STUDIJŲ KOKYBĖS VERTINIMO CENTRAS
CENTRE FOR QUALITY ASSESSMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION

COSMETOLOGY FIELD OF STUDY

UTENOS KOLEGIJA

EXTERNAL EVALUATION REPORT

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I. INTRODUCTION

1.1. OUTLINE OF THE EVALUATION PROCESS

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

1.2. REVIEW PANEL

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

The composition of the review panel was as follows:

1. Panel chair: Prof. dr. Katarzyna Pytkowska, Head and owner of the consulting company “Katarzyna Pytkowska”, former Vice-Rector for Research at the Warsaw School of Engineering and Health (WSIiZ), expert of the Polish Accreditation Committee (Poland);
2. Academic member: dr. Ivana Pantelić, Associate Professor at the Department of Pharmaceutical Technology and Cosmetology, Faculty of Pharmacy, University of Belgrade, (Serbia)
3. Academic member: dr. Marta Klimczyk-Caryk, Associate Professor at the Lodz University of Business and Health Sciences (WSBiNoŻ Łódź), Associate Professor at the Warsaw Higher Vocational School of Cosmetics and Health Care (WSZKIPZ) (Poland);
4. Social partner representative: Julija Vaitkevičiūtė, Sales Manager at UAB “Optimum Derma Aciditate” (Lithuania);
5. Student representative: Dovilas Dicevičius, Graduate of the integrated study program in Medicine at Vilnius University, first-year resident (Lithuania).

1.3. SITE VISIT

The site visit was organised on 20th April 2026 onsite.

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

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

A professional translator was present in all the meetings except the meeting with students.

1.4. BACKGROUND OF THE REVIEW

Overview of the HEI

Utenos kolegija HEI is a state College (hereinafter UK, HEI or College) situated in the Eastern Highlands region of Lithuania. The UK was established in 2000, during the reorganisation of the Utena Higher Medical and Business Schools. The Statute of UK was approved in 2012 and updated in 2020. The governing bodies of the UK are: the Board (consisting of 9 members, including 1 student representative, 4 members of the academic (staff) community, 4 non-staff members); the Academic Board (consisting of 9 members, including 6 teachers (2 of whom are associate professors or higher), 2 student representatives, and the Director) and the one-person governing body – the Director. Students' interests are represented by the Students' Representation, which is composed of students elected by the General Students' Assembly. An institutional evaluation of UK was carried out in 2021, when it obtained a 7-year accreditation.

The organisational structure of the UK comprises two faculties (Faculty of Medicine (FM) and Faculty of Business and Technology), including 5 departments. Each faculty is managed by a Faculty Board and a Dean. The FM has 2 Departments, and the Cosmetology Study Field programme is a part of the Department of Rehabilitation and Social Welfare.

Overview of the study field

UK implements 18 study programmes from 8 groups of study fields: Informatics, Engineering, Health Sciences, Social Sciences, Technology, Law, Business and Public Management, Agricultural Sciences. The FM offers 7 programmes in the Health and Social Sciences study field groups. The evaluated Cosmetology study field belongs to the Health Sciences study field group. The Cosmetology program was implemented in 2010.

The mission of the UK is to train specialists with higher College education, conducting applied scientific research, developing lifelong learning and creating value on a regional, national and international scale. The strategic goals of the UK for 2025–2030 are: to conduct studies based on innovation, academic professionalism, and partnerships between science and business; to develop innovative scientific research and experimental development, addressing relevant regional, national and international issues; to develop the social responsibility of the UK community by contributing to the sustainable development of the region, the country and the welfare of society.

The UK has more than 230 agreements with social partners (mainly regional and national), and actively participates in the international higher education area in order to improve study contents and teaching approaches. Academic mobility schemes are mainly oriented towards Latvia, Poland, Estonia and Spain. The UK organizes approximately 50 events per year, striving for a strong social effect, focusing on community needs.

Previous external evaluations

The Cosmetology study programme has been systematically updated since 2010: a new version was approved in 2011, a new state code was assigned in 2016, and subsequent changes in 2022 and 2024 demonstrate the improvement of the study programme and its response to external evaluation recommendations and labour market needs. Among other, previous evaluations recommended that the study programme outcomes for the development of general competences should be better formulated; a lack of consistency in the layout and content of subjects in the study plan was noted; international student mobility should be more developed; students should be encouraged to participate more actively in scientific activities; development of a system for the

assessment and recognition of students' informal and self-directed learning achievements should be completed; international mobility of teachers should be promoted; unclear distribution of responsibilities between the study programme coordinator and the study programme committee was noted.

Documents and information used in the review

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

• Self-evaluation report and its annexes;

• Final theses;

• Protocol of the Cosmetology Study Programme Committee meeting;

• Beauty Services Administration and Digital Technologies.

Additional sources of information used by the review panel:

https://www.utenos-kolegija.lt/en/studies-program/cosmetology.

II. STUDY PROGRAMMES IN THE FIELD

First cycle/LTQF 6

Title of the study programme	**Cosmetology**
State code	6531GX028
Type of study (College/university)	College studies
Study cycle	First cycle
Mode of study (full time/part time) and nominal duration (in years)	Full-time, three years, part-time study four years
Workload in ECTS	180
Award (degree and/or professional qualification)	Professional Bachelor in Health Sciences
Language of instruction	Lithuanian
Admission requirements	Not lower than secondary education, learning outcomes no lower than the minimum indicators approved by the Minister of Education, Science, and Sports of the Republic of Lithuania.
First registration date	10-07-2010
Comments (including remarks on joint or interdisciplinary nature of the programme, mode of provision)	

III. ASSESSMENT IN POINTS BY CYCLE AND EVALUATION AREAS

The **first cycle** of the *Cosmetology* field of study is given a **positive** evaluation.

No.	Evaluation Area	Evaluation points[1*]
1.	Study aims, learning outcomes and curriculum	3
2.	Links between scientific (or artistic) research and higher education	3
3.	Student admission and support	4
4.	Teaching and learning, student assessment, and graduate employment	3
5.	Teaching staff	3
6.	Learning facilities and resources	3
7.	Quality assurance and public information	3
	Total:	22

1*

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

IV. STUDY FIELD ANALYSIS

AREA 1: STUDY AIMS, LEARNING OUTCOMES AND CURRICULUM

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

FACTUAL SITUATION

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

The Cosmetology study programme is generally aligned with labour market needs, particularly in preparing specialists for the beauty and personal care sector. The curriculum includes a wide range of subjects such as anatomy, dermatology-related topics, cosmetic procedures, and client service, which support the development of practical and professional competences required in real work environments.

The learning outcomes reflect key skills needed in practice, including performing procedures, ensuring hygiene and safety, and communicating with clients. The strong emphasis on practical training further supports students' readiness for employment and corresponds to labour market expectations. Also, learning outcomes resonate with the relevant legal regulations and requirements. Moreover, the programme is being updated in light of timely feedback from employers, students, alumni and relevant associations. An improvement of the programme was proactively detected during a meeting with social partners: while alumni shared, they did not get enough expertise and skills to enter the labour market as entrepreneurs, current students claimed they are ready to kick start their careers.

However, the report provides limited explicit evidence of labour market analysis or statistical data supporting the demand for cosmetology specialists. Regarding the College's focus on the ageing population, the SER identifies the need for professional cosmetologists with scientifically grounded knowledge capable of managing age-related skin histology and chronic conditions. The programme integrates these needs through specific subjects such as 'Cytology and skin histology' and 'Dermatology and Venereology', which provide the theoretical basis for treating mature skin. However, a more detailed statistical analysis of regional demographic shifts would further validate the long-term sustainability of this strategic orientation.

Overall, the programme is well oriented towards professional practice, while a more evidence-based justification of labour market needs and clearer positioning within the field would further strengthen the alignment.

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

The Cosmetology study programme aligns with the HEI's mission, particularly through its focus on practice-oriented studies and preparation of specialists for the beauty and health sector. The study plan demonstrates a clear balance between theoretical knowledge and practical skills, including biomedical subjects and applied cosmetology.

Learning outcomes are relevant and cover key competencies such as understanding of human biology, application of cosmetic procedures, and client consultation. The study results matrix shows

a structured link between programme outcomes, study subjects, and competences, indicating a coherent and well-planned study process.

The alignment of the programme with the HEI's mission is specifically evidenced by the integration of subjects such as 'Beauty Services Administration and Digital Technologies' and 'Entrepreneurship and Mobile Services'. These modules are instrumental in fulfilling the institutional mission of training practice-oriented specialists capable of independent business organization in the beauty sector. Additionally students participate in voluntary activities providing specialized beauty services to community members with special needs, which allows them to apply their skills in a real-world social context and reinforces the institution's commitment to community welfare.

However, as College declares focus on innovations and innovative scientific research as well as social responsibility as their strategic goals, cosmetology programme could further be strengthened by these specific areas to more smoothly align with the strategy.

Overall, the programme is well aligned with institutional mission and goals, with some potential to further strengthen the clarity of its strategic positioning.

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 1.1.)

Cosmetology study programme is generally well aligned with labour market needs and the HEI's mission, as it prepares practice-oriented specialists for the beauty and personal care sector. Its learning outcomes cover relevant professional competences, including practical procedures, hygiene and safety, client communication, biomedical knowledge, entrepreneurship and service management. The programme is also regularly updated based on feedback from employers, students, alumni and social partners, thereby strengthening its relevance. While the programme effectively prepares specialists for the labour market, its uniqueness lies in being the sole provider of such training in the Lithuanian Eastern Highlands region, thus filling a geographic gap in higher education. Nevertheless, it is a minor shortcoming that the SER does not sufficiently highlight how the programme differentiates itself from other national providers through its specific emphasis on e-learning accessibility and strong regional business partnerships. The alignment would be stronger if the report included clearer labour market evidence and more explicit links to the HEI's strategic priorities such as innovation and research.

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

FACTUAL SITUATION

1.2.1. Programmes comply with legal requirements

The Cosmetology study programme at Utenos kolegija (UK / HEI) fully complies with the applicable legal framework governing higher education in the Republic of Lithuania, including the Law on Higher Education and Research. The detailed study plans for both full-time (3 years) and part-time (4 years) modes are provided in Annex 1 of the SER. The curriculum is structured with a total workload of 180 ECTS credits (4,800 hours), distributed according to statutory requirements: 150 ECTS for field-specific subjects (meeting the minimum 120 ECTS threshold), 21 ECTS for general College subjects, and 9 ECTS for electives.

Legal compliance is further substantiated by the strong practical orientation of the programme: practical training accounts for 35.7% (1,712 hours) of the total workload, exceeding the mandatory one-third requirement for collegiate studies. Additionally, the final thesis is awarded 12 ECTS credits, which complies with the minimum 9 ECTS requirement for the first cycle of College studies. The programme also meets staff qualification regulations, as 16% of the field subjects are delivered by doctoral degree holders (exceeding the 10% legal threshold) and 100% of the staff possess the required minimum of three years of professional practical experience.

