assisted by identifying with which parts of the international community it wishes to engage, to avoid an unstructured and potentially wasteful use of resources.
- The introduction of more systematic benchmarking. The lack of regular benchmarking against competitors will weaken the School's aim to maintain and enhance its standing amongst prospective students, employers and public and private partner organisations.
- The need to adopt a monitored internal risk register. The School's systems for the identification and monitoring of internal risks are unclear.

12. The review of a higher education institution assesses each of the evaluation areas with one of five ratings: **excellent** – 5 points – the area is rated exceptionally well in the national context and internationally; **very good** – 4 points – the area is rated very well in the national context and internationally, without any drawbacks; **good** – 3 points – the area is being developed systematically, without any major drawbacks; **satisfactory** – 2 points – the area meets the minimum requirements, and there are drawbacks that must be addressed; **unsatisfactory** – 1 point – the area does not meet the minimum requirements, there are fundamental drawbacks.

13. The decision on **positive** evaluation is made when none of the evaluation areas is evaluated unsatisfactorily (1 point). The decision on **negative** evaluation is made when at least one of the evaluation areas is evaluated unsatisfactory (1 point).

14. In line with the Methodology, the review report, prepared by the Panel is reviewed by SKVC and sent to the higher education institution to comment on factual errors and the evaluations based thereon. The Panel revises the report in response to the comments from the higher education institution (if applicable) and submits it to SKVC.

15. The Panel did not receive the comments on factual errors from International School of Law and Business and therefore no further changes were made to the report.

16. After the Panel considers comments from the higher education institution (if applicable) and finalizes it, the report is considered by the external Commission of the Higher Education Institutions' Review (hereinafter – the Commission), set up by SKVC. On the basis of the proposal, made by the Commission, provisioned in the Commission's regulations, approved by the order of the Director of SKVC on 8 of January, 2020 order No. V-5, SKVC takes one of the decisions on the accreditation of the higher education institution:

- to evaluate the performance of the higher education institution positively;
- to evaluate the performance of the higher education institution negatively.

The decisions of SKVC may be appealed to the Commission for Appeals, formed by SKVC. Subsequently, the decisions of SKVC and the Commission for Appeals may be appealed against

in accordance with the procedure established by the Law on Administrative Proceedings of the Republic of Lithuania.

17. On the basis of the external review decision SKVC takes one of the following decisions on the **accreditation** of the higher education institution:

- to **accredit for a period of seven years** if performance of the higher education institution is evaluated positively;

- to **accredit for a period of three years** if performance of the higher education institution is evaluated negatively;

- to **deny accreditation** if the repeated external review results of the higher education institution are negative.

18. SKVC announces the decision on the external review together with the conclusions of the external review and the decision on the accreditation of the higher education institution on it's website. The higher education institution respectively announces the decision on the evaluation of the higher education institution together with the external review report on it's website and maintains it until the next external review.

2.1. Background information about the institution

19. The International School of Law and Business is located in Vilnius was founded in 1998 as D. Daugvilienė's Business College. In 2001 the College changed its name to Vilnius College of Business and Law, and in 2009 it re-registered its status to a legal person (a limited liability company) under its current name. ISLB (the Lithuanian acronym is TTVAM) offers study programmes in business, tourism and recreation, finance and cosmetology. Currently, new students can enrol in study programmes of 180 ECTS in Business Management, Tourism and Hotel Business, Finance, and Logistics and Forwarding, which lead to the diploma of Professional Bachelor in Business Management. The programmes are offered in Lithuanian whilst the programmes in Business Management and Tourism and Hotel Business are also taught in English. Despite its name, ISLB no longer provides programmes in law. The College has no separate faculties or academic departments. In 2020-2021 683 students were attending the Business Management, Logistics and Forwarding, Tourism and Hotel Business, Finance and Cosmetology study programmes. During the last academic year, 156 students from foreign countries arrived for full-time studies in the College. As of 1st October 2020, 46 lecturers and 23 administrative employees worked in the College. ISLB was last reviewed by SKVC in 2012 (with a positive outcome). In 2021 the ownership of the College shifted to a new shareholder who holds all the shares of ISLB.

III. ANALYSIS BY EVALUATION AREAS

3.1. Management

Management area is analysed in accordance to the following indicators and criteria, set up in the Methodology.

1.1. Compliance of the higher education institution's strategic action plan with the mission, assurance of its implementation:

1.1.1. The strategic action plan is consistent with the mission of the higher education institution, legal acts regulating research and study activities and it takes into account the provisions of the national research and study policy, the European Higher Education Area and the European Research Area;
1.1.2. The parts of the strategic action plan (analysis of the current situation, priorities and aims, objectives of the activities, implementation means, resources, planned performance indicators) are appropriate and justified;
1.1.3. Regular monitoring of the implementation of the strategic action plan is carried out and the results are used to improve performance management.

20. In 2018, the strategic plan of ISLB for 2012-2018 was prolonged until 2021. The Panel received the new ISLB strategy for 2022-2026 shortly before the online review meetings took place. The vision, mission and values of the College have been reformulated and extended in this new strategy. ISLB' vision is to be "an international higher education institution conducting studies that include sustainability, entrepreneurship and the global worldview". The College's mission in view of its students is "to develop a brave, responsible and creative personality capable of creating changes in an open and sustainable society, to develop applied science focused on the challenges of a sustainable society, and to contribute to the development of lifelong learning while meeting the needs of modern society". Sustainability is added as an important strategic theme. The themes of entrepreneurship, a global worldview and respect for diversity were also present in the previous strategy, albeit under the heading of "graduate statement and attributes". In preparing the strategy, the College has considered the relevant Lithuanian laws, the Strategic Action Plan 2021-2023 of the Ministry of Education, Science and Sports, Lithuania's Progress Strategy "Lithuania 2030", the Standards and Guidelines for Quality assurance in the European Higher Education Are (ESG), Horizon Europe 2021-2027, and the 2030 UN Agenda for Sustainable Development. The Panel was impressed with the forward-looking vision and plans for institutional cooperation of the new shareholder, who is the main driver for the new strategy and direction of the College.

21. The new strategy for 2022-2026 starts with an overview of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT), which is based on the SWOT conducted in preparation for the SER. After the vision, mission, and values outlay, there are five strategic priorities identified regarding the quality and development of studies, applied science, internationality, lifelong learning, and community inclusion. The Panel notes that these strategic priorities are aligned with the mission of the College. However, the strategy does not contain an analysis of how the

strengths and opportunities identified in the SWOT have influenced the choice of these strategic priorities.

22. ISLB has formulated 2 or 3 quantitative indicators for each strategic priority to measure success in 2026. The College elaborates the strategy by specifying for each priority the strategic direction, purpose, tasks and measures that have to be carried out in the coming years. Most of the measures are not quantified and are openly formulated to leave sufficient possibility for adaptations along the way. The Panels' opinion is that this strategic action plan is appropriate and justified in view of its mission. As the College is still defining its niche in the educational market the feasibility of some ambitions is not assured, for example the intention to launch an engineering programme in the absence of qualified staff and suitable infrastructure. The strategic action plan lacks any descriptions of resources, responsible actors and time schedules. It is mentioned in the strategic plan, as was confirmed in the interviews, that "specific actions, implementation periods, measurable results, and responsibilities for the implementation of strategic priorities" will be detailed in the annual action plans. The execution of the new strategy will be aided by the restructuring and rebranding of the College as the current name (including "law") is no longer accurate, and a new beginning under new ownership is considered necessary. The Panel's view is that it is indeed necessary to closely monitor the achievement of the new strategy in the annual action plans since currently there is no evidence of its potential success.

23. It is acknowledged in the SER that due to significant restructures and demographic and policy changes since 2016, it has been difficult to maintain a leading position for the College as was presumed in the Strategy 2012-2018. In fact, the College has shrunk considerably in student and staff numbers in the previous years. The downsizing of ISLB meant that many ambitions set out in the strategy could not be reached, with the notable exception of internationalisation that saw a growth in student numbers. The downsizing, restructuring and subsequent changes in the management of the College made the implementation of the strategy only partially possible and limited the possibilities for monitoring and improvement.

24. The College asserts in the SER that its Quality Management system's Procedure on Management Analysis and Performance Improvement has been followed, which includes the assessment of the implementation of the strategic plan during so-called Management Analysis meetings. These meetings take place twice a year and seem to contribute to the annual actions plans (although these are not mentioned as such in the procedure). The 2020-2021 Action Plan (in the format of one Excel table) includes tasks and indicators assigned to each objective, deadlines for implementation and responsible persons, but has no indications of funding sources. The Panel's view is that the College should make the monitoring process more transparent by publishing the results of these monitoring exercises as well as the annual action plans. The quality of long- and short-term strategic planning could be enhanced when Head of Strategy and Innovation's vacant position is filled.

