

JOINT OPINION BY THE EXPERTS GROUP  
ON THE ASSESSMENT OF THE HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION OR COLLEGE

“HOTEL SCHOOL” Hotel Management College

The experts group recommends / does not recommend to accredit the higher education institution/ college.

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14.09.2020 (date)

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# I. Aims, Objectives, and Management of the Higher Education Institution/ College

## *Analysis*

- 1. The aims and objectives of the higher education institution/ college are clearly defined and attainable, as evidenced by the strategic planning documents.**

In 2016 the “HOTEL SCHOOL” Hotel Management College (hereinafter – College) Board elaborated the College Development Strategy 2016 – 2022. In 2019 the College Development Strategy was updated in line with the previously achieved results during the period of 2016-2019, as well as the planned initiatives, suggested by the College Founder and staff (academic, general and students). The College has an organisational strategy, which clearly indicates the College’s mission, vision and strategic directions, although the bases of the strategic analysis (SWOT and background) is not too justified. According to the information of the Ministry of Education and Science of Latvia, there are 3 other higher education institutions (hereinafter – HEIs) in Latvia (Turība University, ISMA, Alberta College) offering study programmes in this field and in 1<sup>st</sup> level of higher education, 2 HEIs in Estonia (Estonian Entrepreneurship University of Applied Sciences and University of Tartu) and 11 in Lithuania (e.g. Kaunas University of Applied Engineering Sciences). The SWOT analysis does not bring out the main threats concerning the College plan to admit students from 3<sup>rd</sup> countries – strategic risk analysis is missing and the issues which were raised during the IA (Institutional accreditation) weren’t mentioned in the analysis (e.g. employees of low-income sectors are not able to pay tuition fees, etc.). The intended target group is not clearly given in any College strategic document. In their strategy, the College has set up strategic directions and some general key performance indicators (hereinafter – KPIs), which should show whether the College is moving toward set goals. The College also has sectoral action plans (Scientific research work plan, Methodological work plan, Staff professional development plan, Procurement plan for informative resources and methodological resources, Investment plan in infrastructure and material and technical base, Marketing plan) which are in coherence with the strategic directions of the College and once a year the College makes a summary of the implementation of the action plan to get feedback for the next annual plans. Although the College has set up some KPIs in their strategy (e.g. 25% of students in mobility, 150 students by 2022, etc), proper analysis and monitoring process of the achievement of KPIs is missing. At the time of evaluation (23.07.2020.) the College has approx. 25 students, new potential students for 2020/2021 are not matriculated yet, and achieving the KPI of the College (to have 150 students by 2022) seems to be unattainable (concerning also the missing process of intended admission of foreign students from 3<sup>rd</sup> countries and the length of this process – one process takes around a year and the College does not have proper methodology, marketing plan and legal admission process (incl. admission criteria, etc) for candidates from 3<sup>rd</sup> countries).

- 2. The higher education institution/ college has developed a management structure and mechanisms, which are efficient in reaching the aims of the higher education institution/ college. The process management is development-oriented, the stakeholders are involved in the decision-making process, and the decisions are made efficiently.**

According to the College Regulations, the main decision-making body in matters of education and research is the College Council, where all the representatives of the necessary stakeholders (academic staff, employers, students and board) are represented. The administrative and economic management of the College is carried out by the Director, who is the official representative of the College in all matters and also a member of the College Council. The College is quite a small institution, which allows for borderless cooperation between management bodies (Board, College Council, Director) and staff, the possibility to communicate quickly and effectively with students and partners. At the same time, a small number of employees means also fragmented work tasks and big workload in different job positions

(one employee needs to deal with many different tasks to get a full-time position) and gives space for complications in management roles and relations (e.g. due to the vacant Director position, a Board member is also a member of all other decision-making bodies – Council, acting director and quality manager), which is not in full coherence with good management practice (the same person gives tasks, confirms those, implements, monitors, assesses and gives approval). Such multitasking is not sustainable and although the competition of the new Director is ongoing, the management processes (incl. decision making) are not clear and transparent. Hiring of the new director allows College to decrease the responsibilities of the Board member, but abovementioned multitasking and role-division problems remain.