The programme's aim is to train cosmetology specialists capable of providing high-quality, evidence-based face and body care services, which is consistent with the requirements for a Professional Bachelor in Health Sciences (LTQF Level 6). The intended learning outcomes are comprehensively divided into five categories: knowledge and its application, research skills, special skills, social skills, and personal skills, all of which align with the Descriptor of Study Cycles.

The curriculum design ensures the sufficiency of the programme through a logical progression based on Miller's competency pyramid and Bloom's taxonomy. The first year focuses on fundamental biomedical knowledge (Anatomy, Physiology, Skin Histology), the second year on intermediate applied modules (Apparatus Procedures, Facial/Body Care), and the third year on professional integration and internships. This sequential structure, combined with a transparent cumulative assessment system (10-point scale), effectively ensures that students achieve the intended professional competencies.

The allocation of study credits is strictly based on the intended learning outcomes and calculated student workload. Following national standards, one academic year corresponds to 60 ECTS credits (1,600 hours) for full-time studies and 45 ECTS credits (1,200 hours) for part-time studies, where 1 ECTS equals 26.67 hours of work.

The composition of credits is subject to a systematic review cycle involving the Study Programme Committee (SPC), social partners, and student feedback. A fundamental review was conducted in 2024, which led to the consolidation of subjects and an increase in credits for core professional skills, such as face and body care procedures and mobile cosmetology services, to better align the workload with current labour market demands. Workload distribution ensures that contact work does not exceed 35% of the total programme volume, while independent study is systematically supported via the Moodle platform.

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

The teaching and learning methods employed in the Cosmetology programme are generally well aligned with the stated programme aims and learning outcomes. The programme applies a student-centred, practice-oriented philosophy, with a particular emphasis on experiential learning and competence development through direct engagement with professional procedures and equipment. The curriculum integrates a broad and professionally relevant range of cosmetological disciplines, including anatomy, dermatology-related topics, phytotherapy, aesthetic and care procedures, and treatment apparatus such as radiofrequency (RF), vacuum, electrophoresis, galvanisation, peeling, lipodrainage, and roller devices. The selection of teaching methods – spanning lectures, seminars, practical laboratory sessions, and supervised professional internships – is consistent with the intended competence profile of a Professional Bachelor in Health Sciences.
Assessment methods are transparent and consistently applied. Course requirements, assessment criteria, and grading procedures are communicated to students at the start of each subject. Academic staff have access to the Scopus scientific database, which supports evidence-based curriculum content and alignment with current developments in the fields of cosmetology and health sciences. The Moodle Virtual Learning Environment provides students with structured access to study

materials, task descriptions, and consultation schedules, ensuring consistency and accessibility in the learning process.
During the site visit, both teaching staff and students confirmed a generally positive assessment of the coherence between the programme's theoretical foundations and practical components. Alumni confirmed that the competences developed during the programme were directly applicable in professional settings, particularly in hands-on procedural skills.

1.2.3. Curriculum ensures consistent development of student competences

The curriculum of the Cosmetology programme is structured to ensure the progressive and coherent development of student competences across the three-year study period. The sequencing of subjects moves logically from foundational biomedical disciplines (anatomy, physiology, pathology, dermatology) in the first year, through intermediate applied cosmetology modules (cosmetic facial care, equipment-based treatments, body care) in the second year, to advanced practical integration and professional internship in the third year. This sequential design reflects an understanding of the need for cumulative competence-building and is consistent with the field's requirements.
The practical component of the Cosmetology study programme at Utenos kolegija comprises 1,712 hours. This represents 35.7% of the total student workload envisaged in the programme, which amounts to 4,800 hours in total. This figure includes various forms of practical learning activities, such as practical classes, seminars, and professional internships/placements.

As previously mentioned, the curriculum ensures that students develop procedural competences through repeated supervised practice. Students are trained in a wide range of contemporary cosmetological techniques, including those utilising radiofrequency, vacuum, electrophoresis, galvanisation, peeling, lipodraining, and roller technologies, as well as phytotherapy-based approaches.
The programme is further enriched through engagement with industry professionals, including visits from practitioners and brand representatives who participate in practical teaching sessions. This approach ensures that the curriculum reflects current market standards and provides students with exposure to the full range of products and techniques encountered in professional practice. The institution's international partnerships – including Poland, Latvia, Estonia and Spain – further contribute to the breadth and currency of the programme's content.
The student government and scientific club, both operating under faculty supervision, provide additional opportunities for students to develop research, organisational, and collaborative competences beyond the formal curriculum.

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

Students in the Cosmetology programme at Utenos kolegija have access to a number of mechanisms that support the personalisation of their learning experience. The programme provides flexibility through elective course options and the possibility of individual study plans, which can be adapted to the student's specific circumstances, professional aspirations, or academic needs.
The institution's scientific club and student government provide structured platforms for students to pursue interests beyond the compulsory curriculum, including research, community engagement, and professional networking. During the review period, students participated in organised volunteering activities (notably providing cosmetology services to persons with disabilities), which enabled them to develop professional skills and a sense of social responsibility in an authentic practice context.

The KCRD support mechanism provides students with the opportunity to address academic shortfalls through direct re-engagement with the responsible teacher, thereby reducing the risk of falling irreversibly behind in the study programme and ensuring that students who encounter difficulties retain a meaningful path to completion. The programme also offers study in both full-time and part-time modes, which broadens accessibility for students with different personal and professional circumstances.

The Cosmetology study programme provides students with structured opportunities to personalise their learning paths through the allocation of 9 ECTS credits for elective courses, also referred to as Freely Chosen Subjects (FCS). These courses are specifically designed to develop general skills. While the study plan (Annex 1) refers to these entries generically as "1st, 2nd, and 3rd elective course", students select specific subjects from a university-wide list maintained by the College. This list is reviewed annually, assessed for popularity among students, and adjusted as necessary to ensure its relevance.

The institution also provides robust mechanisms for the individualisation of the study process. During the evaluation period, individual study plans were drawn up for 12 students. These plans are typically granted to address special needs, illnesses, or to compensate for study differences following a transfer from another institution or form of study. Furthermore, 7 students were granted flexible assessment schedules, which are available to those unable to attend regular lectures due to objective reasons, such as having children under the age of three, being on maternity leave, or managing chronic illnesses. Students further personalise their studies by choosing specific topics for their independent assignments and final theses, as well as selecting internship placements that align with their professional interests.

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

The final thesis (FT) in the Cosmetology study programme is a culminating assessment activity worth 12 ECTS credits. The preparation process is governed by institutional procedures and methodological guidelines available to students via the Moodle VLE. The research and preparation phase begins in October of the final year of study, with students coordinating their planned empirical research with the institutions where they perform their final internships.
The analysis of prepared theses demonstrates that topics are strongly aligned with the cosmetology field of study. During the assessment period, 84 theses were defended, grouped into areas such as the effectiveness of facial and body care procedures, assessment of cosmetic and apparatus effects (e.g., LLLT, micro-needling), and social aspects of the profession. Notably, 86% of the topics are relevant to the regional or national socio-economic needs.
The assessment process includes a mandatory plagiarism check using the Turnitin tool in the Moodle environment, as well as the eLABa system. A thesis is only allowed for public defence if no plagiarism is detected. The Final Thesis Assessment Committee consists of 5 members appointed by the Director, at least three of whom must be cosmetology specialists. To ensure objectivity, the committee includes lecturers from other institutions and social partners.
The assessment grades for the evaluation period show a high level of achievement, with the following average scores: 2024/2025 - average grade 8.1.; 2023/2024 - average grade 8.6.; 2022/2023 - average grade 8.0.

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 1.2.)

The expert panel concludes that the Cosmetology study programme at Utenos kolegija demonstrates full compliance with the Lithuanian legal framework, including the total workload of 180 ECTS and

staff qualification requirements, where 16% of field-specific subjects are delivered by doctoral degree holders. A significant strength of the programme is its high practical orientation, with practical training accounting for 35.7% (1,712 hours) of the total workload, which exceeds the mandatory one-third requirement for collegiate studies. The curriculum design is based on a logical progression of competences utilizing Bloom's taxonomy and Miller's pyramid, ensuring a coherent transition from fundamental biomedical knowledge in the first year to independent professional practice and internships by the third year.

The teaching and assessment methods are generally well-aligned with the programme aims, utilizing a student-centred, experiential philosophy supported by the mature use of the Moodle VLE. The panel particularly commends the KCRD support mechanism, which represents a proactive institutional approach to managing student academic progress and ensuring retention. Furthermore, the final theses show a strong professional alignment, with 86% of topics addressing real-world regional or national socio-economic needs and maintaining high achievement levels with average grades between 8.0 and 8.6.

There are no major weaknesses identified in the curriculum design or legal compliance. Nevertheless, the panel identifies a need for further strengthening of the already implemented procedure for selecting and approving final thesis topics, preferably through a separate, formalized mentoring scheme.

Additionally, a minor shortcoming is observed regarding the personalisation of studies. While the allocation of 9 ECTS for electives meets national standards and 12 students benefited from individual study plans, the presentation of elective courses in the study plan remains abstract. Because they are not explicitly listed by name within the cosmetology documentation and students are not provided with guidance on which courses from the university-wide elective list are best suited to the professional and personal development of a cosmetologist, it is difficult for students to plan individualized professional profiles effectively in advance.

AREA 1: CONCLUSIONS

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

COMMENDATIONS

1. Active engagement with industry practitioners, including regular visits by professionals and brand representatives, which ensures that the curriculum reflects current market standards and provides students with authentic professional exposure.

2. The institution's KCRD support mechanism reflects a proactive and formalised approach to student progression, ensuring that all students have a structured opportunity to address academic shortfalls and complete their studies.

3. Broad international partnerships contribute meaningfully to the programme's content, methodology, and student development, reflecting a genuine commitment to internationalisation in practice.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To address shortcomings

1. Strengthen future self-evaluation reports by incorporating statistical evidence and demographic analysis (e.g., regarding the ageing population in the region) to move beyond descriptive justifications of the programme's alignment with regional societal needs.

For further improvement

1. More explicitly articulate the links between the cosmetology programme's content and the institution's stated strategic priorities of innovation, evidence-based research, and social responsibility in future revisions of the self-evaluation report.

2. Consider introducing a structured mentoring scheme to support students in the early stages of thesis topic identification and research design, building on the existing culture of staff accessibility.