> **1.2. Effectiveness of process management of the higher education institution:**
>
> *1.2.1. A clear structure for governance, decision-making and distribution of responsibilities is defined;*
> *1.2.2. Regular process management analysis is performed, preconditions for process improvement and risk management are planned;*
> *1.2.3. Stakeholders are involved in the management process at an adequate level.*

25. The Statutes have been renewed in November 2021. According to the Statutes, the supreme body is the Meeting of Shareholders, which appoints the Director as the management body of ISLB. The current Director started in July 2021. The College has no Deputy Directors, although these positions are foreseen in the Statutes. In the second half of 2021, the ownership of this private college shifted to a new, sole shareholder who is also a shareholder of two other higher education institutions in Lithuania. The new shareholder posited that many positive changes for ISLB will ensure following the cooperation within this alliance of three institutions, for instance in the areas of internationalisation, research, and lifelong learning. The Panel had a positive impression of these intended changes but cannot make a statement about the implementation because these were at the time of the review only plans and intentions.

26. The Council of the College is the supervisory body and consists of 11 members. Six members are appointed by the Director on the recommendation of the Meeting of Shareholders; according to the Statutes these persons should represent the areas of research, economy, local government, enterprises, etc. Four members are appointed by the Academic Council and one member is chosen by the students' representative body. The Council members elect their chairperson, who should not be a member of staff or a student. The Director attends the Council meetings in an advisory capacity. The Panel met with three Council members who all had a strong background as a cooperation partner of ISLB, as an employer of the College's graduates or partner in the new institutional alliance. This poses the question of potential conflicts of interest and whether sufficient independent expertise is represented in the Council to fulfil both the supervisory and advisory functions (as mentioned in the Statutes).

27. The Academic Council is composed of 11 members of which the Director appoints 9 members among heads of units and administrative staff. The tenth member should be delegated by the students' representative body, and the eleventh member is the Director. The chairperson is elected by the members of the Academic Council; the Director is prohibited to act as chairperson. Important responsibilities of the Academic Council are the approval and amendments of study programmes and the internal quality assurance system. It should be noted, though, that decisions of the Academic Council shall only enter into force upon approval by the Director (as stated in the Statutes). This set-up makes adherence to the values of self-governance and academic freedom, which are referenced in the Statutes, largely dependent on the goodwill of the Director.

28. The appointment of nine Academic Council members by the Director (and the tenth member being the Director) limits the possibilities for staff members to participate in the Academic Council independently from the Director. The Panel **suggests** ISLB to consider some changes in the governance model so that staff members have the possibility to elect at least some of their representatives in the Academic Council themselves, as this would facilitate the emergence of coherent quality culture and a stronger feeling of ISLB identity among staff.

29. At the mid-management level there are four heads reporting to the Director. The position of Head of Strategy and Innovation was vacant at the time of the review. The position of Head of Study Processes and Quality was recently filled by an experienced consultant who works one day a week for the College. The Head of Research and Applied Activity and the Head of Marketing (who reports to the Head of Strategy and Innovation) are new hires who have been brought in with a view of the new strategy. The fourth manager reporting to the Director is the Head of the International Study Centre (which furthermore consists of a Study Manager and

Erasmus+ Manager) and has been very important for the growth in international student numbers. The Panel is confident that this planned management team represents the competences needed for the College to develop in the direction of the new strategy. The organisational structure is completed by the Information and Data Department (reporting to the Head of Study Processes and Quality), the Finance Department and IT officers (who report to the Director).

30. The Panel concludes that the governance structure as outlined in the Statutes is top-down with a dominant role for the Director but that within this structure, the responsibilities of the decision-making bodies and Councils, as well as the rights and duties of staff and students, are clearly described in the Statutes. However, the top-down structure leaves little leeway for the emergence of an academic, self-governance culture.

31. The College applies the Quality Management System's procedure for management analysis and performance improvement. Aside from the analysis meetings of the management that are conducted twice a year and a brief reference in the procedure to an analysis and discussion of the need for preventive action in these management meetings the Panel has found no evidence of the existence of tools for risk management at the organisational level. The decrease of student numbers and the discontinuation of study programmes show that the needs of the labour market and student demand were not accurately diagnosed and that the risk management system at the organisational level failed. At the level of managing operational risks, the College's response to the pandemic by providing online education through Moodle and video conferencing tools was appropriate and the transition process was smooth in the view of students and staff. This shows that the College has the ability to manage operational risks and make swift changes in their study organisation in times of crisis.

32. Students are represented in the Academic Council and the Study Programme Committees. There is, currently, no student representative in the College Council, although this is foreseen in the Statutes. The Panel heard that the formal student representation does not function well. In past years there have been examples where student representatives felt ignored or even opposed by the management. There has also been a lack of interest from students to act as a student representative and a limited understanding of the value of student participation, for example, confusing it with organising social events for students. The Panel is convinced that student representation is a major improvement area for ISLB.

33. The social partners and alumni that the Panel met had a positive view regarding their relationship with the College. Some alumni have informal contacts with ISLB staff, but this is mostly on an individual basis and not supported by or structured through alumni relations schemes. Social partners were to some extent involved with management processes, e.g. in round table discussions and activities of Study Programme Committees. Such activities are mostly informally and without involvement in developing the new strategy. The stakeholders that the Panel met were, with some exceptions, neither involved in developing the new strategy nor had they read the document. The Panel believes that there is ample opportunity for a wider group of social partners and alumni to be made actively aware of and involved in the strategic and management processes of the College.

1.3. Publicity of information on the performance of the higher education institution and its management effectiveness:

1.3.1. Systematic collection and analysis of the performance data, results (including student employment and graduate career monitoring) is in place, data is used for the improvement of performance of the higher education institution;
1.3.2. Information on the performance of the higher education institution is clear, accurate and accessible to the academic community and the public, and is provided regularly to the founders and members of the legal entity.

34. ISLB has procedures in place for internal and external communication and the management information system. The College uses a computer system to manage the study processes, including student progress monitoring and statistical analysis. Information, timetables and documents regulating the study process are published on the ILSB website, which also provides access to the Moodle learning environment. Urgent information is sent to students and lecturers through the information system or by e-mail. Although the introduction of an electronic data collection and processing system has improved the quality of information, the Panel **suggests** there is still an opportunity for making the management information system more effective with appropriate dashboards for monitoring performance.

35. The main channels of public information about the ISLB's regulations, activities and results are its website and social networks (Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram). Social media, conferences, exhibitions, and advertisements are used as platforms for marketing purposes. Joint marketing events with the two other Lithuanian higher education institutions in the alliance are planned. The scope of information posted on the website is different for the Lithuanian and English language websites. On the former, one can find modest information about the four study programmes, while on the latter one there is more information about the regulations governing the admission and the process of education. ISLB acknowledged during the interviews that the website needs a revision which will be connected to the rebranding of the College.

36. The number of ISLB students has decreased from 979 in 2015-2016 to 684 in 2020-2021; about half of them study in part-time mode. Most students are enrolled in the Business programme, followed by Tourism and Leisure. Data from the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport show that 79 percent of ISLB students in 2020-2021 who were admitted through the national admission system had a score lower than 4.3, the minimum agreed (but not required) score in Lithuania. Usually, the scores of students that enrol through the institutional admission system are even lower. In 2020, 42 per cent of students were admitted to ISLB via their institutional admission system. Despite the claim in the SER that data are analysed and used to manage study programmes and continuous improvement, the College has not provided an analysis of how it is ensured that students with poor academic results receive sufficient support whilst maintaining academic standards.

37. The graduates' employment rates are monitored by the College based on the data of the Employment Service of the Ministry of Social Security and Labour, Vilnius Employment Service and periodic surveys of graduates. Apart from these data, the College also gathers information from alumni based on e-mails exchanges and meetings. The data provided by the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport show that the average employment rate within 12 months after graduation in 2017-2020 in professional levels 1-3 (leaders, (junior) specialists, technicians) is 38 per cent; this compares to 32 per cent for the college with the lowest employment rate and 53 per cent for the college with the highest rate. ISLB itself reports employment rates of about 95 per cent over the last years. However, these figures are based on

registered unemployment after at least 9 months of graduation and exclude alumni who are inactive but not officially registered as unemployed. The data on the status of graduates, including inactivity, which were made available at the request of the Panel show a different picture. In 2016-2019, the employment rate was 79 per cent. In the non-employed group, the low percentage of those undertaking further studies (1.5 per cent) is striking. As the data gathered by the College are not analysed well, the boasting of high employment rates draws a picture that is not very accurate.

38. According to Article 21 of the Statutes, "The School must publish the quality indicators of its activities having regard to results of a self-analysis and external assessment ...research activities, the opinion of students, graduates, and other concerned parties about the quality of studies, assessments of activities of the School". However, the Panel observed that these documents were not placed on the website during the review period, except for the Code of Ethics and the Strategy in summary form. It also became clear to the Panel that there were no analytical reports available apart from what was presented in the SER. Although the statutes mandate the College Council to draw up an annual report of its activities for the Meeting of Shareholders, the Panel heard that such reports were not available. Similarly, the Academic Council stated that it does not regularly report on its activities, although there is meeting with the owner three times a year.

39. The Panel would like to point out that the current lack of transparency in communicating on ISLB activities and analysing these makes it difficult for stakeholders to suggest effective measures for improvement of the College. Therefore, the involvement and advisory potential of stakeholders is not fully exploited.