The College regulations, strategy and other management documents (also the meeting minutes, reports and protocols) confirm that representatives of the most important stakeholders (except alumni) are involved in the decision-making and development processes. At the same time, according to the evaluation meetings with the different stakeholders, the communication between representatives and their community is not too effective – teachers (who are not the members of the Council) know nothing about the self-evaluation report (hereinafter – SER), staff didn't know about the strategy, etc.

**3. The principles and aims of the higher education institution/ college for the cooperation with the employers and sectoral representatives have been defined, and their attainment contributes to the achievement of the aims of the higher education institution/ college and the implementation of its strategy.**

There is no specific employer-cooperation oriented strategic aim or direction given in the College Strategy. Only one strategic direction (No 8, international cooperation and internationalisation) indicates indirectly the intentions concerning employers and states *“to promote College collaboration with recognized universities of Europe and the world and research centres of a similar profile, as well as hospitality industry employers abroad for the purpose of implementing the internationalization of the College. Ensure that at least 25% of students and 20% of academic staff participate in mobilities each year; to motivate students to work in high-level foreign hotels, thus facilitating their integration into the European labour market, building strategic partnerships to tackle common challenges in the hospitality sector”*. In the SER (Pg. 13) the College brings out that they select its partners carefully, by applying strict quality requirements – only local and foreign companies that represent high-level hotels (4-5 stars) are selected, as well as job agencies and recruitment companies that recruit only qualified staff for hotels. It can be said that the College has some principles and aims connected to employers, however, according to the evaluation meeting discussion, the aims are not measurable, and the principles are unfamiliar for the staff and partner employers.

According to the feedback from the evaluation meeting with the employers, the College shows initiative to collaborate with them, especially in the field on internship and study visits into their hotels. As strategic aim appoints, employers and students confirmed during the evaluation meetings, the students can do their internship in 4-5 stars hotels in Latvia and abroad. Other, specific, collaboration with employers is described in part VI.

**4. The graduates of the higher education institution/ college are employed corresponding to the acquired qualification/ degree or in another sector, and the higher education institution/ college develops forecast prospects with regard to the employment of graduates.**

According to the SER, since 2017 up to the evaluation visit (23.07.20) only 15 students have graduated from the higher education level in this College. According to the information provided by the College, the majority of the alumni are working in the particular sector. The College Graduate Survey 2017 (5 alumni) indicated that 100% of respondents (not clear, how many of 15 graduates responded to the questionnaire) were employed in local or foreign hospitality companies. The Graduate Survey in autumn/winter 2019 (2018, 2019, and 2020 graduates) indicated that 86% of respondents were employed in the hospitality or related field, 71% of respondents said that their job responsibilities include the organization of hospitality services, while another 29% said they partially do (according to

the SER). Despite COVID-19, employers of this sector still see a need for the employees in this sector, but mostly the need is in the level of specialists, not managers.

- 5. The feedback mechanisms and other mechanisms for data collection and analysis, as implemented by the higher education institution/ college, are efficient, and the higher education institution/ college conducts surveys the outcomes of which are evaluated and taken into consideration when improving its own performance and study programmes.**

Feedback is collected mainly through five surveys (SER, page 14): Annual Student Satisfaction Survey, Student survey on the performance of the Academic staff of the College during the semester courses, Employer survey on the College student performance during the internship, Employer survey on the College graduate professional qualifications, and Graduate Employment survey. Additionally, the academic staff is asked for feedback for curriculum development. Some of the surveys' results are used to improve the processes and study organisation. The employers' feedback is collected using evaluation sheet of the student after the internship. According to the College managers confirmation, this feedback is used for the updating the study programme, however, no examples of particular changes in study programme or summaries of the feedback weren't provided. In general, according to the collected information during the evaluation meeting, only some surveys finalize with a report/summary available for all the connected parties. Therefore, the feedback collecting and implementing is not fully systematic and purpose oriented. One of the strengths of the College is being a small institution, and informal processes help to involve different stakeholders in the oral feedback discussions. If one of the institution's aims is to grow, then formal processes must be developed to cover all levels and important providers of feedback, because informal processes (e.g. The Head of the Academic Department can personally speak with every student and solve his/her problems) are not possible when the institution is bigger.