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

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

FACTUAL SITUATION

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

During the evaluated period, Research and Experimental Development (R&ED) activities were planned and carried out in accordance with the HEI strategic documents (the most recent document covers these activities until 2030). Additionally, the annual evaluations of scientific activity show a growth in R&ED results, with the weighted sum of points for scientific works of 59.28 (in 2022), 96.83 (2023) and 162.92 points (2024). The results are partially due to the obtained state funding (in total **410,000** EUR). The outreach of the scientific results is quantifiable through the publication databases. The HEI's teaching staff mainly publishes in the peer-reviewed scientific publication Įžvalgos/Insights. Also, the Faculty of Medicine (FM) is the organizer of an international scientific-practical conference in the research field close to the aims and scopes of the evaluated study programme.
In 2025, a pilot expert evaluation of applied research and experimental development was conducted. It has provided external confirmation of the level of scientific activity, rating the quality, economic, social impact and viability of applied R&ED activities with the score 3 (good). These and other results on R&ED parameters (including the existing regional projects and consulting activities) are summarised annually by the HEI. Such annual activity reports are published on the HEI's website.
In the evaluation period, the HEI has modified the title of the thematic direction from "Application of cosmetological procedures and measures" to "Research on Cosmetology Innovations and Beauty Service Safety", emphasizing its mission towards research- and evidence-based education. Whenever applicable, lecturers' research expertise in other areas (such as social sciences, education, nursing, etc.), is implemented within the study process. Teaching staff is additionally supported to conduct research through workload adjustment and salary variables. Namely, the workload (with R&ED) of a full-time lecturer is 1500 hours/year, but for lecturers holding a scientific degree, contact work accounts for up to 50%. The work allocated to scientific activity is differentiated

according to position (professor, associate professor, assistant – no less than 50%; senior lecturer, lecturer, junior assistant – no less than 25%). Scientific activity is timely, annually planned.
The link between scientific activity and the cosmetology field of study is substantiated by the provided examples of the past (publications in journals, oral/poster presentations in conferences, thesis, projects) and ongoing research. However, the annual number of KPIs demonstrating scientific activity is not consistent (e.g., the number of scientific articles and thesis varied from 4 in 2025 to 25 in 2023). Nevertheless, the cooperation with external partners (e.g. guest lecturers, international outgoing programmes) has strengthened both scientific and teaching competences.
The plans for further scientific activities are founded on the adopted R&ED strengthening strategy for 2024–2029. The KPIs mentioned in the strategy are publications and international dissemination of scientific results. Areas of interest are clear and relevant for the improvement of the study program: assessment of the efficacy and safety of cosmetic procedures; analysis of infection risks and prevention measures thereof; assessment of innovative technologies in cosmetology; occupational health, burnout and other working environment risks of beauty specialists. During the site visit, the HEI representatives highlighted that the aging population will be another topic of interest. However, new research equipment would need to be purchased in order for this strategic plan to be fulfilled.
The UK states that the plan of scientific activities is based on a mixed financing model, meaning that it combines state budget allocations for applied scientific activities, project-based (inter)national funds, as well as institutional funds (from the services/consulting activities HEI provides). The UK is advised to allocate suitable funds for supporting contemporary research activities, both in terms of infrastructure (e.g. suitable laboratories and/or climate-controlled rooms) and research resources (research equipment and consumables).

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

The content of the subjects studied is updated whenever applicable, especially in response to technological changes in the field and relevant safety requirements. The study programme is revised based on the analysis of the professional field and the labour market. Introduction of novel methodologies/procedures (e.g. low level laser therapy (LLLT), radio frequencies, ultrasound) and technological solutions (exosomes, bioactives, cold plasma technologies) is evidence-based. Also, safe and rational use of the selected methods was taken into account. Hence, students become familiar with scientifically based products and tools, both theoretically and in practice, which is needed for their future professional practice. Each newly introduced approach is discussed with students in terms of relevance, safety (contraindications) and efficacy.
The content of the study programme is additionally influenced by the feedback from the continuous cooperation with the HEI's social partners at (inter)national level. The dynamic nature of the cosmetic industry implies the need for novel skin care approaches. The study programme benefited from the international academic contacts (especially through involvement into the Erasmus+ blended intensive programmes, cooperation with the Daugavpils University Agency Daugavpils Medical College and the P. Stradina Medical College). The teaching staff also had the opportunity to experience and implement certain digital teaching/learning tools. However, some strengthening of in-house research capacities is needed for faster transfer of scientific developments into the cosmetology study curriculum. This would additionally enable the teachers involved in the study program to consider disseminating their research results in diverse international journals. Research activities need more internationalization and diversification (teachers must step out of their comfort zone, that seems to be relying on Įžvalgos/Insights publications), in order to aim for consistent improvement in both the number and quality of papers, proceedings and other indicators of research progress.

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

The involvement of the students in applied research activities is ensured by integrating research elements into the study process (through research projects, coursework and final theses). The students are in contact with the scientific literature, are able to define problems and research space, provide scientific justifications, analyse and interpret results, etc. Students learn to critically appraise literature sources (by date and relevance), for the purpose of final thesis writing.
The students also volunteer in activities of the Utena Association of People with Disabilities, providing cosmetology services to community members with special needs. During the evaluation period, several professional practice seminars were organised, allowing students to learn/update knowledge on specific technologies and methodologies.
The teachers try to involve students in the research activities during their studies. Such endeavours have resulted in publishing 2 scientific articles and 7 presentations at (inter)national conferences. During the evaluated period, around 10% of the students participated in scientific/research activities. Increasing students' interest in joint research activities should be regarded as an important strategic priority, as it directly contributes to the development of analytical thinking, professional curiosity, scientific literacy, and evidence-based practice. Greater student involvement in research may be encouraged through more innovative and accessible communication strategies, clearer presentation of ongoing research opportunities, and the formal recognition of student roles within research projects. In addition, the introduction of incentives, such as additional points or other forms of academic acknowledgement, could further motivate students to participate actively and responsibly. Such measures would strengthen the research culture of the institution and contribute to closer integration of teaching, practice, and applied scientific work.

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 2.1.)

The HEI regularly adopts strategic documents for scientific research development. The teaching staff is timely informed on their workload, with balanced teaching vs. research hours. Although the total sum of points attributed to scientific KPIs depicts a steady increase, when analysing individual KPIs, such as the number of submitted or published scientific papers and participation in research projects, the actual number of scientific activities varies significantly from 2022 to 2025. Further, the HEI management plans to focus research activities towards the aging population, but the actual resources and results of this approach are unclear and yet to be demonstrated.
The curriculum is evidence-based (covering a broad spectrum of topics, from facial and body products/procedures to spa treatments), and the teaching staff invites students to participate in research activities. However, the students' response is still modest (10%) and should be improved. The main reason for their reserve are personal/family reasons and self-apprehension in joining the offered international mobility schemes.

AREA 2: CONCLUSIONS

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

COMMENDATIONS

1. The methodological basis of the study programme is reinforced by the integration of evidence-based practice principles.

2. Research potential of the teaching staff is actively improved through participation in well-chosen training.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To address shortcomings

1. According to the strategic plans, the HEI should invest in suitable research resources and infrastructure.

2. Improvement of research activities in order to demonstrate a consistent increase in the number and quality of publications and other research indicators.

For further improvement

1. Increase students' interest in joint research activities (e.g. through novel communication strategies, formalization of student roles within research studies, additional points awarded, etc.).

AREA 3: STUDENT ADMISSION AND SUPPORT

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

FACTUAL SITUATION

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

Public information on admission to the Cosmetology study programme is available on the official website of Utenos kolegija and national admission system. Admission is organized with national requirements for admission to higher education and the institution's internal admission procedures. Admission to both state-funded and non-state-funded places is organised through the centralised national admission system LAMA BPO. Selection is based on a competitive score. During last years the minimum admission threshold changed: in 2022–2023 different minimum scores were applied for state-funded and non-state-funded places, from 2024 a minimum threshold is equal for all applicants, with a lower threshold set for 2025. Since 2024, an additional competitive ranking has also been applied for applicants from socially vulnerable groups.

The website provides the main information relevant to applicants, including the minimum competitive score, study form, tuition fees, consultation options, and access to the LAMA BPO competitive score calculator. Information and consultations are available: phone, email, and in person. The competitive score is based on achievements applying weighted coefficients in biology 0.4, a second relevant subject (Chemistry, mathematics, information technology, physics, engineering technology) 0.2, another school subject different from covered subjects 0.2, and Lithuanian language and literature 0.2. Additional criteria for state-funded places are set at the national level, while additional points for non-state-funded places are determined by the institution and published publicly.

The programme is offered in full-time and part-time study modes with available mixed delivery arrangements. According to the currently published information, the minimum competitive score is

2.0. For applicants to non-state-funded places in the Cosmetology programme, additional points may be awarded for relevant work experience, prior vocational education, employer recommendation, or non-formal education related to art or visual arts.

Admission to the programme takes place annually. During the review period, the number of first-priority applications decreased from 55 in 2023 to 42 in 2024 and 38 in 2025. The number of admitted students also declined, from 27 in 2023 to 21 in 2024 and 17 in 2025. At the same time, the total number of students remained stable in 2023 and 2024 (122 in each year), before decreasing to 88 in 2025. The number of graduates was 26 in 2023, 25 in 2024, and 32 in 2025. These data indicate that the programme continues to admit students each year, although a downward trend in admissions and total student numbers is visible in the most recent year.

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

The recognition of foreign qualifications, partial studies, and prior non-formal and informal learning at Utenos kolegija is regulated by Lithuania's legal acts and internal institutional documents. The recognition of foreign qualifications is based on the Lisbon Recognition Convention, relevant national legislation, and the institutional procedure approved in 2024 and updated in 2025. The procedure defines the principles of assessment, decision-making, appeals, and quality assurance. It also provides that information on academic recognition is published on the institution's website in Lithuanian and English and that the procedure is free of charge for applicants.

Recognition of foreign qualifications is organised as part of the admission process, but it is not equivalent to admission itself. Qualifications are assessed individually. The procedure defines the roles of the assessor and the commission, the documents to be submitted, the stages of assessment, and the possible decisions. The assessment includes verification of documents, determination of the qualification level and purpose, comparison with the corresponding qualification in Lithuania, and evaluation of substantial differences. The procedure also provides for internal review and external appeal.

The transfer of partial study results is regulated by the Study Regulations, the procedure for the transfer of partial study, teaching and learning results, and the Study Quality Management System Manual. In cases of study mobility, the recognition of results is based on prior approval of the study content in a tripartite agreement concluded before the mobility period. Where the agreed conditions are met and the subjects have been passed, the results are recognised. Subjects without a direct equivalent in the study programme are included in the diploma supplement.
Recognition of prior learning is also applied in admission to higher courses. Applicants who have previously studied in higher education or completed another programme may apply for recognition of competences acquired through formal, non-formal, or informal learning. During the review period, 59 applications for the transfer of credits were submitted in the Cosmetology study field, representing on average 13% of students in the field. The number of applications decreased from 27 in 2022–2023 to 7 in the autumn semester of 2025–2026.