1.4. *Effectiveness of human resource management:*
1.4.1. Clear and transparent principles and procedures for the formation, management, evaluation of academic and non-academic staff are established and applied;   *1.4.2. The higher education institution has sufficient academic (in-house academic staff) and non-academic staff to meet its operational objectives;*   *1.4.3. The qualifications of the academic and non-academic staff are appropriate for the purposes of the higher education institution;*   *1.4.4. Conditions are created for the academic staff to improve the knowledge and skills required for teaching and research activities;*   *1.4.5. Conditions are created for non-academic staff to develop competencies.*

40. ISLB has procedures in place for the recruitment, selection, evaluation, dismissal, etc., of academic and non-academic staff. These procedures comply with the legal requirements. Lecturers are assessed at the end of each semester based on student questionnaires and a performance-evaluation interview. The Academic Council discusses the summarised results of these assessments. These processes are indeed applied in practice, as was confirmed in the interviews with students, teaching staff, and the Academic Council. If the lecturer is not able to teach well or if the student's results in theses, internships, exam results are consistently low then the contract may not be renewed. Many lecturers have only contracts for one academic year or one semester.

41. The SER states that the demand for new academic staff is considered at the start of each semester. The Panel notes that ISLB does not have a human resources strategy to define staffing

needs for the medium or long-term. Neither is it made clear how the staff appraisal system supports the strategic objectives such as internationalisation and entrepreneurship. Although internationalisation of studies is a priority there are no lecturers from foreign partner higher education institutions employed or operating as visiting lecturers. It was explained in the interviews that the human resources department was terminated due to the restructuring of the College, and that its functions are now combined with finances.

42. Since 2016 the College has been restructured and downsized in view of the decrease in student numbers. Between 2016 and 2020, the number of academic staff decreased faster (over 40 per cent) than the number of students (15 per cent). The ratio between the number of students (683) and the number of lecturers (46) amounts to 15 in 2020. However, the student lecturer's ratio increases to 56 when replacing the number of lecturers (who are nearly all working part-time) with the full-time equivalent number (12.2 in 2020). The Panel finds the deteriorating ratios concerning and heard in the interviews that an increase in academic staff numbers is desirable, although a growth in student numbers is a prerequisite for that according to the management.

43. Seventeen per cent of lecturers (or 8 out of 46) had scientific degrees (PhDs) in 2020. This percentage has decreased from 22 per cent in 2019. Ninety per cent of lecturers have more than three years of experience in their teaching subject. Lecturers typically (37 per cent) have 7 to 9 years of experience in their teaching subject. Most academic staff members fall in the age group of 35-49 years. Two-thirds of all lecturers are female. The Panel is positive about the experience of lecturers as well as their age and gender distribution.

44. The Panel finds it remarkable that only one lecturer works full-time. The overview of academic staff shows that lecturers are working on average at ISLB for less than 0.3 FTE. Sixty per cent of lecturers are working either a half-day (0.1 FTE) or one day (0.2 FTE) per week for ISLB. According to data provided by the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport one-quarter of lecturers work at other higher education institutions. It can be deduced, as was confirmed in the interviews, that most lecturers are practitioners working in a company or are self-employed (working in their own company). According to the SER group, about 90 per cent of lecturers are practitioners and most lecturers work at other colleges or universities as well. The recruitment of teachers from various academic institutions and practitioners with different approaches to the teaching and learning means on the one hand enhancement of the teaching process, but on the other hand, it raises the question to what extent these practices form a coherent system. The staff composition may hamper the steady involvement of part-time lecturers in the processes of quality improvement and their continuous commitment to the development and execution of the strategy. Moreover, the sustainability of such a personnel development system, and its consequences for the quality of teaching, are questionable.

45. The academic qualifications and professional experience formally represented by the teachers meet the minimal requirements enshrined in the Law on Higher Education and Research and the General requirements for the provision of studies. The 2021 data made available to the Panel show that out of the 46 academic staff members, 8 are employed as associate professors and the others hold lecturer positions. There are no researchers or professors, although these positions are mentioned in the Statutes. The low proportion of PhD holders (17 per cent) limits the possibilities to reach the objectives regarding (applied) research. It would be beneficial for

the further development of the College if researchers, as mentioned in the Statutes, would be employed in practice.

46. In the SER it is mentioned that there are 11 non-academic staff members who provide academic support for students (library employees and staff providing health and social support). Most of these staff members work part-time. In 2020 the ratio of student numbers to academic support staff was 62 (again, these are not full-time equivalents). Students value the support that is given to them, and international students would like to see an enlargement of the capacity for student support as the small team has a heavy workload. The Panel heard in the interviews that there is a lecturer who also operates as a psychologist for students and staff. There are 6 support staff employees for IT, housekeeping and reception.

47. ISLB has not provided an overview of qualifications of non-academic staff. The College has no system of how to plan and assess the quality and qualifications of non-academic staff. However, from the interviews with administrative and technical staff the Panel got the impression that non-academic staff are sufficiently qualified; this was confirmed by the positive views of students regarding the support they receive.

48. In 2020 ISLB has implemented the Lecturer Competence Development System for planning, organising and monitoring competence development in accordance with the Ministry's guidelines for improving the competences of lecturers. For example, during the Covid pandemic, special attention has been paid to the improvement of the digital competences of lecturers. As a result of the pandemic, ISLB has made efforts to improve the digital skills of lecturers by hosting trainings, seminars and individual consultations on the use of digital tools. The new incentives scheme for encouraging involvement of lecturers in applied research is also promising according to the Panel.

49. As ISLB has switched from paper to electronic documents, all employees, including non-academic staff, have been trained on how to use the electronic system. The administrative staff has also received training on the use of Google and other virtual conferencing tools.

50. The Panel concludes, based on the provided list of courses and seminars in which a small number of ISLB staff participated in the last three years and the interviews with staff members, that both academic and non-academic staff have opportunities for further development of competences. Although these conditions are created by ISLB on an individual basis, there is no policy in place yet to actively identify training needs, for instance for newly hired staff or staff members who would like to become engaged in internationalisation and would profit from an active policy towards improving intercultural or language skills.

1.5. Efficiency of financial and learning resource management:
1.5.1. Financial resources are planned, allocated and used rationally; *1.5.2. Various financial resources for the implementation of higher education activities are attracted;* *1.5.3. Learning resources for provision of studies and research (art) activities are planned and used rationally;* *1.5.4. Learning resources for conducting studies and research (art) activities are appropriate, sufficient and available.*

51. The Director is responsible for the day-to-day financial management and prepares the annual financial plans that are submitted to the Meetings of Shareholders (as mentioned in the Stateutes). Decisions regarding the capital, reserves and appropriation of profits (including dividends paid to shareholders) are taken by the Meeting of Shareholders (also stated in the Statutes). A system for planning and managing the College's finances has not been presented to the Panel and is the prerogative of the shareholder and Director.

52. The SER includes an annex with a concise overview of income and expenditures over the last three years. The figures covering the period 2016/17-2020/21 show that the total income has decreased over the last three years whilst the expenditure is also less in 2020/21 compared to 2018/19. Nevertheless, there was a budget surplus in each year; in 2020/21, this surplus amounted to nearly 27 per cent of total income.

53. Despite the decrease in staff numbers the expenditure on wages, salaries and social security grew significantly in 2020/21. It was explained to the Panel that the reason for this increase is a change in the social security taxation system in Lithuania. The salaries of lecturers are competitive and include motivational incentives (up to 30 per cent). Expenditure on salaries (63 per cent) and the purchase of goods and services (36 per cent) account for 98% of total expenditure. The remaining expenditure is on fixed assets investments and scholarships (262 euros). In the absence of costs estimates for the strategic objectives, it is not possible for the Panel to assess the financial feasibility of the strategic plan.

54. The College's main source of income (about 88 per cent in 2020/21) is from student tuition fees and, to a small extent (12 per cent), from so-called targeted funds (projects etc.). This means that ISLB is highly dependent on the numbers of enrolled students, which tend to fluctuate and have decreased in the last years. The rise in the number of international students has partially mitigated the loss of domestic students. In 2018-2020, ISLB was one of only two colleges that did not receive state funding for R&D, including Art activities; in 2021, the College received 800 euros, according to additional data provided by SKVC. The Panel concludes that ISLB has had limited success in attracting financial resources other than student tuition fees.

55. The College is to be commended for its flexibility in deferring payment of tuition fees for students who are facing financial difficulties. The Panels heard some examples of students who were grateful for this flexibility as they would not have been able to finish their studies without such payment agreements.

56. The College has not formally adopted plans for the development of the teaching and learning infrastructure. Nevertheless, depending on the current needs, purchases of new equipment and software necessary to support the educational process are made. Over the last years, investments have been made to create a modern infrastructure for hybrid learning which has become especially useful because of remote learning during the pandemic.