- 6. A support system related to education and career development to promote students' employment, a social and/or emotional support system, residence and scholarship offer, and a support system for foreign students are in place, implemented, and available.**

The College provides career support service for the students to mediate internship places and suitable job vacancies from the hotel industry (Prakse.lv, Hobsco.com, etc.). The study department offers assistance in study and student loan applications and the provision of accommodation facilities and advice on discounts related to public transport and tuition fees, etc. According to the interview with the College's staff, educational support (e.g. concerning study-debt, re-examination, etc.) is provided mostly by the Head of the Academic Department, individually for every student. Although the personal approach for every student is undoubtedly student-centred, the College should pay attention to finding alternatives to set up a sustainable students' educational counselling system to decrease the workload of the staff and in the case of rapid student count increase (as stated in the College's strategy). All support services are offered in English. According to the information given by the College management, there are no students from 3rd countries studying at the higher education level – since the College's development plans are based around international admissions, a cultural and migration-related support system must be developed. The College does not offer psychological assistance for the students.

- 7. The information published on the website of the higher education institution/ college regarding the offered study programmes complies with the information available in the official registers. It provides important information for candidates and students and is published in all languages in which the study programmes are implemented.**

The College's official webpage is fully available in English, Latvian and Russian, and provides the minimum of the necessary information about the study programmes and other information about the College and studies. At the same time, there is no clear difference between higher education programmes and studies in other programmes (vocational education and training, continuing education, etc.) and therefore the structure of the webpage where all the programmes are given in the same list is misleading for the candidates and students. The College does not comply with ESG 1.8, i.e., “Higher

*education institutions/colleges shall regularly publish clear, accurate, objective, up-to-date and easily accessible information about their activities, including the offered programmes".* The College does not follow this principle in terms of providing objective information about their programmes advertised in their webpage – the study programme information in the webpage must be unambiguous and in accordance with the law, concerning the study programme level and provided qualification.

### *Conclusions by specifying strengths and weaknesses of the described criteria*

The College has a strategy up to 2022, where the College's mission, vision and strategic directions are given. The College has created a general system for creating, implementing and evaluating their strategic management, but although the KPIs are stated, there is no clear system for their monitoring and assessment. The representatives of the stakeholders are involved in the decision-making processes, but the decisions and other information do not reach the wider audience. Personal communication (e.g. counselling and support) between College administrative staff and students is positive but not sustainable if the College is going to grow (as is highlighted in the College strategy). The information about offered study programmes level and qualification obtained in the College's webpage is misleading for the students and potential students. The College values the collaboration with the employers of this field from Latvia and abroad, but their employer-oriented strategy lacks the clear aims and indicators concerning the cooperation with the employers.

#### **Strengths:**

- Due to the small number of students and staff, face-to-face and personal communication between people is possible and applied;
- The College has set up strategic directions which cover main strategic partners and core processes and has some KPIs to indicate College activity toward aims;
- Representatives of the main stakeholders are involved in core processes and decision-making bodies.

#### **Weaknesses:**

- There is a lack of evidence-based approach in the strategy and some directions/aims are unattainable due to the current level of KPIs;
- The College is managerially unprepared for the achievement of their strategic aims (150 students, 3rd country students, etc.) due to a lack of formalized 3rd country student admissions process, no cultural risks analysis and counselling preparation, etc.;
- Fragmented and controversial roles of the management and other administrative staff;
- There is no specific aims and indicators established for the collaboration with the employers;
- The information on the College's webpage is misleading when listing all of the institution's programmes on the same list and does not distinguish clearly between HE and other programmes.