The institution has defined the grounds for non-recognition. These include the absence of the required documents, insufficient correspondence between the previously completed subject and the subject in the current study programme, and cases where the content of earlier studies is considered outdated. The assessment and recognition of competences acquired through non-formal and informal learning are regulated by a separate institutional procedure. During the assessment period, two applications of this type were submitted, and both were approved.

Overall, the available information indicates that the recognition procedures are formally regulated and applied in practice.

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 3.1.)

The available evidence shows that both admission and recognition procedures are established, transparent, and applied in practice. Admission to the Cosmetology study programme is organised through the national centralised system, which ensures uniformity of procedure and public access to information. The key admission requirements are clearly published, including the competitive score, its structure, study forms, tuition fees, and the possibilities for consultation. The criteria themselves are sufficiently clear and consistent. The introduction of a unified minimum threshold for all applicants strengthened consistency, while additional ranking arrangements for socially vulnerable applicants and additional points for non-state-funded places show that access arrangements are regulated and considered.

The procedures for recognition of foreign qualifications, periods of study, and prior learning are also clearly regulated. The institution has established formal procedures that define responsible bodies, required documents, assessment stages, criteria for recognition, and appeal possibilities. This indicates that recognition is handled with organized procedures. The evidence also shows practical application of these procedures: credit recognition requests are regularly submitted in the study field, and applications for recognition of non-formal and informal learning have been approved. This suggests that the recognition system is functioning in practice, not only formally existing in documents.

Overall, the factual situation supports the conclusion that the institution has appropriate and transparent arrangements for both student admission and recognition of prior achievements. The main issue visible from the data is the recent decline in student intake, which is relevant for programme development, but does not undermine compliance with these evaluation points.
The evaluation points are fully met: student selection and admission criteria and procedures are adequate and transparent, and the institution has established and applies procedures for the recognition of foreign qualifications, periods of study, and prior learning.

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

FACTUAL SITUATION

3.2.1. Opportunities for student academic mobility are ensured

Utenos kolegija has established conditions for student academic mobility in the Cosmetology study programme through its internationalisation strategy and Erasmus+ partnerships network. Student mobility is treated as one of the priority areas of internationalisation, and the study field has access to mobility opportunities for both studies and traineeships. According to the information provided, 13 valid Erasmus+ cooperation agreements are in place, creating opportunities for participation in outgoing mobility.

Information about mobility opportunities is spread through several channels, including the International Relations Department, information meetings, Erasmus+ events, the institutional website, “Moodle”, and social media. The available evidence indicates that students are informed not only about mobility possibilities, but also about conditions of selection and funding. Mobility

formats are chronologically flexible, with different periods so they can be adapted to the study process and student's individual needs.

During the review period, outgoing mobility in the Cosmetology study field accounted for 23% of students in 2022–2023, 16% in 2023–2024, 12% in 2024–2025, and 21% in the autumn semester of 2025. This shows that outgoing mobility was present throughout the review period, although its scale fluctuated and remained limited in absolute numbers.

Incoming mobility was higher than outgoing mobility throughout the period. The number of incoming students in the field was 15 in 2022–2023, 16 in 2023–2024, 5 in 2024–2025, and 10 in the autumn semester of 2025, amounting to 46 incoming students in total. Incoming mobility was concentrated in one country - Latvia. Mobility opportunities are functioning in Utenos kolegija, but participation is stronger on the incoming side. At the same time, the concentration of incoming mobility in Latvia indicates limited geographical diversity of partnerships at field level.

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

Utenos kolegija has established a multi-layered student support system in the Cosmetology study field covering academic, financial, social, psychological, and personal support. Support measures are presented centrally on the institution's website, the website is very well-structured, provides clear information and contacts for student to apply or get informed about support and are linked to institutional documents on student retention and first-year adaptation, indicating that support is organised not only as separate services but as part of an integrated approach to student success and continuity of studies and well-being.

Academic support is organised through several channels. Students are introduced to course requirements, assessment, and study materials at the start of subjects, while Moodle is used for equal access to study materials and consultation schedules. Support is also provided for study and internship planning, recognition of prior results, Erasmus+ participation, and final thesis preparation. Consultation responsibilities appear to be distributed across academic staff, the programme committee, the department, and faculty administration.

Financial support is available in several forms, including incentive scholarships, one-off scholarships, social scholarships, and access to state-supported loans. The data provided show that incentive scholarships are the most frequently used form of support in the field, while one-off scholarships are used to respond to individual circumstances and social scholarships are present but limited in number. Students who pay tuition fees may also choose to pay in instalments instead of making the full payment at once. This increases the flexibility of the support system and promotes broader access to the Cosmetology programme, helping to ensure uninterrupted studies for students who might otherwise face financial barriers.

Students have access to confidential psychological consultations, additional seminars on emotional well-being and stress-related topics, support for students with disabilities, accommodation in student residences, and representation through the Students' Representation. The available evidence therefore suggests that personal and social support extends beyond academic counselling alone. Recent addition of full-time psychologist on site indicates a clear understanding of psychological support need and is a positive step forward to well-working and structured support system. Student feedback data indicate generally positive evaluations of support. Academic support is rated positively, financial and personal support shows improvement over the reviewed period, and

openness of the administration is evaluated comparatively strongly. At the same time, psychological support receives the lowest scores among the support areas, although these remain moderately positive. Overall, the factual situation suggests that student support is broad in scope, formally structured, and used in practice, while psychological support remains the area requiring the closest attention.

3.2.3. Higher education information and student counselling are sufficient

Students in the Cosmetology study programme are introduced to the programme and its requirements through a structured start-of-studies process and are provided with further information and counselling throughout the whole study period. At the beginning of studies, first-year students are introduced to the main study-related documents, programme aims and learning outcomes, assessment arrangements, institutional services, and available support. Responsibilities for this introduction appear to be clearly distributed between the programme leadership, group curator, lecturers, and faculty administration with clear responsibilities of each position, which helps ensure that students receive all-round and coordinated programme-related as well as practical study information.

During the course of studies, information is provided through several channels. Study-related documents are published centrally on the institution's website, while study materials, announcements, consultation schedules, and current information related to the study process are available in Moodle and through the academic information system. This shows thorough information delivery system that can be easily always accessed.

Continuous counselling is also organised through planned and targeted measures. Students have access to subject consultations, consultations for independent work and final thesis preparation, and advice on study organisation and progression-related issues. Consultations are available in person and remotely, which increases accessibility for students in different study situations. In addition, students who encounter academic difficulties are offered additional consultations based on progress monitoring, indicating that counselling is also used as a retention and support measure rather than only as a general service. This shows that students at different levels and different situations can access counselling and get help to solve difficulties along the studies.

The available information further indicates that the adequacy of student information and counselling is monitored through student feedback, including surveys at the start of studies and during the study period.

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 3.2.)

Student support in the Cosmetology field at Utenos kolegija meets the required standards and is good, as students are provided with a broad and structured system of academic, financial, social, psychological, and personal support, as well as continuous access to information and counselling throughout their studies. The support system appears to be clearly organised, with defined responsibilities, accessible information channels, and a range of measures that contribute to student progression, retention, and well-being. The programme also provides actual opportunities for academic mobility, and mobility is implemented in practice.

At the same time, several areas would benefit from further development. In particular, outgoing mobility remains limited, while incoming mobility is concentrated mainly in one country, which indicates a need to broaden both student participation and the geographical diversity of partnerships.

Psychological support, although available and recently strengthened, remains the least positively evaluated area and should continue to receive targeted attention. It would also be beneficial to further encourage students to make active use of counselling, mobility, and broader development opportunities during their studies.

Overall, the student support and counselling infrastructure is well organised and functioning, and it provides students with the necessary conditions to progress in their studies and prepare for professional activity.

AREA 3: CONCLUSIONS

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

COMMENDATIONS

1. Easy to understand information on Utenos kolegija website about admission.

2. Detailed support system procedures with every step and outcome defined.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To address shortcomings

None

For further improvement

1. Outgoing and ingoing student mobility participation should be improved.

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

4.1.	Students are prepared for independent professional activity

FACTUAL SITUATION

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

The Cosmetology program at Utenos kolegija (UK / HEI) is designed to ensure a student-centred approach, focusing on achieving learning outcomes in both the full-time (3 years) and part-time (4 years) tracks. The total workload is 180 ECTS credits, and the program structure has been deliberately designed to balance theoretical knowledge with extensive practical training, which accounts for 35.7% (1,712 hours) of the program. The teaching process is based on the philosophy

of pragmatism and experiential learning, emphasising the application of knowledge in real-world professional situations and learning by doing.

The teaching and assessment framework is systematically linked to Miller's competency assessment pyramid. Core courses in the first year (e.g., Anatomy, Physiology and Pathology, General Cosmetology) address the "know" and "know how" levels. As students progress into their second and third years, courses such as Cosmetic Facial Care Procedures and Equipment-Based Treatments focus on the "shows how" level through demonstrations, simulations, and the resolution of clinical scenarios. The highest level, "does," is achieved during professional internships (42 ECTS), where students perform procedures in a real professional environment under the supervision of mentors. Furthermore, the selection of teaching methods is guided by Bloom's taxonomy, ensuring hierarchical progression from memorizing terms to analysis, synthesis, and evaluation.

Active participation in seminars, practical classes, and clinical placements is mandatory, as these are considered essential for developing specialised skills. Theoretical lectures are encouraged but allow for a higher level of self-directed learning. The educational process is consistently supported by the Moodle Virtual Learning Environment (VLE), which includes 33 e-courses that cover 81.25% of the curriculum. This environment facilitates flexible educational solutions, including remote classes, interactive consultations, and access to all necessary materials, notes, and descriptions of practical assignments.

Student performance is assessed using a ten-point criteria-based grading system. Cumulative assessment is used to ensure continuous student engagement throughout the semester; it combines mid-semester assignments (tests, case studies, skill demonstrations) with a final exam or project. Transparency of the process is maintained by lecturers presenting the requirements, criteria, and assessment methods during the introductory lecture for each course.

Independent student work is intentionally planned and accounts for a significant portion of the total workload (1,950 hours, i.e., 40.6% of the program). It is supported by a structured consultation system, including scheduled office hours for challenging topics and timelines for thesis preparation. The program concludes with a public defence of the Professional Bachelor's Thesis, which must reflect at least two-thirds of the intended learning outcomes.

Graduates of the Cosmetology program are prepared to enter the job market directly or to continue their education in bachelor's or master's degree programs in fields such as nursing, public health, or social sciences. Data from the evaluation period demonstrates high educational effectiveness - approximately 90% of students complete their studies within the standard timeframe, and the graduate employment rate 12 months after graduation ranges from 80% to 92.3%.