57. The Panel did not have the opportunity to visit the premises and facilities of ISLB but got a good impression based on the descriptions in the SER, a video tour and interviews with students, alumni and staff who expressed positive views regarding the facilities. The rented ISLB building in Vilnius features lecture halls, classrooms with computer equipment for group work and tutorials, a library with computerised workstations and a reading hall, a conference hall, and premises for the administration and staff. The library's working hours are flexible and open on Saturdays to accommodate the part-time students. The library includes workplaces for the

disabled. A special elevator and entrance stairs for disabled students have also been installed. The electronic facilities include a virtual learning environment with e-learning resources and virtual lecture rooms (using Moodle). Students and lecturers have access to relevant software and international bibliographic databases. In 2020 ISLB has signed a cooperation agreement with the College of Social Sciences (SMK) so that students and lecturers have the possibility to use common materials and library resources. It was clarified that the College rents specialised laboratories necessary in the Cosmetology major.

58. The Panel concludes that, with the current number of students, the learning facilities are sufficient to ensure an adequate level of quality. Students can evaluate the quality of infrastructure and services provided by the school. The Panel **suggests** establishing a student incubator and/or an accelerator coworking space to support the creation of start-ups and develop entrepreneurial competences.

59. **In summary,** the College went through a period of restructuring and downsizing due to falling student numbers. The main weakness of the strategic planning was the lack of a sufficiently in-depth diagnosis of the conditions in which ISLB functions and a diligent analysis of its own potential. Effective risk management tools are missing. This resulted in the formulation of goals that are inadequate to the resources available as well as failures in the effective execution of plans. The new owner is the main driver for the strategy 2022-2026 that should be implemented by the recently appointed management team. The Panel is hopeful that this team has the competences to ensure the continuity of the College. The organisational structure is top-down with a dominant position for the Director who appoints most members of the Councils and approves their decisions, thereby leaving little leeway for the emergence of an academic, self-governance culture. The involvement of stakeholders, particularly students, in the development of the strategic and management processes is very limited. This limited involvement of stakeholders is also reflected in the lack of documents published by the management and Councils. The composition of the staff group is balanced in terms of experience, age and gender. The high proportion of lecturers who are practitioners is an important asset of ISLB but in combination with the low per centage of PhDs and the absence of funding for R&D, this makes it difficult to fulfil the strategic objectives regarding (applied) research. The fact that, with one exception, all lecturers work part-time (on average 0.3 FTE) hampers the development of a coherent College practice and identity. The financial surpluses, even in years of falling student numbers, are encouraging but the Panel did not find any policies for finances and human resources that would enable mid- and long-term planning for financial and staffing needs in view of the strategic objectives. The teaching and learning infrastructure are well equipped, attentive to the needs of part-time and disabled students, and with significant investments made in electronic learning environments.

60. **Judgment:** the area is meeting the minimum requirements, with drawbacks that must be addressed, and is given two points.

61. **Recommendations for the area:**

1. Improve the strategic planning processes by:

    a) making thorough and continuous analyses of the conditions in which the College operates, including a procedure for the systematic analysis and management of risks, and developing adequate quantitative and qualitative key performance indicators

b) including estimates of the financial investments that are needed to fulfil the strategic objectives

c) raising awareness and involvement of stakeholders at an early stage of strategy formation.

2. The feedback of the different Councils and departments should be clear and in written format so that there is evidence of their contributions to the institutional organisation and structure.

3. To increase the transparency of the College's activities, the systematic publication of information on the processes and their outcomes on the website should be ensured.

4. The management of the College should take action to ensure participation of student representatives in the collegiate bodies including the College Council, strengthen student participation in the management processes, making students aware of the benefits of formal representation, and providing support to student representatives and the Student Union.

5. To develop mid- and long-term human resources policies which are connected to the strategic objectives and aimed at strengthening the research capacity, fostering coherent College practices and identity among part-time lecturers, and attracting creative minds to support the transformation and modernisation of the College.

62. **Good practice examples:**

1. The vigilant response to the pandemic by making smooth transitions to online learning, aided by significant investments in electronic learning environments, appropriate tools, and training for staff.

2. The flexible tuition fees payment system for students who are facing financial difficulties.

3.2. Quality assurance

Quality assurance area is analysed in accordance to the following indicators and criteria, set up in the Methodology.

2.1. Implementation and effectiveness of the internal quality assurance system:
2.1.1. The higher education institution has approved and made publicly available internal quality assurance documents that are consistent with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area; *2.1.2. Internal quality assurance measures of planning, implementation and improvement are appropriate, applied periodically and ensure the involvement of the whole institution and stakeholders;* *2.1.3. Processes for planning, implementation, monitoring, periodic evaluation and development of activities are specified;* *2.1.4. Students and academic and non-academic staff of the institution receive effective support;* *2.1.5. Provisions and procedures for academic integrity, tolerance and non-discrimination, appeal and ethics are specified and applied;* *2. 2.1.6. The results of the external review are used to improve the performance of the higher*

63. ISLB states in the SER that its quality management system covers the management processes, core processes (including study programme development and monitoring, marketing, applied research, lifelong learning etc.), and supporting processes (such as records administration, project management, HR, communication, stakeholder complaints, IT, and infrastructure). The Quality Manual mentions these 21 processes, includes their descriptions and guidelines, and states the general principles and responsibilities for quality assurance. In 2019 the Director has approved the updated Quality Manual. The Head of Study Processes and Quality is responsible for the implementation of the quality management system. The Quality Manual includes an appendix that visualises the sequence of processes and their interaction. The Quality Manual is published on the website. The SER includes an annex that describes for each of the standards of ESG Part 1 how these are implemented in the processes of ISLB. The Panel concludes that ISLB fulfils the requirements regarding the approval and publication of the internal QA documents and its adherence to the ESG.

64. For each of the processes in the Quality Manual their management is described in separate procedures. These procedures provide for the methods of operation and the actions that should be performed by the ISLB staff. Each process has an owner who is a staff member. The Panel heard in the interviews that due to the personnel reductions some staff members are now in charge of several processes. Not all procedures are actively used but these can be activated by the owner of the process if needed. In some meetings with staff members, the Panel noted that it was not clear to staff how the processes are integrated and the system is developed, and who is responsible for what. Changes in the management may have contributed to this confusion and the new management team is too fresh to have sorted this out.

65. As scarce information on the content or implementation of procedures was included in the SER the Panel decided to request an example of a procedure. The Panel examined the procedure VP07 "Study programme preparation and supervision" which was also referred to by ISLB in connection with ESG standard 1.2 (design and approval of programmes). This procedure specifies who is planning and performing the work, who assesses the quality of the work performed and where it is to be registered. The procedure includes a pro forma Programme description and Study plan, and a format for the verification and registration. The process overview is sufficiently detailed but suggests a top-down driven procedure with late-stage involvement of lecturers, students, and social partners and a reliance on minutes of meetings which are not always made in practice (as in the case of the Academic Council).

66. ISLB has previously followed the ISO methodology and was last audited by ISO in 2012. The applied methodology of processes and procedures stems from that experience. As the last ISO audit took place nearly a decade ago, the Panel **suggests** investigating whether the procedures could be updated and their number reduced to increase the coherence and efficiency of the system.

67. According to the SER the College's quality assurance activities are based on the PDCA cycle (activity planning, implementation of activities, evaluation of activity results, improvement of activity results). An important instrument in this cycle is the annual action plan in which the quality of activity planning and implementation is to be evaluated. For this purpose, ISLB uses

the procedure "Methodology for Measuring, Monitoring and Evaluating Performance Indicators". The action plan is discussed by the Academic Council and approved by the Director.

68. The strategy that was valid until 2021 contains many "key performance indicators" which are categorised into impact and output indicators and are often formulated quantitively. The new strategy has a limited set of success criteria with specific indicators to be reached in 2026 for each of the five strategic priorities, followed by a list of tasks and measures to be taken for each priority. This set of criteria, indicators and measures seems much more manageable for guiding the development of the annual action plans.

69. Feedbacks from students, graduates and employers are systematically collected through surveys. Students evaluate their lecturers each semester. In an interview, it was stated that approximately half of the students tend to answer these questionnaires. Thematic student surveys were held in 2020 about the study progress organisation in online mode and the quality of studies. The summarised results of the student evaluations are discussed during the meetings of the Academic Council. In 2020 there was also a survey for teachers regarding the study process organisation in online mode (23 teachers responded) and a survey was held for graduates (55 graduates responded). The Panel examined the samples of surveys it received for graduates, employers, and the 2020 student survey on the quality of studies. The questions in these surveys are appropriate. For the 2020 student survey, the Panel also received a short summary of the results by ISLB. The students evaluated the quality of teaching as good or very good. Especially the virtual study environment and the evaluation of lectures were rated high. The clarity and objectivity of teachers' assessments were rated the lowest.

70. The process descriptions presented in the Quality Manual and SER, and the meetings with management and different stakeholders did not provide evidence for the existence of a holistic overview of the internal quality assurance system and its outcomes. The quality management system is not clearly linked with the surveys system and the PDCA process (which is pictured in the SER but not related to other quality assurance (QA) aspects in the Quality Manual). The Study Programme Committees and teaching staff did not seem to be aware of the link between the PDCA cycle and the study programme development process they are responsible for. Academic and non-academic staff do not receive specific support for handling the quality assurance system, except for the information that is given to them regarding the procedure of which they are an owner. The Panel could not observe an agreed understanding of the quality management system; teachers expressed that without the QA system everything would continue with the same quality. The Panel concludes that the current internal quality assurance system does not foster the engagement of the academic community in building a quality culture.

