



CENTER FOR QUALITY ASSESSMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION

OVERVIEW REPORT FOR FORESTRY STUDY FIELD

2022 year of the evaluation

Prepared by the chairperson of the expert panel:

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I. INTRODUCTION

The overview is based on the external quality evaluation of the *Forestry* study field in the following Lithuanian Higher Education Institutions (HEIs): *Kauno Miškų ir Aplinkos Inžinerijos Kolegija and Vytautas Magnus University*.

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

Comprehensive external evaluation reports including strengths and weaknesses and concluding with recommendations were prepared separately for first and second cycle field studies and included evaluation marks. This overview focuses on the main findings of the external evaluation of the *Forestry* field from a general point of view.

Based on the findings of the evaluation, expert panel have come to a decision to give **positive** evaluation to the Kaunas Miškų ir Aplinkos Inžinerijos Kolegija first study cycle and Vytautas Magnus University first and second study cycles.

On the basis of external evaluation report of the study field SKVC takes a decision to accredit Kaunas Miškų ir Aplinkos Inžinerijos Kolegija first study cycle and Vytautas Magnus University first and second study cycles for 7 years.

II. STUDY FIELD OVERVIEW BY EVALUATION AREAS

Overall observations by the expert panel regarding the most positive aspects of the study field in Lithuanian HEIs as well as areas in need of improvement. The analysis covers all 7 evaluation areas.

3.1. Intended and achieved learning outcomes and curriculum

Both Kauno Miškų ir Aplinkos Inžinerijos Kolegija (KMAIK) and Vytautas Magnus University (VMU) conduct well renowned and respected forest educations. The curriculums of both entities are well in line with comparable educations outside Lithuania. However, there is a lack of foreign influence in both. We would like to see more scientific references in KMAIK's theses and VMU should provide forest courses in English to attract exchange students from abroad. The VMU should be alert to provide practical skills to students, which has been hampered by the COVID restrictions.

3.2. Links between science (art) and studies

The staff of VMU is publishing scientific reports and are well represented in the international scientific community. The staff of KMAIK regularly take part in conferences, seminars and field days, both domestic and international. However, we wish the applied research of KMAIK would take a step further and intensify their efforts and to publish internationally. Also, we would like to see students involved in these efforts (e.g., as thesis work).

3.3. Student admission and support

For both HEI's a declining number of applicants is the biggest threat for the future. We cannot give any ultimate remedy for this, as it is to some extent an international phenomenon. But

the HEI's should cooperate with the forest sector at large, to turn this downward trend. Forestry must reclaim its place as an important and interesting workplace.

Both entities follow the required admission procedures. However, we would suggest that VMU broadens the intake for 2nd cycle. Now it is required to have a BSc in forestry to gain access, but it may be vitalising for the study programme to have students with different backgrounds. For VMU it also could be of interest to have incoming exchange students. But then it is required to have enough courses in English.

The international mobility of students is low for both educations. It cannot be determined if that is primarily due to that many students have (often full-time) work besides studies or due to a lack of proficiency in English. Both HEIs should give more attention for this important issue.

The student counselling works well in both HEIs but is particularly successful at KMAIK. The students were very happy both with the system and especially with the attitude of the teachers.

3.4. Teaching and learning, student performance and graduate employment

Teachers apply a variety of methods in teaching and in assessing students' performance.

The HEIs have a good documentary and infrastructural basis for accommodating the needs of vulnerable groups and students with special needs, monitoring of the study progress, ensuring academic integrity and handling appeals. There is a high rate of employability of graduates.

A question for both HEIs to consider is why a large proportion of graduates take jobs outside of forestry.

3.5. Teaching staff

The teaching staff of both HEIs are well educated with many PhDs. For KMAIK, some of the more practical oriented teachers have long practical experience. The students were very positive to the dedication of the teachers.

In VMU there may be too much formalism, and in KMAIK there is a lack of scientific activity amongst the staff.

3.6. Learning facilities and resources

Both HEIs have very good facilities and equipment for the most part. The wood processing is a field where both HEIs now could take a step forward, as the only education (at Kaunas University of Technology) had been closed. Furthermore, the share of Non-industrial Private Forest owners is substantial in Lithuania, but neither HEI has an exercise/demonstration area for this purpose.

3.7. Study quality management and public information

The internal study quality assurance systems for both HEIs are adequate and efficient: it is based on regular monitoring, feedback, and publicity. The involvement of stakeholders (students, teachers, employers) in the improvement of the study process is good. The collaboration with social partners and involvement of employers in the development of study programme is very good. However, publication of information on summarised results of stakeholder's surveys and its public availability are insufficient at VMU.

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

MAIN STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE IMPROVEMENT IN FORESTRY STUDY FIELD

- **Strategic recommendations for the Higher Education Institutions (at institutional level):**
 1. Increase the international cooperation, both scientifically and educationally.
 2. Increase the presence of English language in the teaching. Make sure students read scientific literature, encourage international mobility, and open more for foreign exchange students.

- **Strategic recommendations for the Ministry of Education and Science and Sport (at national level):**
 1. Support the HEIs to promote the educations to attract more applicants. Lithuania will need foresters also in the future. This is not an issue just for the HEIs but for the whole forestry sector.
 2. Support the HEIs to be able to increase their international cooperation, especially with students' mobility and influx of foreign students to Lithuania.
 3. The HEIs in forestry are well running facilities, with dedicated personnel and motivated students. We have pointed out some issues where there can be improvement, but as a whole, we are very positive about the forestry educations at both HEIs.

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