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

Utenos kolegija provides for access to studies for socially vulnerable students and students with special needs through a combination of adapted study arrangements, individualisation measures, and broader inclusion-related support. The available information and site visit indicate that support is based on documented need and is aimed at ensuring equal opportunities to participate in studies and achieve the intended learning outcomes.

In practice, this includes the possibility of adapting the study process, study materials, assignments, and assessment methods. Students who are unable to participate in studies on campus for health-

related reasons may study remotely, and individual study or assessment schedules may be arranged where needed. The available evidence also suggests that the institution applies practical forms of individualisation, such as adjusted task completion conditions, alternative presentation of information, and assessment arrangements adapted to the student's situation while maintaining academic requirements.

Access is also supported through environmental and technological adjustments. The accessibility (elevators, stair assistant) is ensured. Assistive solutions are available for students with visual or hearing impairments, and students with a low level of working capacity are given priority for accommodation in the student residence. In addition, the institution links inclusion not only to student support measures, but also to staff preparedness: lecturers and staff participate in training related to inclusive higher education and the adaptation of studies for students with different needs. Inclusion measures are also extended to mobility, as additional support arrangements are provided for participation in Erasmus+ activities.

Overall, the factual situation suggests that access to studies for socially vulnerable groups and students with special needs is addressed through a combination of consultation, individualised study arrangements, adapted learning conditions, and staff competence development.
The available information clearly describes adaptation of the study process and learning conditions; however, less explicit information is provided on consultation mechanisms specifically related to access to studies and on measures aimed at the social and academic integration of students with special needs or from socially vulnerable groups into the academic community.

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 4.1.)

The expert panel concludes that the Cosmetology program at Utenos kolegija is effectively designed to prepare students for independent professional practice, as evidenced by both the program structure and high employment rates.
The program demonstrates strong internal coherence by applying Miller's competency pyramid and Bloom's taxonomy. This approach ensures a logical progression from acquiring basic theoretical knowledge in the first year (the "knows" and "knows how" levels), through demonstrations and simulations in laboratory settings (the "shows how" level), to full independence during professional internships (the "does" level). The high proportion of the practical component (35.7% of the total workload) is a distinguishing feature of the program, directly addressing the regional labour market's demand for specialists with specific procedural skills.

The student-centred approach is implemented through extensive use of the Moodle Virtual Learning Environment (covering over 81% of the program), which ensures flexibility and accessibility of instructional materials. The option to study according to individual study plans (which 12 students utilised during the evaluation period) and flexible assessment schedules for individuals facing difficult life circumstances or with disabilities demonstrate a high level of inclusivity and a commitment to student retention.

Access to education for socially vulnerable groups and individuals with special needs is ensured not only through formal regulations but also through specific infrastructure solutions (elevators, stair assistants) and specialised assistive software (e.g., JAWS, WinTaker Voice). Training for teaching staff in inclusive education further strengthens this area.
Despite high effectiveness in career preparation (92.3% graduate employment rate in 2023), the expert panel identifies areas that require attention. Although students declare their readiness to start

their careers, feedback from some graduates suggests a need to further strengthen soft skills and entrepreneurial skills to better prepare them to run their own businesses. Furthermore, although the support system is comprehensive, the visibility of the “Internationalisation at Home” paradigm could be greater, thereby allowing students to better navigate the global environment of the beauty sector. In summary, the evaluation criterion has been fully met. The institution has appropriate, transparent, and consistent mechanisms in place to ensure that students are prepared for independent work. The main challenge remains maintaining enrolment stability amid demographic trends and further promoting international mobility.

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

FACTUAL SITUATION

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

The monitoring of academic progress for students in the Cosmetology program at Utenos kolegija is conducted systematically, in accordance with the institution’s internal “Procedure for Monitoring Student Progress and Providing Academic Assistance.” This process is integrated into the internal quality assurance system and includes analysis at the level of individual students, courses, departments, and faculties.

Progress monitoring is conducted on an ongoing and periodic basis. During the semester, instructors monitor students’ participation in classes and their interim grades, providing them with ongoing feedback. At the end of each semester, an exam session is held (with at least two days between exams), and a comprehensive analysis of student progress is conducted twice a year.
Responsibilities in the monitoring process are clearly divided:
● Students are required to independently track their results and progress through the Student Academic Database (SADB) and the Moodle Virtual Learning Environment.
● Instructors monitor progress at the course level, identify students at risk of failing to make progress, and organise additional consultations for them.
●The department analyses the reasons for lack of progress in specific cases and initiates appropriate academic or organisational support measures.
● The Study Program Committee (SPC) and Dean’s Office discuss aggregate monitoring results, using the findings to improve the organisation and quality of education.
The system provides remedial mechanisms for students with academic deficiencies. Each academic deficiency may be remedied twice (the first time free of charge, the second time for a fee). In the event of failing grades, students are offered additional consultations, about which they are informed individually via email, and the schedules for these meetings are published on the Moodle platform. Data from the last three years indicate that only about 1–2% of students have academic deficiencies, suggesting the effectiveness of preventive measures.

An integral part of monitoring is analysing the dropout rate. During the period under review, a downward trend at this rate was observed (from 12.24% to 11.11%). Most withdrawals (9.47%) result from students’ voluntary decisions, most often made during the first year due to insufficient motivation, while withdrawals caused by a lack of academic progress account for only 1.21%. The university conducts individual meetings with students considering dropping out to propose solutions that would allow them to continue their studies.

4.2.2. Graduate employability and career are monitored

Graduate career tracking at Utenos kolegija is managed centrally by the Career and Communication Department. The monitoring system integrates data from the national Education Management Information System (EMIS/ŠVIS) and the Employment Service with internal institutional surveys. Results are periodically summarised in activity reports and discussed within the Study Programme Committee (SPC) to inform curriculum updates. In addition to quantitative tracking, the institution maintains qualitative contact through alumni events, social media groups, and specialised seminars such as the planned "Career Path" series.

The employment data for the Cosmetology programme graduates indicate a high level of integration into the labour market. Twelve months after graduation in 2023, the employment rate reached 92.3% (22 out of 24 graduates), with 58.33% working in highly skilled positions. For the 2024 cohort, 80% (15 out of 20 graduates) were employed, with 75% of them in highly skilled jobs. Data for the 2025 cohort is not yet available in the national EMIS system. It is important to note that many students are already active in the beauty sector during their studies, meaning these indicators often reflect career continuity and the transition to higher-qualified roles based on newly acquired professional bachelor's competences.

Feedback from stakeholders is collected systematically through annual surveys and direct engagement during internships. On average, 80% of graduates report feeling in high demand in the labour market. The 2025 survey results showed that graduates are particularly satisfied with the organisation of professional internships and the quality of teaching, stating that the programme adequately prepared them for the market. Employers highlight graduates' strong theoretical foundation, compliance with professional standards, and ability to work in teams as key strengths.

The inclusion of subjects such as entrepreneurship and service management also indicates that graduates are prepared not only for employment but also for self-employment or business development in the cosmetology sector.

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

The implementation of the principles of academic integrity, tolerance, and non-discrimination at Utenos kolegija is based on an institutional legal framework and practical preventive and control measures. The main documents governing this area are the UK Code of Academic Ethics (with appendices), the Internal Rules for Students, the Regulations on the Activities of the Academic Ethics Committee, and the UK Equal Opportunities Policy. Compliance with these principles is overseen by the Academic Ethics Committee, and feedback from students and alumni regarding the ethical climate is systematically collected as part of the study quality assurance cycle.
Academic integrity is ensured through a clear definition of responsibilities and ongoing communication with students. Before beginning their studies, each student signs a “Declaration of Integrity,” in which they commit to adhering to the Code of Academic Ethics and faithfully fulfilling their student responsibilities. In addition, the principles of source citation and professional ethics are integrated into the content of courses such as “Cosmetic Services Administration and Digital Technologies.”

Plagiarism prevention is implemented as a systematic set of measures, including education of the academic community and technical monitoring. Responsibility for the originality of work is distributed: instructors are responsible for verifying written assignments, advisors for supervising theses, and students for the authorship and independence of their work. All final theses and selected written assignments must be checked for plagiarism using the Turnitin tool in the Moodle environment. The

defence of a thesis is permitted only after confirmation that there are no unauthorised borrowings. Instructors also employ additional measures to ensure the integrity of assessment, such as rotating question sets and implementing control procedures during exams.

Principles of tolerance and non-discrimination are firmly embedded in study procedures, guaranteeing students the right to freely express their opinions and access support. These issues are discussed within modules on professional ethics and the work environment. The Academic Ethics Committee reviews all reports of potential violations within 3 business days of their submission.
During the evaluation period (the last 3 academic years), no cases of violations of the principles of academic integrity, tolerance, or non-discrimination were identified in the Cosmetology program. No cases requiring review by the Academic Ethics Committee were reported for this program.

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

Students at Utenos kolegija have the guaranteed right to file appeals and complaints regarding the study process, the assessment of learning outcomes, violations of assessment procedures, or disciplinary sanctions imposed. This process is based on the clearly defined and publicly available “UK/HEI Procedure for Submitting, Examining, and Deciding on Appeals.” These rules are consistent with key internal documents, such as the Study Regulations (sections 46 and 87), the Procedure for Assessing Academic Performance (section 22.6), and the Procedure for Organising Final Exams and Thesis Defences (sections 27 and 66).

Under the established system, students may file appeals within the following timeframes and on the following grounds:
● Exam grading: A student who disagrees with the organisation or grading of an exam has the right to file an appeal with the dean of the faculty within 2 business days of the announcement of the results.
● Final exam and thesis: Complaints regarding the procedures for the final exam or thesis defense must be submitted to the director of the UK within 2 business days of the announcement of the results.
● Recognition of results and qualifications: An appeal against a decision regarding the recognition of academic results (e.g., in the case of a transfer) must be submitted to the university director within 10 days; however, in matters concerning formal requirements for the recognition of foreign qualifications, the student may appeal to the national appeals committee at the Ministry of Education, Science, and Sport.

If an appeal is filed, the director of the UK or the dean of the faculty appoints a dedicated committee to re-examine the disputed grade or procedural decision, ensuring the objectivity and impartiality of the rulings.

During the period under review, the number of appeals and complaints in the Cosmetology program was low, indicating the stability of the grading system. Four requests were recorded regarding the procedure for admission to the thesis defense in cases where the department’s review was negative. In accordance with the procedure, students submitted reasoned requests to the dean of the faculty. After reviewing them, the requests were granted in three cases, and the students were admitted to defend their theses before the Qualification Committee; in one case, the request was rejected. These examples confirm that the appeals procedure functions in practice, is transparent, and allows for effective review of administrative and academic decisions.

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 4.2.)

The team of experts states that the system for assessing students, monitoring their progress, and ensuring academic integrity in the Cosmetology programme at Utenos kolegija is well structured, transparent, and effectively implemented.