71. Students can receive academic support from lecturers during their consulting hours, by e-mail or in the virtual learning environment. Students may also approach administrative staff for problems encountered in the study process, questions regarding the preparation for internships or careers, or when they are experiencing financial difficulties. In the latter case, the College points out the different possibilities that exist for state-funded scholarships and support. ISLB funding for scholarships is very limited but its flexibility in tuition fees payment is a good practice. Since the pandemic psychological counselling is provided on a regular basis. There is special psychological support available for disabled students and ISLB staff have participated in a state-funded project for developing specific competences regarding the accessibility of studies. Study managers and heads of study programmes organise consultation meetings with students who

want to terminate their studies and investigate the reasons for dropping out. The most frequently given reason for study termination is financial difficulties. There are also a lot of students who are dropping out because they cannot combine it with their jobs. Some of them, especially the ones who obtained good results in their studies, return to the College after some months or even years. In the interviews, the staff made it clear that they do their utmost to prevent students from dropping out of ISLB.

72. The students that were questioned by the Panel have a positive view of the support they receive from the College. Especially in the time of the pandemic, this was appreciated. Technical support was given and the students who needed to do their internship were supported, and individual solutions were found. Regarding the growing number of international students, it was remarked that the current two staff members do an excellent job but seem overloaded with work and that more staff would be needed for the support. Students feel that they receive sufficient information about their studies from ISLB, especially in the first year of their study, and that lecturers give feedback to students regarding the student evaluations. Students were neither aware nor involved in the strategic plan. They receive some information on the College's activities and plans from student representatives; the Student Union would give information to the elders of the student groups who then inform the whole group. Furthermore, students remarked that sometimes the feedback they receive regarding the grading could be better, the mistakes made by students and the composition of the final score could be better explained. The Panel notes that these remarks from students are aligned with the findings from the 2020 student survey.

73. ISLB applies a Code of Ethics which includes regulations for academic integrity, tolerance and non-discrimination, appeals and ethics. It contains a brief presentation of academic ethical principles and norms, as well as ethics in pedagogical activity including provisions on plagiarism and fraud. Students are informed about this Code, student's rights, complaints and appeals procedures at the beginning of the first year. They need to sign a Declaration of Academic Integrity. The Code states that members of the ISLB community need to report cases that may involve corruption or fraud to the Ethics Committee; no indications are given about the reporting of other breaches of the ethical code. The Ethics Committee is formed by the Director, acting in accordance with provisions approved by the Council.

74. The procedure for settling disputes is regulated in the Statutes. A student may file a complaint to the Director (or a person authorised by the Director) and must receive a reply within 30 days. The student has the right to refer to the Complaints Commission if the reply was not received within 30 days or in case of dissatisfaction with the reply. The Complaints Commission is formed and regulated by the Director; it must include student representatives.

75. The Panel noted in the interviews that there was little awareness among students and staff regarding issues of academic ethics. Students confuse academic ethics and integrity with formal study requirements and study discipline. The student theses that were examined by the Panel did not indicate a clear understanding of academic ethics. Ethical issues do not appear in student surveys. Explaining the ethical code in the first year and signing a statement is not a sufficient guarantee for continuous attention to ethical issues throughout the study. As the composition of both the Ethics and Complaints Committee is determined by the Director this may provide a threshold to submit ethical issues or complaints, especially if these concern the management. The Panel **suggests** that the members of the Ethics and the Complaints Committee will be equally

appointed by the management and staff, and include a student member as well. The continuous awareness of ethical issues and the possibility to file a complaint would benefit if these would be standing committees instead of ad-hoc committees that are only installed when an issue or complaint arises.

76. The College uses training and assessment techniques that discourage plagiarism. Additional measures such as applying electronic identification systems have been taken during the pandemic in accordance with Guidelines for Ensuring Academic Ethics in Distance Education issued by the Lithuanian Office of the Ombudsman or Academic Ethics. This Office did not receive information in 2019-2020 on infringements of the ISLB academic ethics and procedures or complaints regarding the management or administrative units in the field of academic ethics and procedures. However, the Office holds non-disclosed data on infringements in compliance with the Law on Higher Education and Research, or Statutes of the Institution or Institutional Codes of Academic Ethics, or data on administrative proceedings or related issues.

77. The College states that there are no problems with tolerance or discrimination. This was confirmed by the international students who experience ISLB and Vilnius as a welcoming environment.

78. ISLB has established a "Procedure for Appeals and Examination" which is placed on the website. Students can lodge appeals against the assessment of examinations, perceived violations of the procedures for these examinations, the objectivity of the crediting of study results, and compliance with the admission rules. Students can also appeal against perceived breaches of orders in the procedure for taking final examinations or defending final theses, but it is not possible to appeal against the evaluation of final examinations or the defence of final theses. Upon receipt of a complaint, the Director appoints a Board of Appeal consisting of three members. The student has the right to apply to the Complaints Commission when dissatisfied with the decision of the Board of Appeal.

79. The SER reports only one or two appeals regarding the assessment of examinations in each academic year since 2017-2018. In this period there was one appeal regarding violations of examination procedures or contestation of imposed penalties. According to the Academic Council, many potential problems are solved in the interaction between student and lecturer or by contacting the student manager so that a formal appeal is not necessary. Although appeals are archived there is no register and annual report on how appeals and complaints are dealt with.

80. The last external review of ISLB took place in 2012. The evaluation was positive, and the SER includes a table detailing the implementation of recommendations. Most recommendations were addressed in one way or another, although not always following the essence of the recommendation. The principal recommendations of the 2012 review were the prioritisation of the many key performance indicators; a greater clarification of the concept of internationalisation by clearly identifying with which parts of the international community the College wants to engage; the introduction of more systematic benchmarking; and the need to adopt a monitored internal risk register as the systems for the identification and monitoring of internal risks are unclear. The Panel noticed that the strategy applying until 2021 still contained many indicators and no prioritisation of the key performance indicators (this was only taken up in the new strategy 2022-2026). There has been a noteworthy growth in international students since 2012 but there is no clear strategy for international involvement and partnerships. Neither systematic

benchmarking nor an effective risk management system is in place. Although the circumstances have significantly changed and many years elapsed, the essence of the 2012 main recommendations remains valid.

81. The current external evaluation of ISLB shows several shortcomings in the self-analysis as demonstrated in the SER. The Car Business Management programme had to close following a negative accreditation in 2017 and no new programmes were proposed for accreditation. Despite these difficulties, there are no self-critical reflections regarding these problems in the SER. There is much repetition between the text in annexes of the SER and the main text of the SER. The report "Summary of the Activity Report of the International School of Law and for Business 2020-2021" is included as an annex to the SER although much of the text in this report is literally repeated in the main text of the SER. Many statements in the SER are not supported by factual analysis and evidence (that could have been annexed). The Panel had to ask for significant additional information, which was often not translated into English although ISLB portrays itself as an international College. The SWOT is an overview of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats without a clear analysis behind it. The SWOT is unbalanced, lacks self-criticism and realism as there are only three weaknesses identified (and none in quality assurance) against thirteen strengths. The number of threats identified is only half the number of opportunities, although it was acknowledged during the interviews that without the recently started transformation the continuity of the College is not ensured.

82. **In summary,** the implemented policy of quality assurance and improvement is based on formalised processes and procedures. These procedures have been in place for a long time and could be updated and revised, also in view of the new strategy and statutes. There is a system of formal feedback through surveys for students, graduates and employers of which the results are discussed in the Academic Council. *On paper*, this system is part of a PDCA cycle and contributes to the annual action plans. However, in practice, there is a lack of awareness of the system, and what PDCA entails, among the lecturers and stakeholders of ISLB. As a result, the feedback loops are not closed. There is also a lack of awareness regarding academic ethics. The Panel acknowledges the difficulty of establishing a coherent quality culture with part-time lecturers who are working on average less than 0.3 FTE (and some just teaching for one semester or year). There are several loose ends in the formal system, for instance regarding the structural set-up of the committees for ethics, complaints and appeals. Nevertheless, the small size of the College allows for informal feedback through direct contacts between students and staff, enabling solutions before they reach the formal stage of appeals and complaints. The support that students receive is also perceived positively. A major shortcoming is the lack of thorough, self-critical analysis in the SER, SWOT, and reflection on the implementation of previous recommendations which hampers the emergence of a culture of continuous quality improvement.

83. **Judgment:** the area is meeting the minimum requirements, with drawbacks that must be addressed and is given two points.

84. **Recommendations for the area:**

   1) Build a comprehensive and suitable internal quality assurance system that fulfils external requirements, internal needs and strategic aims. Integrate education, research, governance, internationalisation into this system and include a clear distribution of responsibilities.

