



CENTER FOR QUALITY ASSESSMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION



OVERVIEW REPORT FOR DENTAL HYGIENE STUDY FIELD

Year of the evaluation 2020

Prepared by the chairpersons of the expert panels:

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I. INTRODUCTION

This report is based on the external quality evaluation of the *DENTAL HYGIENE* study field in Lithuanian Higher Education Institutions: at ***Klaipeda State College***; at ***Kaunas University of Applied Sciences***, at ***Lithuanian University of Health Sciences***, at ***Panevėžys College***, at ***Utena College***.

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

Comprehensive external evaluation reports including strengths and weaknesses and concluding with some recommendations were prepared for *DENTAL HYGIENE* in each evaluated Higher education institution for first cycle and included evaluation marks. This overview focuses on the main findings of the external evaluation of the *DENTAL HYGIENE* field from a general point of view.

Based on the findings of *DENTAL HYGIENE* evaluation, expert panel have come to a decision to give **positive** evaluation to HEIs: at ***Klaipeda State College***; at ***Kaunas University of Applied Sciences***, at ***Lithuanian University of Health Sciences*** at ***Panevėžys College***, at ***Utena College***.

On the basis of external evaluation report of the study field SKVC takes a decision to accredit study field and cycle either for 7 years or for 3 years. If the field evaluation is negative such study field is not accredited.

II. STUDY FIELD OVERVIEW BY EVALUATION AREAS

Overall observations by the review team regarding the most positive aspects of the study field in Lithuanian HEIs as well as areas in need of improvement. The analysis should cover all 7 evaluation areas.

3.1. STUDY AIMS, OUTCOMES AND CONTENT

The aims and learning outcomes of the programmes correspond to the higher education in Lithuania and approved Lithuanian Medical Norms. The aims of the study field are clearly stated and matched to the learning outcomes focusing on practical activities and the development of applied research. The duration, depth and scope of the programmes is adequate to accomplish the aim and learning outcomes.

The programmes aim to align the subjects to provide a transition from theoretical knowledge to more practical activities. This alignment should be reviewed to ensure the timely delivery of all subjects to facilitate the achievement of the practical learning outcomes as early in the programme as possible. For example, the expert panel recommends the teaching of periodontology should take place earlier in the DH programme curricula at Klaipeda and Kaunas colleges. Likewise, the teaching of Radiology at Utena College was also deemed to be too late in the programme. These changes would help to contextualise the content of the other modules and the clinical skills training.

3.2. LINKS BETWEEN SCIENCE (ART) AND STUDY ACTIVITIES

Clear evidence was found by the expert panel that research is an integral part of the student's study activities, especially as part of the final theses, and research developments are incorporated into teaching.

We recommend that all of the institutions continue to develop their applied research activities, including developing more national and international collaborations, and promote student input into research throughout the curricula, not just in the final theses.

3.3. STUDENT ADMISSION AND SUPPORT

The programmes are in high demand and are increasingly attracting more academically gifted students. It was evident to the expert panel that the students and graduates have a very high regard for the support they received from their teachers. All the institutions inspected provided readily available information regarding admissions and student support on their websites.

We recommend that the requirements for State funding for students to attend programmes be reviewed to increase the numbers of students who are eligible for this support, especially in the regional colleges.

3.4. STUDYING, STUDENT PERFORMANCE AND GRADUATE EMPLOYMENT

The processes used for student admission, academic and pastoral support were found to be appropriate, sufficient and effective.

We recommend that resources be provided to support the development of additional studies in the Dental Hygiene study field in all Colleges and Universities, for students who wish to progress to further studies, to meet the requirements to be admitted to second cycle studies.

There was clear evidence at the expert panel's meetings with the students, alumni, employers and social partners that there is a desire to have master's level DH programmes.

3.5. TEACHING STAFF

The composition of the academic staff complies with the legal requirements. The teachers are engaged, committed and qualified in their area of study.

The expert panel recommends that more Oral Care Study Field staff undertake higher qualifications (i.e. MSc & PhDs) to allow the development of the MSc programmes and research.