The procedures for monitoring student progress (4.2.1) are systematic and multi-level, and the use of the Student Academic Database (SADB) and the Moodle platform ensures that students have constant access to information about their results, which encourages self-assessment. The low dropout rate due to insufficient academic progress (only 1.21%) should be assessed particularly positively, as it demonstrates the effectiveness of the additional consultations offered and the preventive mechanisms in place.

In the area of graduate employment monitoring (4.2.2), the programme has achieved tangible results, with an employment rate of 92.3% in 2023 and 80% in 2024. Strong links with the labour market are confirmed by employers' opinions, who value students' theoretical preparation and work culture during placements. The team of experts' notes, however, that the institution could benefit from more formalised and long-term monitoring of career paths beyond the first year after graduation, which would allow the programme to be better aligned with rapid technological changes in the sector. Academic integrity and tolerance policies (4.2.3) are solidly embedded in the institutional regulations. The mandatory use of Turnitin to check final theses and the signing of integrity declarations by students constitute an effective barrier against misconduct. The absence of recorded ethical breaches during the evaluation period indicates a healthy academic climate within the programme. The appeal procedures (4.2.4) are fully transparent, and the analysis of cases concerning permission to defend final theses shows that the system allows for substantive review of administrative decisions.

Despite the overall high evaluation, the team suggests increasing the visibility of the so-called meta-skills (soft skills: communication, teamwork, problem-solving) in course syllabi and further digitalising real-time feedback collection processes.

AREA 4: CONCLUSIONS

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

COMMENDATIONS

1. A good balance between theory and practice, supported by a significant number of hours spent in specialized laboratories (35.7% of the program).
2. High graduate employability and a strong alignment of thesis topics with the region's needs (86% of topics).
3. A transparent system for monitoring progress and an effective cumulative assessment model, minimizing the dropout rate due to academic reasons.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To address shortcomings

1. Increase the prominence of soft skills (communication, teamwork, problem-solving) in course syllabi to better reflect the demands of today's job market.

For further improvement

1. Systematise graduate career tracking by implementing periodic qualitative surveys among employers, which will enable an even faster response to technological changes in the beauty sector.

2. Further digitisation of feedback collection mechanisms (real-time feedback) to increase the program's responsiveness to students' current needs.

AREA 5: TEACHING STAFF

5.1.	Teaching staff is adequate to achieve learning outcomes

FACTUAL SITUATION

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

The teaching staff involved in the evaluated study programme is adequate in number, qualification, and competence to achieve the intended learning outcomes. Among the 19 teachers, 14 hold full-time, while 5 hold part-time positions, of which 6 are permanently employed at the UK for the cosmetology programme for at least 3 years. In total, 9 teachers teach general College and elective subjects, and 11 teachers teach subjects in the evaluated field of study. One teacher is involved in both general and field teaching, giving a total of 19 involved teachers. However, information on at least 3 representative works (papers, projects, conference proceedings, etc.) over the last 5 years was provided for only 7 teachers. The teachers share a workload spanning from 0.5 to 1.0 FTE, resulting in the average teacher-student ratio of 1:5. More than half of teachers (55%) have at least 3 years of practical work experience in the cosmetology field of study.

Expertise of the teaching staff covers all the relevant areas. Apart from 4 cosmetologists, teaching units from the field of dermatology and plastic/reconstructive surgery are covered by the guest teachers. The teachers presented in SER Annexe 4 table have more than 3 years of professional experience (ranging from 3 to 31 years), with adequate qualifications and competences to achieve the programme's learning outcomes.

The teaching staff composition has endured certain changes from the academic year 2024/2023 until the time of the evaluation, with two teachers resigning and two joining the staff. This is a natural process, and the HEI manages such fluctuations through timely planning of candidate selection and maintaining contact with guest teachers (practitioners). The young teachers are supported through training, opportunity to enroll further studies and/or professional practice (e.g. one teacher obtained a master's degree, while another teacher enrolled doctoral studies in the evaluation period).

Only three teachers hold PhDs, one lecturer-practitioner holds a bachelor degree, and the remaining staff hold master degrees, which is in accordance with the provisions of national regulations.

In the evaluated programme, the subjects of the field of study comprise 150 out of 180 credits, whereas teachers with a scientific degree teach 16% (>10%) of the study programme's subjects (equals to 24 credits). Teachers of suitable qualifications are engaged in general and practical modules, with experience in the fields of cosmetology, rehabilitation, healthcare and education.

Although this evaluation concerns the study programme in Lithuanian, not less than 90% of the teachers speak at least one foreign language at the B2 level or higher. However, some teachers should improve their English language level, in order to be able to engage with international students and apply for academic mobility schemes.

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 5.1.)

The teaching staff of the Cosmetology study programme at Utena kolegija is sufficient in number and appropriately qualified to meet the intended learning outcomes. They have from 3 to 31 years of teaching experience (and 12-31 practical work experience). Lecturers are supported by the HEI to improve both formal and informal competences. The programme employs 19 lecturers, of which 3 hold doctoral degrees, 15 hold master's degrees, and 1 lecturer-practitioner holds a bachelor degree. Being a part of the Faculty of Medicine, professional competence is ensured, with teachers with qualifications in fields of dermatology and plastic/reconstructive surgery. Staff members are engaged in applied research, but representative references are provided for only 7 teachers engaged in subjects in the field of cosmetology.

Despite meeting all formal qualification requirements, the programme faces vulnerabilities related to a small number of PhD-qualified staff (1 Doctor of Law and 2 Doctors of Educology - none in the cosmetology field). This structure of staff competences could compromise not only the improvement of the research-based learning environment, but also the regulatory compliance if teaching allocations should change. Although the teaching staff demonstrates understanding of students' personal situations, offering certain flexibility in their studies, their didactic competences should be more actively strengthened through continuous professional development. Further, improving staff English language skills should be recognized as an important condition for strengthening internationalization and increasing the programme's attractiveness to foreign students. Enhanced English proficiency would support more effective participation in international projects, academic mobility, joint teaching activities, and cooperation with foreign partner institutions. In the long term, this would contribute to the programme's international visibility, competitiveness, and capacity to attract and support a more diverse student population.

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

FACTUAL SITUATION

5.2.1. Opportunities for academic mobility of teaching staff are ensured

Supported by the HEI's International Relations Department, certain teachers participate in academic mobility activities (teaching visits, training) every year, in particular through Erasmus+ and other international programmes. Applications are evaluated by a commission, which selects the lecturers who will be able to go on a visit during that academic year. Additionally, there is a document (adopted in 2023) that describes the organization of staff participation in Erasmus+ teaching and learning visits and the mobility of lecturers coming from companies/organizations. Unbalanced trend in academic mobility is reported, considering the fact that it is in favor of the outgoing teachers (20 teachers of the evaluated HEI, as opposed to 4 incoming/guest teachers, mainly from Akademia Nauk

Stosowanych Wincentego Pola w Lublinie (Poland) and DU Agency "DU Daugavpils medicinas koledza" (Latvia). Nevertheless, the study programme benefited from the accomplished mobilities, mainly reflected through improvement in certain teaching methods, introduction of new technologies, advancing professional experience, certain didactic skills and language proficiency.

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

Teachers are supported by the HEI to improve their skills by participating in diverse courses, seminars, conferences, projects, events of professional associations, as well as by conducting scientific and applied work and participating in internships at (inter)national level. Teachers also have the opportunity to be relieved from teaching duties for up to 1 year every 5 years to conduct research and improve their scientific and pedagogical qualifications, while retaining their average salary. These opportunities may be initiated by the International Relations Department, the Project Management Department, the E-learning Centre or the teachers themselves. Activities are monitored at department and/or HEI level, and reported accordingly. The HEI reported a steady funding of teaching staff development (namely, in 2023 – 11 000 EUR, in 2024 – 10 000 EUR, and in 2025 – 10 000 EUR), encompassing the development of foreign language levels, subject-specific, research, pedagogical and other general competences. The HEI has an internal procedure for systematic improvement of staff competences.

In 2022–2023, an evidence-based teaching concept was implemented at the HEI, which has enhanced the development of teachers' competences. Both teachers and students are more encouraged to accept innovative technologies, provide feedback on academic activities, rely on evidence-based information, etc. Risk of staff turnover is decreased through mentor consultations and methodological support from the head of department and faculty administration. Continuous efforts are made to perform internal training through informal programmes on relevant topics, such as application of the Turnitin tool, data interpretation, mentoring process, alternative study programme design, research quality, etc.

From 2022 to 2025, an increased number of training in subject-specific, didactic and general competences was reported, while only one doctoral internship was initiated in the field of internships. Such events were aligned either with certain flexibility in work schedules or provision of financial support where possible (e.g. by covering the registration fees once per academic year).

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 5.2.)

HEI provides opportunities for academic mobility and professional development for teaching staff in the Cosmetology programme. Mobility opportunities are clearly communicated through multiple channels (e.g. International Relations Department, Project Management Department, at the Department level). Also, the teachers are free to propose a suitable conference, seminar or course. Participation in academic mobility schemes (outgoing teachers) has increased markedly since 2022/2023 (21%) towards 2024/2025 (73%). Teachers had the opportunity to visit partner institutions in Latvia mainly, but also in Poland, Estonia and Spain.

Staff development is guided by a structured institutional procedure that ensures equal access to training, including foreign language competences, digital, subject-specific, scientific (research), pedagogical and general competences. Overall, the opportunities provided by the HEI are consistent with the expectations for a professional bachelor-awarding College. However, some open questions remain. While mobility participation is improving, there is a disbalance in the number of outgoing and incoming teachers.

Expanding international collaboration should be pursued through more research-focused mobility and the development of strategic partnerships with foreign institutions. Such cooperation would enable staff and students to participate in joint research projects, exchange expertise, access complementary infrastructure, and strengthen their international academic networks. Research-oriented mobility would also support the transfer of knowledge and good practices into teaching, thereby contributing to programme innovation and curriculum development.

AREA 5: CONCLUSIONS

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

COMMENDATIONS

1. There is a clear institutional framework as competence development is regulated by formal procedures ensuring consistency and transparency.

2. All lecturers have equal rights and opportunities for professional development.

3. The faculty provides resources and guidance to meet individual development needs.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To address shortcomings

1. Raise the number of PhD-qualified staff to build critical mass for impactful and innovative research activities. Establish dedicated staff roles for strategic R&D development to strengthen research integration and programme innovation.
2. Improve staff English language skills, to support internationalization and attract more foreign students.
3. Expand international collaboration by promoting research-focused mobility and partnerships with foreign institutions.

For further improvement

1. Continue prioritizing professional development in emerging areas, such as AI tools, digital learning, and innovative student-centred didactic methods to maintain alignment with global trends.
2. Monitor and evaluate the impact of mobility and training programs to ensure they contribute effectively to teaching quality and programme relevance.