2) Develop a quality assurance policy with a prominent focus on developing a quality culture with common values and a shared understanding of what quality entails; promote this policy within the College and involve external stakeholders so that everyone regards themselves as co-owners of the quality assurance system.

3) Set-up a proper system for assessment and analysis of ISLB activities, including evidence-based improvements and developments. Explanations for performing these activities should be given, which requires systematic data collection and analysis.

4) Publish information confirming the continuous improvement of quality processes on a regular basis. A Study Guide explaining the processes and procedures important to students would also be useful.

5) Improve the skills and capacity for critical self-assessment, impact analysis and a holistic view on quality assurance.

6) Increase the awareness and understanding of the meaning of academic ethics, and how to integrate this into the everyday study process.

85. **Good practice examples:**

1. The good support and technical, psychological and financial advice that students receive from lecturers and non-academic staff, which is especially appreciated by students in the pandemic situation.

3.3. Studies and research (art)

Studies and research (art) area is analysed in accordance to the following indicators and criteria, set up in the Methodology.

3.1. The level of research (art), compatibility of studies and research (art) and its compliance with the strategic aims of activities:
3.1.1. The study and research (art) activities carried out and their results are consistent with the mission and strategic aims of the higher education institution;   *3.1.2. The level of research (art) activities is sufficient for the ongoing studies of the higher education institution;*   *3.1.3. Studies are based on research (art);*   *3.1.4. Consistent recognition of foreign qualifications, partial studies and prior non-formal and informal learning is performed.*

86. As the ink of the new strategy is barely dry the Panel must base its judgements regarding study and research results in view of the strategy 2012-2021. ISLB has not provided an overview of achievements regarding the many indicators in the strategy 2012-2021. However, based on the information given in the SER, additional documents and interviews it is self-evident that most of these indicators have not been achieved. For example, the decrease in the number of programmes offered from 11 to 5 signals significant difficulties in matching the educational offer to the needs of prospective students and the labour market. The problems with obtaining accreditation of some programmes reflect declining quality in these cases. From the data on the SKVC website, it

appears that most of the evaluated study programmes were rated as average. In six cases scores were given between 10 and 19 (with a maximum of 24), and in four cases between 20 and 22. The strategic objective to "ensure the quality and relevance of curriculum that meet the diverse needs of students and employers" is not fully achieved.

87. The Panel heard from teaching staff and the Academic Council that student-centred learning is applied through a student-focused approach and that all programmes are designed based on learning outcomes. Teaching staff said that courses can be adapted during the year, but it is not clear to the Panel how with constant changes the coherence of the learning outcomes is guaranteed. Problem-based learning and teaching with case studies started five years ago with an international project to develop such competences of teachers. However, student-centred learning is not given much attention in the SER and based on a review of the curriculum and syllabuses of English-language study programmes, the Panel does not find much evidence for the implementation of "innovative teaching and assessment methods", which is another Strategic objective.

88. Apart from basic data on the status of graduates in the labour market, there are no data on the quality of professional careers which would confirm the extent to which the required competences in the "Graduate statement and attributes" section of the strategy are demonstrated in the labour market. On the other hand, the graduates that the Panel met had a positive view regarding their studies at ISLB. The internships, the practising of business and presentation skills, and the opportunity to communicate with students from other countries in the English taught programmes were mentioned as valuable experiences at ISLB.

89. As stated before, when corrected for inactive students the employment rate was 79% in 2016-2019. The fact that 34 per cent of students are offered a job at the organisation where they follow their internship testifies to the usefulness for employers of the practical education and skills gained by ISLB students. This was also confirmed in the Panel's meeting with the social partners.

90. The Panel requested a sample of final theses (selected by ISLB) and examined these. The Panel could not always follow the high scores that were given or the explanation of such high scores was missing. In some cases, the referencing was not accurate. The SER reports that 15 per cent of the final theses were evaluated as very good or excellent. In view of the low average admission score of the Lithuanian students, the lower end average proportion of graduates employed in professional levels 1-3, the heavy emphasis on the practical side of the education and prior problems with the accreditation of some programmes, the Panel has some hesitations regarding the academic end level of the education. However, this can only be thoroughly examined in external reviews for programme accreditation.

91. The discontinuation of the applied scientific research unit and related activities meant that the ambition in the strategy to become a knowledge hub could not be achieved. The College admits that the neglect of research is due to the lack of sufficient human resources. A list with scientific output (publications and conferences) by ISLB staff in the last 5 years was provided. This list includes 11 publications from two researchers who are listed with their affiliation at another higher education institution. In other words, the scientific output may result from their work at another institution. This would explain why in one of the two cases the publications are not related to the fields of study at ISLB. No evidence was provided regarding student

participation in research projects (except for a Tourism and Hotel Business project in cooperation with the Lithuanian Association of People with Disabilities which was cancelled due to the pandemic).

92. The Panel concludes that the scientific output does not provide a minimal basis for the curriculum of the current fields of study. It is questionable whether teachers who do not become acquainted with the latest scientific literature through their research or at least allocate sufficient time to keep abreast with the latest research, are able to transfer the state-of-the-art knowledge into the teaching process.

93. The SER announces the restoration of the importance of research, as well as four new research priorities. However, there is only one such objective included in the latest annual action plan and it is not directly related to these priorities. The plan's objectives in the research sector are equally vaguely defined: "Increase the visibility of RTD activities and dissemination of their results" and "Systematically search for, collect and communicate information on national and international scientific conferences to research staff". The performance measure for this target is "the timely provision of information on conferences". There is no research plan based on the comparative advantages of the ISLB's staff and covering a longer time horizon. The teaching staff explained that most of them are working in a private business or other higher education institutions and that they do not have time to contribute to applied research. Without an increase in the number of researchers, it will be difficult to achieve the newly defined research priorities. Opportunities to revitalize the research agenda, including national and international funding related to collaboration with cross-border partners, have not been exploited. The recent hiring of the Head of Research and Applied Activity, a new bonus scheme to reward lecturers carrying out research activities and the re-establishment of the ISLB Journal of Law and Business are positive steps for the future but do not impact the current review.

94. Foreign general education is evaluated and recognised by SKVC upon request; only students with a SKVC certificate of suitable education are admitted to ISLB. The College has a procedure in place for recognising partial studies. Prospective ISLB students who have a diploma or certificate to prove their part-time or full-time study at another Lithuanian or a foreign higher education institution can request ISLB to recognise their study results corresponding to the content of a specific ISLB study programme. Up to 75 per cent of the content of a study programme can be recognised. The Panel was informed in the interviews that recognition decisions are primarily made based on the description of the course and not according to the achieved learning outcomes. Students must pay the same tuition fee although they might be exempted from a significant part of the programme. About 20 per cent of students in Lithuanian taught programmes and 50 per cent of the students in English taught programmes have their study results recognised according to this procedure. The Study Manager and Head of the International Study Centre carry out these procedures. Teachers are mostly not involved in the recognition. In addition, the small proportion of students who study one or more semesters abroad through an exchange programme can have their study results recognised based on a certificate issued by the partner higher education institution.

95. ISLB also has a procedure for recognition of competences obtained by informal and self-directed learning methods. Students and external listeners who have completed their secondary education and have at least three years of work experience can apply for this procedure in which the main methodology is the assessment of the learning achievement portfolio. There have only

been a few applications per year in three programmes. Some students prefer to sit an exam instead of providing a portfolio. This recognition procedure of prior learning is not actively communicated to students.

96. The Panel concludes that recognition procedures are operational but that improvements could be made in taking recognition decisions based on learning outcomes, involving teachers as the area specialists in recognition procedures, and communicating the possibility of recognition of prior non-formal and informal learning more broadly.

2.2.   *Internationality of studies, research (art):*
3.2.1. The higher education institution has a strategy for internationalisation of research (art) and study activities (including indicators of internationalisation), means for its implementation, and measurements of the effectiveness of these activities are performed (not applicable to colleges unless provided for in its strategic documents);
3.2.2. The higher education institution integrates aspects of internationalisation into the content of studies and research (art) activities.

97. The College has not developed a separate internationalisation strategy, although internationalisation is one of the objectives in the strategy for 2012-2021 and the development of internationality is also a strategic priority in the strategy for 2022-2026. In both strategies, the emphasis is on the growth of international student numbers. The College has been successful in this regard as the number of foreign students has increased from 28 in 2016 to 156 in 2020 (84 in Business Management and 45 in Tourism and Hotel Business). This means that 23 per cent of the student population are international students. In 2020 these students originate mostly from Cameroon, followed by students from Nigeria, Ghana, India, Azerbaijan, and Belarus. The College has no clear policy regarding international diversity although expanding the geographical diversity of students is mentioned in the new strategy. B2 level competence in English is asked for at admission but it was remarked that it is left to the teachers to assess the competence in English. Reasons that were mentioned by international students for studying at ISLB were the international admission procedure and willingness to accept these students, the affordable tuition fee, the programmes on offer and the reputation of the College and Lithuania as a peaceful, safe country. International students report that in their English taught courses there are often a few Lithuanian students in the classroom; these contacts with Lithuanian students are much appreciated. However, the interaction with other Lithuanian students is limited.