If resources are provided to support subject specific teachers to progress to further studies, this would improve the availability of suitable qualified teachers who are highly qualified in their subject specific fields, reducing the reliance on other dental professionals to teach the programmes. This would also provide role models for students and promote the future recruitment of graduates into academia.

3.6. LEARNING FACILITIES AND RESOURCES

The physical, informational, and financial resources provided are sufficient for the existing programmes. However, the expert panel recommends that colleges should be provided with the resources to develop more clinical facilities within their colleges rather than being so reliant on the social partners to deliver the practical training externally. This would ensure consistency of the student experience in terms of clinical teaching, assessment, feedback and the management of a variety of patients with different needs. Such facilities would promote the recruitment of foreign students, either for exchanges or to enrol on full-time programmes, which would further promote internationalisation. These clinical facilities may also provide greater scope for students to be involved in clinical research.

3.7. STUDY QUALITY MANAGEMENT AND PUBLICITY

The internal Quality management and assurance systems used by the institutions are consistent with European and Lithuanian regulations.

In general, participation of stakeholders, graduates and students in these processes requires improvement to allow these groups to have more input into the ongoing development of the programmes to ensure the programmes can adapt to the changes in society/local regional needs. However, it was evident to the expert panel that there are effective long-term close working relationships between the graduates and stakeholders at Klaipeda and Utena colleges.

III. EXAMPLES OF EXCELLENCE

Please give examples of excellence (if any) discovered while conducting the *DENTAL HYGIENE* evaluation.

Core definition: Excellence means exhibiting characteristics that are very good and, implicitly, not achievable by all.

Explanatory context Excellence enshrines one meaning of quality: a traditional view that associates quality with the exceptional.

The expert panel would like to highlight the excellent work carried out by the HEIs and all the staff which enabled the teaching of the programmes to continue during the Covid-19 pandemic. The expert panel recognise the challenges faced in order to adapt to an online/distance learning approach and found several examples of good practice. For example, the collaborative online teaching carried out by Klaipeda and Kaunas Colleges with international institutions.

However, the programmes should reflect upon the changes made during the Covid-19 pandemic and consider, in conjunction with the students, whether some of these changes should be retained long-term. For example, retain and further develop collaborative online teaching between institutions.

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

MAIN STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE IMPROVEMENT IN DENTAL HYGIENE STUDY FIELD

➤ **Strategic recommendations at institutional level (for Higher Education Institutions):**

The expert panel recommends the following:

- *Additional resources be provided to Colleges to strengthen research collaboration with international partners and to support both staff and students to engage and undertake research projects and disseminate their findings.*
- *Additional resources be provided to all of the Colleges to fund the necessary facilities required to increase opportunities to undertake practical treatments on patients in the Colleges.*
- *Follow-up of the quality of employment monitoring. This would allow the recording of the graduate's career progress and success in employment, which helps to determine how the graduates of the programmes are valued by national and international employers. It is also recommended that the data gathered should be used in planning the future needs of study field professionals.*
- *Increase the number of programme staff with higher qualifications, especially PhDs.*
- *Continue to promote internationalisation by increasing staff and student exchanges, particularly into the Lithuanian institutions, and by promoting second language development (e.g. English). Furthermore, promote international research collaborations.*
- *Seek opportunities to further develop interprofessional education/teamwork within institutions.*

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

- *The expert panel recommends the addition of the competency of taking/exposure of dental radiographs into the scope of practice for dental hygienists in Lithuania. This is indicated in the "Common European Curriculum for Dental Hygiene" (EDHF, 2020) in Domain III: Patient-Centred Care, as a recommended learning outcome for dental hygiene programmes.*
- *The expert panel recommends a change in the legislation to allow a greater percentage of the clinical skills training to be undertaken in the Colleges. This would ensure the students master techniques, procedures and therapeutic protocols to a set standard with a balanced number, complexity and type of patients. It would also allow a more consistent assessment of the students.*
- *The expert panel recommends the introduction of legislation to allow Colleges to develop MSc programmes.*