AREA 6: LEARNING FACILITIES AND RESOURCES

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

FACTUAL SITUATION

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

The physical and material infrastructure supporting the Cosmetology programme at Utenos kolegija is adequate and professionally relevant. The practical laboratories are well-equipped with a comprehensive range of specialist cosmetological apparatus, including radiofrequency (RF) devices, vacuum treatment units, peeling apparatus, lipodrainage devices, roller tools, and electrophoresis and galvanisation equipment. This range of equipment covers the full spectrum of procedures included in the programme's curriculum, enabling students to develop hands-on procedural competences in conditions that replicate those encountered in professional practice.

During the site visit, students consistently confirmed that the practical facilities are well resourced and that academic staff are reliably available to provide guidance and troubleshoot technical difficulties during laboratory sessions. Alumni also confirmed that working with diverse specialist equipment during their studies contributed directly to their professional confidence and employability upon graduation. The equipment available is appropriate in scope and quality for a first-cycle professional bachelor programme in Health Sciences.

The institution uses the Moodle Virtual Learning Environment as its primary digital learning platform. According to information reviewed, Moodle hosts 33 e-courses covering over 80% of the programme's subjects, providing students with flexible access to study materials, assignment descriptions, consultation schedules, and institutional communications. This platform supports both in-person and remote learning arrangements, and its systematic use across the faculty reflects a structured approach to digital teaching support.

Academic staff have access to the Scopus international scientific database, which supports the evidence-based development of teaching content and enables staff to integrate current research findings into the learning process. This access is particularly relevant to a programme in the health sciences, where evidence-based practice is a core professional standard.

Library resources are available to students in both physical and online formats. Students confirmed access to professional databases and specialist cosmetology literature, including resources from internationally recognised brands and suppliers (among others, NOTIS, Anne Lotan, and Meys). These resources support independent study, final thesis preparation, and the development of research competencies.

However, the panel notes a concern consistently raised by different stakeholder groups during the site visit: the computing infrastructure in the institutional library partially consists of dated equipment. Students and staff assessed this equipment as inconvenient for contemporary academic work, particularly for tasks involving online database searches, thesis writing, and engagement with digital learning resources. Nevertheless, within the HEI’s Act on the Commissioning of Fixed Assets, purchase and installation of seven computers (six desktop and one laptop) was documented in April 2019. While this limitation does not directly impair access to practical training equipment, it represents a material constraint on students' ability to fully benefit from the digital resources otherwise available to them. Additionally, the students are provided remote access to subscribed electronic databases via a virtual private network (VPN).

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

The process of planning and upgrading material resources at Utenos kolegija is formalised within Chapter 11 of the institution's Study Quality Management System ("Resource Management Processes"). The primary objective of this process is to ensure that the infrastructure remains responsive to the evolving didactic requirements and the specific needs of students and staff.
The identification of resource needs is a bottom-up process: requirements are first discussed at the departmental level and within the Study Programme Committee (SPC), subsequently reviewed by the Faculty of Medicine (FM) Dean's Office, and finally submitted to the UK Board for consideration. Based on these aggregated needs, an annual procurement plan is approved by the Director. The planning cycle incorporates periodic surveys of students and staff, which serve to identify gaps in the learning environment. For instance, a recent assessment identified the need for modernised rest areas for teachers and the establishment of semi-enclosed, quiet independent study zones for students, which are scheduled for implementation in 2026. Furthermore, the SPC recently decided to prioritise the structural update of the Moodle VLE to better support digital learning needs.
The institution has developed a comprehensive Resource Acquisition and Renewal Plan for 2026–2030 (Annex 5) specifically for the Cosmetology field. This plan focuses on maintaining the technological currency of the practical training laboratories and includes:

- Technological Upgrades: Procurement of a vacuum-endodermic massage device, electric pedicure chairs, and a professional skin analysis and diagnostic device (2028), followed by a multi-functional mesotherapy device (2029).
- Simulations and Models: Acquisition of silicone makeup models, human head models, and skin structure mannequins to enhance pre-clinical training (2027).
- Digital Infrastructure: Implementation of the EasyWeek software (2027–2030) to manage the cosmetology training centre, reflecting the programme's focus on digital administration skills.

The financial viability of these improvements is ensured through a mixed funding model. The total projected investment for equipment and materials in the 2026–2030 period is €50,440, with an additional €820 allocated for specialised software. These upgrades are financed primarily through the HEI's own internal funds and supplemented by targeted project-based funding. The institution's commitment is further evidenced by the fact that €57,106 was allocated between 2022 and 2025 and the additional allocation of €6,100 was planned specifically for practical skill development in 2026.

The programme benefits from cooperation with industry partners who contribute to the practical learning environment through equipment demonstrations, donated materials, and access to current professional products. These partnerships represent an important supplementary source of resources for renewal and help ensure that students are exposed to contemporary cosmetological technologies and materials beyond those available through the institution's own inventory.

Academic staff receive institutional support for professional development, including participation in training, conferences, and international mobility programmes, enabling them to integrate new technologies, methodologies, and equipment-related knowledge into their teaching practice. The introduction of novel procedures, such as low-level laser therapy (LLLT), radiofrequency, ultrasound, exosome-based approaches, and cold plasma, during the review period demonstrates the institution's responsiveness to developments in the field.

Nonetheless, the panel notes that the planning and upgrading of information resources have not kept pace with the programme's digital development ambitions. The panel further recommends that the institution develop a structured resource renewal plan that includes clear timelines, budget

allocations, and responsibility assignments for the upgrading of both physical and digital learning resources.

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 6.1.)

The learning facilities at Utenos kolegija provide a solid foundation for delivering the Cosmetology programme. Practical laboratories are equipped with a professionally relevant range of specialist apparatus – including radiofrequency (RF) devices, vacuum, electrophoresis, galvanisation, peeling, lipodrainage, and roller tools – that covers the full scope of procedures included in the programme. Students and alumni consistently confirmed that practical facilities are well-resourced, and that teaching staff are consistently available to provide guidance during laboratory sessions. Alumni specifically identified hands-on training with diverse specialist equipment as a key contributor to their professional readiness.

The institution's digital learning infrastructure is functionally adequate. Moodle serves as the primary e-learning platform and is used across all subjects to provide materials, task descriptions, and consultation schedules. Academic staff have access to the Scopus scientific database, supporting evidence-based teaching and curriculum renewal. Both a physical and an online library are available to students. Industry partnerships further enrich the learning environment: cosmetics brand representatives and professional practitioners regularly participate in practical sessions, ensuring that students are exposed to current market products and techniques.

Apart from the previous remark that the latest HEI's research strategy necessitates purchase of relevant equipment, there are no major weaknesses identified in the routinely used laboratory equipment or the general study premises. However, one material gap was consistently identified by multiple stakeholder groups during the site visit: the computing infrastructure should be timely updated (latest computers in the institutional library are from April 2019). Students and staff assessed some of the equipment as inadequate for contemporary academic work, particularly for thesis research, access to scientific databases, and sustained engagement with digital academic resources.

The panel further notes that ready-made lesson plans and methodological materials are not consistently available to students on Moodle, representing a secondary gap in the digital resource environment.

Furthermore, while the planning process for material resources is structured (linked to Chapter 11 of the Quality Management System), it is a minor shortcoming that these processes have not yet yielded a specific, time-bound plan for the equipment renewal.

AREA 6: CONCLUSIONS

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

COMMENDATIONS

1. The practical laboratories are comprehensively equipped with specialist cosmetological apparatus spanning the full range of procedures covered in the programme, enabling students to develop professional competencies in conditions that closely replicate those of real-world practice.

2. The systematic use of the Moodle Virtual Learning Environment, covering over 80% of the programme's subjects, ensures consistent and accessible delivery of study materials and reflects a mature approach to digital learning support.

3. Active industry partnerships contribute meaningfully to resource renewal by providing students with access to current professional products, technologies, and practitioners, supplementing the institution's own infrastructure.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To address shortcomings

1. **Replace or substantially upgrade the computing equipment in the library and elsewhere, as well as other equipment required to meet the latest HEI strategic plans. A time-bound implementation plan with a specific budget allocation should be developed and approved within the current academic year.**

For further improvement

1. Formalise and document the existing arrangements with industry partners for contributions to the practical learning environment – including equipment demonstrations, material donations, and visiting practitioner sessions – establishing clear procedures for the integration, maintenance, and quality assurance of externally contributed resources.
2. Develop and make available to students ready-made lesson plans and structured methodological materials on Moodle for all core programme subjects, ensuring that the e-learning environment actively supports student preparation and self-directed learning rather than serving primarily as a document repository.

AREA 7: QUALITY ASSURANCE AND PUBLIC INFORMATION

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

FACTUAL SITUATION

7.1.1. Internal quality assurance system for the programmes is effective

The internal quality assurance system for the Cosmetology program at Utenos kolegija is governed by the Quality Manual and a set of institutional procedures, including the “Procedure for Internal Quality Assurance of Study Programs.” This system is multi-level and involves management, faculty, students, and social partners.

The main body responsible for the quality of the Cosmetology program is the Study Program Committee (SPC), which consists of at least 7 members: 3–4 experienced lecturers, 1–2 representatives of social partners, and 1 student representative. The Committee's work is led by a chairperson, who receives additional compensation for this role.

Quality assurance is carried out as part of a systematic annual and semester-based cycle:
● Semester analysis: After each winter semester, the SPK reviews the program's quality performance based on the results of student and graduate surveys, as well as employer feedback.
● Annual analysis: In September, the SPK conducts an in-depth analysis of the program, identifying weaknesses, evaluating the results of any external evaluations (SKVC), and considering the recommendations of the accreditation committees.
● Planning for improvements: Based on the analysis, quality improvement measures are developed, approved by the Faculty Council, and incorporated into the Department's activity plans by October 15 of each year.
● Reporting: At the end of the academic year (by June 30), SPK prepares a report on quality assurance, which is approved by the Faculty of Medicine Council.
The Head of the Department of Rehabilitation and Social Care plays a key role in the system; as the main coordinator, they oversee methodological work and applied research and ensure the availability of information and materials. Lecturers are directly responsible for the quality of their courses; once a year, they conduct a self-assessment of their own activities and update teaching materials in accordance with the latest scientific developments. As revealed by meetings with employees, information flows within the institution mainly through verbal communication, bypassing official email systems, which hinders the transparent exchange of data between different units and employees.
Institutional oversight of the system is exercised by the UK Study Quality Committee (comprising 13 members), which coordinates survey processes and publishes summary results of stakeholder opinion surveys on the university's website. Students can provide ongoing feedback on individual instructors through anonymous surveys on the Moodle platform, which closes the quality loop and enables rapid responses to potential issues.