98. The SER states that the achievement regarding internationalisation is primarily assessed based on the international mobility results in each semester. According to the SER all students can go abroad for partial studies or internships. Interested students are individually consulted by the Erasmus+ coordinator. The Erasmus+ exchange programme is open to students who are selected after a motivational interview and meet all requirements. The proportion of all ISLB students who depart for partial studies abroad is about 1 per cent on average in the last 5 years, compared to on average 3 per cent of students who follow an internship abroad. The number of arriving students from exchange programmes is mostly comparable to the number of departing students. The Panel views these numbers as low for a college with an outspoken international ambition.

99. Nearly all mobility takes place within the English taught programmes Business Management, and Tourism and Hotel Business. Reasons given for the lack of international mobility in the other programmes include the absence of similar programmes in English (Cosmetology), the incompatibility of programme content (Finance) and the incongruity of combining work with studies abroad.

100. ISLB has made inter-institutional agreements with 64 partner institutions from 18 EU member states plus Iceland, Norway, UK, and Turkey. Although ISLB prides itself on this high number of inter-institutional agreements, the number of available destinations is much higher than the number of students choosing to go abroad. International mobility of ISLB academic and non-academic staff members has been limited (also in the pre-pandemic years), and most have followed trainings abroad; there has been less teaching mobility. There are currently no English language courses organised for teachers. Such courses could be advantageous for promoting international mobility and internationalisation at home but were not popular in the past. No foreign teachers have been employed and the number of visiting lecturers has been too small to make a significant contribution to increasing internationalisation at home. ISLB has not developed prioritised strategic partnerships that would enable larger exchange programmes for students and staff. The SER states that previous joint programmes with partner institutions were not successful and have been cancelled.

101. There is little evidence of deepening the internationalisation of curricula. In the curriculum of one of the English-language programmes classes on intercultural values were included. It is not clear to what extent this practice is also applied in curricula of studies conducted in the Lithuanian language. There is not sufficient proof that students participate in research "through project implementations, applied research, scientific events and international projects" as stated in the SER. Despite the many inter-institutional agreements, the College has not advanced the possibility of benchmarking with comparable foreign partners and does not carry out any joint study programmes or research projects. The Panel **suggests** considering the establishment of an international advisory council for enhanced advising on the internationalisation of studies and research. An additional **suggestion** of the Panel is to establish a Summer School offering specialised courses for international (and Lithuanian) students.

102. **In summary,** research activities and results are virtually non-existent which makes a positive assessment in this area impossible. Restoration of the importance of research is announced and there are some hopeful signs but there is no evidence yet to back this up. The graduates were positive regarding the practical education in their studies and the internships of the programmes are well developed. However, the Panel has some concerns regarding the academic level of the programmes. The absence of researchers and research activities casts doubts on the capability to transfer the latest knowledge into the teaching process. The growth of the international student population is remarkable but the limited international mobility among other students and staff show that internationalisation is still unbalanced. Internationalisation at home and making full use of the presence of international students by creating international classrooms and stimulating the international and intercultural competences of domestic students and staff is not well developed.

103. **Judgment:** the area does not meet the minimum requirements, there are fundamental drawbacks and therefore this area is given one point.

104. **Recommendations for the area:**

1) Develop a long-term research policy focussing on applied research conducted jointly with business partners.

2) Develop applied research through seeking applications for research funding, enabling a larger research capacity and engaging students (through scholarships) in research projects.

3) Hire new staff, specialised in project management, with a scientific background.

4) Offer opportunities for a new career path within doctoral scholarship linked to the business field.

5) Motivate lecturers to engage in applied research and integrate the results of applied research, including the theses outputs, within the curriculum.

6) Use the membership of the new alliance to boost applied research and organise multidisciplinary teams to develop the best solutions for industrial needs.

7) Develop a mechanism for benchmarking the curriculum and ISLB against similar colleges.

8) Increase the geographical diversity of the international student's group to achieve cultural diversity and meaningful internationalisation.

105. **Good practice examples:**

1) The remarkable growth in international student numbers resulted in a high proportion (23 per cent) of international students in the student population.

3.4. Impact on regional and national development

Impact on regional and national development area is analysed in accordance to the following indicators and criteria, set up in the Methodology.

4.1. Effectiveness of the impact on regional and national development:
4.1.1. The higher education institution carries out an analysis of national and (or) regional demands, identifies the needs to be met and foresees the potential impact on national and (or) regional development;
4.1.2. The monitoring, analysis and evaluation of the effectiveness of the measures on national and (or) regional development are performed.

106. Most ISLB students and graduates are based in the Vilnius city and region. There is intensive competition between higher education providers in this region. However, no objectives related to the needs of the region have been formulated in the strategy for 2012-2021 and 2022-2026. There are no references to the regional or city development strategy, for example, the Strategic Action Plan adopted by the city of Vilnius (see: Vilnius Municipality Municipality's Strategic Action Plan for 2020-2022).

107. The strategic planning includes provisions on strengthening cooperation with partners at national and international level, including partners from the business sector. ISLB provided the

Panel at its request with a list of 23 national cooperation partners of the College, including several companies, national associations and two universities. The relevance of ISLB for these partners is not made clear. The College's cooperation with universities, professional associations, and public sector institutions is not framed within a systematic institutional framework, but rather reflects the individual initiatives of ISLB staff members. The cooperation with partners, therefore, seems to reflect random choices instead of being the outcome of a systematic analysis with a view to the realisation of strategic goals.

108. The SER reports that ISLB responded to the goals of Lithuania's Progress Strategy "Lithuania 2030" by undertaking a review of its existing study programmes and making changes in these programmes corresponding to the current trends and needs. However, no information is given on this review, the methodology for making these changes in the programmes or the analysis that provided the foundations for such changes. Neither is it apparent how the College through its education and activities contributes to the key initiatives for change in the smart society, economy and governance as outlined in the Progress Strategy.

109. The SER asserts that ISLB considered the European Commission's initiatives promoting a more competitive, digital, and climate-friendly economy. Again, this assertion is made without presenting an analysis of the changes that this has caused for ISLB's provision, other than the remark that these EU attitudes correlate with ISLB's strategic goals.

110. The College impacts the region primarily as a provider of qualified employees. ISLB states that social partners are involved in the development of study programmes, the updating of its content and the consideration of business innovations and labour market needs. The Panel has met with a small group of social partners and observed that they are indeed involved in this way and making valuable contributions to the development of the College. These social partners are also involved with ISLB as guest lecturers, supervisors of theses or providers of internships for students. In one case the social partner was hired to work on the ISLB strategy. ISLB students are valued for their hands-on approach and the flexible attitude in internships was mentioned to make the internship useful (from the employer's perspective) as the formal requirements of the College are not always considered to be realistic.

111. The SER lists many examples of graduates who work in the region and through their jobs contribute to regional development, as well as examples of international graduates who successfully return to their home country to start their professional careers. In addition, numerous examples of the involvement of staff members in social and regional activities are given. The Panel has noticed in the interviews that graduates and social partners are positive about ISLB's education and appreciates the many examples of graduates finding meaningful and rewarding jobs, and of staff members engaging in the local and regional community. However, the Panel has found no evidence in the documentation or interviews with stakeholders of systematic analyses of regional and national labour market needs and the anticipated effects of changes in the portfolio of study programmes, curricula or applied research. The social partners of ISLB are closely involved with the College and, naturally, they keep an eye on their company's interest as a provider of internships or jobs. There is no industrial advisory board with representatives of both the private and public sectors who have a wider view of the region's needs and how the College can contribute to that. Apart from the employers' survey and their opinions presented as members of Study Programme Committees, there is no institutional platform for collecting information about the needs of the regional labour market.

4.2. Assurance of conditions for lifelong learning:

4.2.1. The higher education institution monitors and analyses the need for lifelong learning;
4.2.2. The higher education institution anticipates the diversity of forms and conditions of lifelong learning and ensures their implementation;
4.2.3. The higher education institution performs the evaluation of assurance of conditions for lifelong learning.

112. The strategy for 2012-2021 includes the objective "to provide innovative, relevant continuous professional development programmes" for which one of the indicators is that new continuous professional development programmes will be launched every year. Obviously, this indicator has not been reached as such new programmes are not provided. It is a legal requirement to conduct lifelong learning programs and ISLB did not offer such studies at the time of the review. ISLB offers no non-degree programmes. The other objective concerning lifelong learning is "to ensure flexible modes and opportunities of life-long learning". One indicator to measure achievement of this objective is "the number of prior learning recognition assessments to increase by 10 per cent year on year". There have only been a few recognition procedures of prior non-formal and informal learning and this option is not widely communicated. The other indicator related to this objective is "the number of distance learners to increase by 10 per cent year on year". This indicator relates to the ISLB's open distance studies which are intended for so-called "listeners" who live abroad or cannot come on campus for other reasons. These studies are organised in an online learning environment. The SER explains that the College has, since 2016, signed agreements with 76 listeners who follow a semester online, of which 46 have received certificates after passing an exam and 14 continued to complete their studies at ISLB and were awarded a professional bachelor's degree. The monitoring of the achievement of this indicator does not seem to feature prominently.

113.In the new strategy for 2022-2026 the development of lifelong learning services is one of the strategic priorities. Developing non-formal programmes, professional development programmes for civil servants, in-service training and retraining programmes for adults are included as measures to be taken in the coming years. The Panel believes that this new strategic priority with the associated measures is promising but also notes that the College starts these lifelong learning endeavours almost from scratch.

114.The Panel has not seen any analyses that underpin the choices made for lifelong learning activities or the lack thereof in previous years. The policy implemented in this area has not been based on clearly defined principles and priorities allowing for an accurate discernment of the needs and aspirations of prospective learners. The main tool for discovering the needs for long life learning are surveys of students, graduates, and employers. However, none of these surveys is directly aimed at collecting such data. In the interviews, social partners advocated offering ISLB programs in management in specific areas (e.g. logistics management), for IT managers (data analysis), and in the area of sustainability (e.g. in production). This may be precious advice but decisions of new provision should be based on broader and thorough analyses of the regional needs.

115.Alumni and students could be another source of information for such analyses. Local students and graduates explained to the Panel that the good location of the College, the opportunity to combine a full-time job with part-time study, the possibility to pass exams

remotely but also the multicultural environment with international students and improving language skills were primary motivations to choose ISLB for their studies. Such motivations could be considered as well when reflecting on lifelong learning options. Graduates made suggestions for ISLB such as creating a platform for sharing the good practices and ideas of graduates, inviting them to hold open lectures, matching entrepreneurs, investors with graduates/students and creating a pitching system for business ideas. However, the College's relations with graduates are now based more on personal contacts than on a well-developed alumni policy with structural alumni relations.

116. The Quality Manual does not include or refer to a process or procedure for analysing lifelong learning. There are some indications in the SER documents that a process for lifelong learning might be planned, which could be expected as the development of lifelong learning services is one of the priorities in the new strategy. For now, the only information the Panel has regarding the evaluation of lifelong learning are the success criteria that are stated for 2026: 10 lifelong learning services/products developed; 15 per cent of participants of the Lifelong Learning Programme continuing their studies at ISLB; 2 certifications of training programmes carried out by foreign accreditation centres. No evaluations of the assurance of conditions for lifelong learning were performed at the time of the review.

117. **In summary,** ISLB cooperates with a group of social partners who are closely involved as providers of internships, employers of graduates or guest lecturers but there is no policy or institutional platform for wider and structured involvement of social partners. Reviews and updates of study programmes are made without thorough analyses of regional and national needs and developments. Graduates are positive about ISLB but not involved in a structural manner. No lifelong learning programs have been provided, except for listeners in distance education who can follow a semester online, possibly leading to a certificate if they take an exam or continue regular study at ISLB. The Panel finds it promising that lifelong learning is one of the strategic priorities in the new strategy. It seems advisable to base decisions on the implementation of lifelong learning courses on well-founded analyses, even if the College has no tradition of carrying out such analyses. Lifelong learning, as a strategic priority, should also become part of the internal quality assurance system.

118. **Judgment:** the area does not meet the minimum requirements, there are fundamental drawbacks and therefore the area is given one point.

119. **Recommendations for the area:**

1) Strengthen the influence of ISLB on regional development through creating an Advisory Council with representatives from the local business, local government and public services.

2) Develop a framework for the monitoring and evaluation of the policy of cooperation with social partners. Establish a system for selecting social partners and associations of employers; make sure that the Vilnius municipality and region are well represented.

3) Establish an effective system with appropriate criteria for the selection of businesses that qualify to provide internships for ISLB students. This system should include an evaluation of student placements based on the satisfaction of the students and their supervisors from the businesses and ISLB staff.

4) Carry out regional and market analyses based on available state and public reports. Analyse the strengths in knowledge and skills of the College that could be tapped on to offer lifelong learning courses.

5) Develop and offer lifelong learning courses for graduates as well for social partners and other companies. Include the evaluation of lifelong learning courses in the internal quality assurance system.

6) Appoint a salesperson to do direct marketing for graduates and social partners, offering lifelong learning services and applied research for the community.

7) Create a liaison office to align the regional entities with the smart specialisation strategies for regional development, and to encourage and support business creation and its connection with an entrepreneurship ecosystem.

8) Build a marketplace for students' ideas and give students the possibility to pitch their business ideas, find possible financiers and collaborators among businesses and entrepreneurs.

9) Create systematic and targeted communication channels with the alumni, including directed services such as additional courses, interesting seminars, possibilities to share their experiences and operate as visiting lecturers.

IV. EXAMPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE

The Panel identifies the following examples of good practice in management, quality assurance and internationalisation:

1) The vigilant response to the pandemic by making smooth transitions to online learning, aided by significant investments in electronic learning environments, appropriate tools and training for staff.

2) The flexible tuition fees payment system for students who are facing financial difficulties.

3) The support and technical, psychological and financial advice that students receive from lecturers and non-academic staff, which is especially appreciated by students in the pandemic situation.

4) The remarkable growth in international student numbers resulted in a high proportion (23 per cent) of international students in the student population.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ENHANCEMENT

The Panel's recommendations for further enhancement to management, quality assurance, studies and research (art) and impact on regional and national development are:

1) Improve the strategic planning processes by:

a) making thorough and continuous analyses of the conditions in which the College operates, including a procedure for the systematic analysis and management of risks;

b) including estimates of the financial investments that are needed to fulfil the strategic objectives;

c) raising awareness and involvement of stakeholders at an early stage of strategy formation.

2) The feedback of the different Councils and departments should be clear and in written format so that there is evidence of their contributions to the institutional organisation and structure.

3) To increase the transparency of the College's activities, the systematic publication of information on the processes and their outcomes on the website should be ensured.

4) The management of the College should take action to strengthen student participation in the management processes, making students aware of the benefits of formal representation, and providing support to student representatives and the Student Union.

5) To develop mid- and long-term human resources policies which are connected to the strategic objectives and aimed at strengthening the research capacity, fostering coherent College practices and identity among part-time lecturers, and attracting creative minds to support the transformation and modernisation of the College.

6) Build a comprehensive and suitable internal quality assurance system that fulfils external requirements, internal needs and strategic aims. Integrate education, research, governance, internationalisation into this system and include a clear distribution of responsibilities.

7) Develop a quality assurance policy with a prominent focus on developing a quality culture with common values and a shared understanding of what quality entails; promote this policy within the College and involve external stakeholders so that everyone regards themselves as co-owners of the quality assurance system.

8) Set-up a proper system for assessment and analysis of ISLB activities, including evidence-based improvements and developments. Explanations for performing these activities should be given, which requires systematic data collection and analysis.

9) Publish information confirming the continuous improvement of quality processes on a regular basis. A Study Guide explaining the processes and procedures important to students would also be useful.

10) Improve the skills and capacity for critical self-assessment, impact analysis and a holistic view on quality assurance.

11) Increase the awareness and understanding of the meaning of academic ethics, and how to integrate this into the everyday study process.

12) Develop a long-term research policy focussing on applied research conducted jointly with business partners.

13) Develop applied research through seeking applications for research funding, enabling a larger research capacity and engaging students (through scholarships) in research projects.

14) Hire new staff, specialised in project management, with a scientific background.

15) Offer opportunities for a new career path within doctoral scholarship linked to the business field.

16) Motivate lecturers to engage in applied research and integrate the results of applied research, including the theses outputs, within the curriculum.

17) Use the membership of the new alliance to boost applied research and organise multidisciplinary teams to develop the best solutions for industrial needs.

18) Develop a mechanism for benchmarking the curriculum and ISLB against similar colleges.

19) Increase the geographical diversity of the international student's group to achieve cultural diversity and meaningful internationalisation.

20) Strengthen the influence of ISLB on regional development through creating an Advisory Council with representatives from the local business, local government and public services.

21) Develop a framework for the monitoring and evaluation of the policy of cooperation with social partners. Establish a system for selecting social partners and associations of employers; make sure that the Vilnius municipality and region are well represented.

22) Establish an effective system with appropriate criteria for the selection of businesses that qualify to provide internships for ISLB students. This system should include an evaluation of student placements based on the satisfaction of the students and their supervisors from the businesses and ISLB staff.

23) Carry out regional and market analyses based on available state and public reports. Analyse the strengths in knowledge and skills of the College that could be tapped on to offer lifelong learning courses.

24) Develop and offer lifelong learning courses for graduates as well as for social partners and other companies. Include the evaluation of lifelong learning courses in the internal quality assurance system.

25) Appoint a salesperson to do direct marketing for graduates and social partners, offering lifelong learning services and applied research for the community.

26) Create a liaison office to align the regional entities with the smart specialisation strategies for regional development, and to encourage and support business creation and its connection with an entrepreneurship ecosystem.

27) Build a marketplace for students' ideas and give students the possibility to pitch their business ideas, find possible financiers and collaborators among businesses and entrepreneurs.

28) Create systematic and targeted communication channels with the alumni, including directed services such as additional courses, interesting seminars, possibilities to share their experiences and operate as visiting lecturers.