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

Stakeholder involvement in the Cosmetology study programme is present and mainly reflected through the structure and implementation of studies, particularly via interaction between students, lecturers, and practical training environments. The programme includes both in-house and external practical training. Approximately 60% of first–second year students complete internships externally, while final-year practice is organised within the College. Although this provides diverse exposure, external placements do not always ensure a full range of treatments.

Cooperation with social partners appears well established. Businesses and institutions report smooth and frequent communication with lecturers. A long-term collaboration with an institution for people with disabilities demonstrates strong social engagement. Social partners value the programme's focus on safety, procedures, and holistic understanding, as well as the involvement of lecturer-practitioners. Also, a continued communication between lecturers and graduates also contributes to a supportive network.

The programme also responds to labour market needs, for example through the introduction of the Beauty Service Management module, which includes social media skills relevant for new specialists.

At the same time, stakeholder involvement is not yet supported by a clearly structured feedback system. The College does not clearly indicate a systematic collection of input from social partners or

clients, which limits consistent use of feedback for programme improvement. Additionally, some partners noted that external internships are sometimes more formal (“for signature”) than practice-based.

Overall, stakeholder involvement is evident, but a more structured and documented quality assurance approach would strengthen its effectiveness.

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

Utenos kolegija systematically collects, uses, and publishes information about the Cosmetology program, the results of its external evaluations, and improvement processes, in accordance with the principle of public accountability. Data collection is a centralized process divided according to the responsibilities of individual units:

• The Academic Affairs Department is responsible for collecting and analysing data on student progress, admission results, dropout rates, and financial aid awarded, using the Student Academic Database (SADB) system.

• The Career and Communications Department collects anonymized data on graduate employability and the results of periodic surveys conducted among employers.

• The Faculty of Medicine Administration maintains records of academic progress for individual cohorts.

• The International Cooperation Department collects information on the academic mobility of students and faculty.

• The E-learning Center monitors the development of competencies in distance learning and the materials available on the Moodle platform.

The collected information is utilised at both the strategic and operational levels. The Deputy Director for Studies and Research analyses the results of scientific and research activities and quality assurance reports and submits them to the Academic Council. At the program level, the main results of internal evaluations of the Cosmetology program are discussed at meetings of the Study Program Committee (SPK), department meetings, the dean’s office, and the Faculty Council.

Public communication is carried out through a multi-channel structure:

1. College website: This is the primary source of information, where program descriptions, admission requirements, learning outcomes, qualifications awarded, results of external evaluations (SKVC), and improvement plans are published.
2. AIKOS database: Where information about the program for prospective students is updated on an ongoing basis.
3. Social media: The HEI maintains active communication on Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, Twitter, and YouTube. The communication style varies depending on the audience -information for applicants and students (e.g., on Facebook) is more visual and interactive, while communication directed at faculty and social partners is more formal.

The results of the 2025 student surveys, after analysis by the Committee on the Quality of Studies, served as the basis for formulating specific recommendations for the Department (e.g., regarding the objectivity of assessment) and the Faculty administration (e.g., regarding the optimisation of class schedules), which confirms the practical use of the collected data to improve the quality of education.

7.1.4. Student feedback is collected and analysed

Utenos kolegija has a well-established system for collecting and analyzing student feedback, which forms an integral part of its internal study quality assurance system. This process is coordinated by the Study Quality Committee, which is responsible for preparing and updating survey questionnaires and disseminating the results of the surveys within the academic community.
Feedback is collected systematically through several communication channels:
1. Semester surveys: Conducted at the end of each fall semester to evaluate the organization of studies, course load, assessment methods, and the availability of material resources.
2. Faculty evaluations: Students have the opportunity to anonymously evaluate individual faculty members at every stage of their studies via the Moodle Virtual Learning Environment. These surveys are used to assess the quality of teaching, the relevance of the information provided, and the culture of communication.
3. Graduate Surveys: Conducted annually upon graduation, these surveys focus on evaluating preparation for the job market, the relevance of the subjects studied, and overall satisfaction with the teaching process.
4. Direct mechanisms: Feedback is also collected during academic group meetings with academic advisors, Department meetings, and through the analysis of complaints and suggestions submitted to a special feedback box.
Survey results undergo detailed quantitative and qualitative analysis. They are discussed at meetings of the Study Program Committee (SPC), Department meetings, and the Faculty of Medicine Council. Based on this, the SPC identifies areas requiring improvement and monitors the implementation of corrective decisions.

The practical application of this mechanism is confirmed by survey results from 2023–2025. For example, in a survey conducted in February–March 2025 that included Cosmetology students, respondents highly rated the relevance of the teaching materials, the objectivity of the grading, and the courtesy of the administrative staff. Data from the 2025 surveys formed the basis for formulating specific recommendations for the program, such as optimizing class schedules for the entire semester and introducing measures aimed at further strengthening the partnership between faculty and students. Upon receiving the survey results regarding their work, lecturers are required to incorporate the feedback into their annual self-evaluation of their activities.

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 7.1.)

The team of experts states that Utenos kolegija has a well-structured and formalised internal quality assurance system that is integrated into the day-to-day operational practice of the Cosmetology programme.

This system is based on clear regulatory frameworks, such as the Quality Handbook and detailed institutional procedures. The key body responsible for quality is the Study Programme Committee (SPK), which ensures a multi-stakeholder perspective by including lecturers, student representatives, and social partners.

The “quality loop” mechanism is implemented through a systematic semester- and annual-cycle process. The team positively assesses the fact that quality analyses are based on data from multiple sources, including student and graduate surveys as well as employers’ opinions. The practical use of this information is confirmed by concrete corrective actions, such as the optimisation of class schedules and the improvement of assessment methods in response to student suggestions submitted in 2025. The use of the Moodle platform to collect anonymous feedback on lecturers is an effective tool for monitoring teaching quality.

Stakeholder involvement (7.1.2) is particularly visible in thesis defences and the implementation of professional placements. Social partners actively participate in the work of the SPK and examination committees, ensuring a strong connection between the programme and labour market requirements. An example of the programme's responsiveness to the needs of its environment is the introduction of a module on beauty services management, including social media skills. Nevertheless, the team notes that the feedback system could be more structured in order to avoid comments that are overly general.
In the area of public information (7.1.3), the institution demonstrates a high level of activity through multi-channel communication. The website, the AIKOS database, and social media platforms (Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, YouTube) are used to effectively disseminate information about the programme, learning outcomes, and external evaluation results.
Despite these strengths, the team of experts identifies areas requiring reinforcement. A key challenge is internal information flow, which relies to a large extent on verbal communication, bypassing official email channels, which may limit transparency. In addition, the quality management system should integrate to a greater extent indicators relating to research innovation and the impact of international mobility (BIP, Erasmus+) in order to better monitor the achievement of the institution's strategic objectives.

AREA 7: CONCLUSIONS

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

COMMENDATIONS

1. A comprehensive quality assurance framework, based on the Quality Manual and clearly defined procedures, which ensures consistency of activities at the institutional and departmental levels.

2. Active and effective engagement of stakeholders, especially social partners, in the processes of evaluating final theses and developing students' practical skills.

3. Transparency and accessibility of information, achieved through multi-channel external communication, build trust among applicants and the socio-economic environment.

4. An efficient survey and feedback system, in which student opinions collected via the Moodle platform lead to tangible changes in the organisation of the study process.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To address shortcomings

1. Strengthen internal communication within the College by diversifying communication channels (such as emails and newsletters sent to staff, in addition to regular meetings,

website posts and verbal communication) to ensure that strategic goals are better known and understood by the entire teaching staff.

For further improvement

1. Enhance the internal quality assurance system by integrating real-time data analytics dashboards within the Academic Information System (AIS/SADB). These tools should aggregate automated feedback from student surveys in Moodle and correlate them with graduates' career tracking data from the national EMIS/ŠVIS system, enabling the Study Programme Committee (SPC) to perform evidence-based curricular adjustments and respond proactively to technological shifts in the cosmetology sector.

2. Systematising the monitoring of the impact of quality improvement by publishing annual, concise summaries of changes implemented in response to stakeholder suggestions (closing the feedback loop publicly).

3. Expand the scope of quality monitoring to include more detailed indicators regarding teaching innovation and the outcomes of academic mobility (BIP, Erasmus+) to strengthen the program's international dimension.

V. SUMMARY

The review panel wishes to express its sincere gratitude to the College leadership, the self-evaluation team, and the entire academic community of Utenos kolegija for their hospitality and for the effort invested in preparing a comprehensive Self-Evaluation Report. The site visit was well organised, and discussions with various stakeholder groups were conducted in an atmosphere of openness, transparency, and constructiveness, which greatly facilitated the panel's evaluation.

The expert panel identified several significant strengths in the assessed areas. The programme is characterized by a very high level of practical training (35.7% of the total workload), which is effectively integrated with theoretical knowledge through the application of Miller's competency pyramid and Bloom's taxonomy. This ensures a logical progression of skills, resulting in a high level of professional confidence among students. The programme achieves impressive results in graduate employment, with a rate of 92.3% in 2023. Moreover, the final thesis topics are strongly aligned with regional needs (86%), demonstrating the institution's commitment to the local socio-economic environment. The UK has established a robust, multi-level support system covering academic, financial, and psychological assistance. Recognition was given to the remedial support mechanisms (KCRD) and the proactive approach to inclusiveness, including the use of assistive technologies for students with special needs. The specialized practical laboratories are comprehensively equipped with cosmetology equipment that closely reflects the real professional working environment. The systematic and mature use of Moodle (covering more than 81% of the programme) provides a reliable digital learning platform. The internal quality assurance system is well structured and includes an effective "quality loop," in which student feedback collected through Moodle leads to concrete organizational and didactic improvements.

Despite the overall positive assessment, the panel identified certain shortcomings that require the institution's attention. More attention should be paid to the quality assurance of the final assessment: the institution should gradually advance towards a formal, systematic procedure for assigning, registering, and obtaining prior approval for final thesis topics. Although the practical laboratories are modern, certain resources should be invested in computers and other equipment for the College to meet its latest strategic plans concerning the aging population.

Both outgoing and incoming student mobility remain limited, with incoming flows concentrated mainly in one country (Latvia). The panel recommends broadening the geographical diversity of partnerships and strengthening staff English language skills to support wider internationalization efforts. Although research output has increased, individual scientific achievements (publications and projects) remain unstable. The programme also faces a vulnerability due to the small number of staff with PhD qualifications, which may affect the long-term sustainability of a research-based learning environment.

Internal communication and soft skills: the strategic flow of information relies too heavily on verbal communication, potentially hindering transparency. In addition, there is a need to strengthen the emphasis on soft skills and entrepreneurship in the syllabi to better prepare graduates for the competitive beauty market.

In conclusion, the expert panel found that the Cosmetology programme at Utenos kolegija provides a solid and professionally relevant education. By addressing the identified technical and procedural shortcomings, the institution will be well-positioned to further strengthen its academic excellence and international standing.