Criterion	Evaluation			
	Excellent	Good	Average	Poor
1.			X	
2.			X	
3.			X	
4.		X		
5.		X		
6.		X		
7.			X	

## II. Internal Quality Assurance System

### Analysis

- 1. The quality policy has been defined and is publicly available. The stakeholders are involved in defining the policy. The aims of the quality policy are associated with the strategic directions and aims of the higher education institution/ college.**

The College has defined its quality policy in the Quality Management Policy document, which is also publicly available on the website of the College. The quality policy is given in 48 pages, summarising a wide range of information; however, it should be noted that after the visit to the College and discussions with administrative and academic staff, students, graduates and employers, experts believe this policy works to a limited extent. At the meeting with the administrative staff, no one was able to answer the question of who was responsible for the quality management system at the College, moreover, this question could not be answered by the internal quality auditor appointed by the College.

The College has not defined in its quality policy, and during the face-to-face meeting with the College representatives it has not been confirmed, what the College's internal quality management processes are, how they are implemented, how they are monitored, how the analysis and evaluation of process execution and performance results are carried out, and who is responsible for what. However, the quality policy states that the quality management system evaluates effective management processes, for the implementation of which appropriate policies have been developed and resources are required. During the visit to the College, none of the persons met by the experts could tell (including the acting director) what these processes were and how they worked. Some information was obtained about how the study process took place, who was responsible for it, and how the practical classes and lectures were organised. The College draws up an annual work plan and reviews it at the end of the year. As a positive point, it should be noted that as already mentioned in the SER and as confirmed by the students during the meeting, student surveys are conducted, the survey results are analysed, discussed with students and solutions to problems/conflict situations are found. Lecturers and employers, in their turn, confirmed that they were not involved in such surveys. The only survey conducted by the lecturers is their self-assessment, but the lecturers could not answer the questions of how their self-assessment results were used and contributed to their work and performance. During the conversation with the lecturers and the organiser of the internship, no one could answer what kind of contract they concluded with the College (an employment contract or a contract for work-performance).

The Quality Management Policy states that *"The College has decided to adopt the BTEC quality standards for vocational education based on the following considerations: quality management standards are developed specifically for higher education institutions and BTEC is a reliable and internationally recognised partner serving as a European and global quality label in the higher education area"*. The information provided and the subsequent references to the BTEC (Pearson Qualification as a provider) quality standard are not entirely correct, this standard is not recognised on a higher education level and does not cover all the areas important on the institutional level of higher education. Undoubtedly, it is positive that the College cooperates and tries to integrate best practises and experiences in their activities; however, it can't be considered the College's own internal quality management system. BTEC/Pearson relies more on study and student assessment procedures rather than on the quality management of the institution as a whole. In practice, this is also confirmed by the Quality Policy of the College and answers received during the meeting with the internal auditor, i.e., the internal auditor of the College conducts an internal audit to verify the truthfulness, objectivity and equality of student performance assessment. In this case, the auditor does not evaluate the quality management system of the College in terms of the institution as a whole.

The system developed and described in the Quality Management Policy is formal and, again, does not cover the whole institution; the quality management system is partially documented, but at the same time there is a lack of effective application in practice, especially at the management level, as well as among

structural units. The quality management cycle (Deming's PDCA) is not fully implemented, there is a lack of evidence about systematic and continuous improvements of the processes and approaches (e.g. conclusive feedback for feedback givers (stakeholders) and clear justification (based on Strategic directions and KPIs), suggestions and feedback are not used).

**2. A mechanism for the implementation of the quality policy has been developed and it ensures the implementation of the policy. Persons responsible for the implementation of the policy have been appointed.**

The SER states that the Quality Management Policy of the College has been developed taking into account the College specificities – the management and organisational processes, its vision and strategic objectives, as well as its internal culture and decision-making model. During the evaluation meeting, experts were not provided with information/specific documents regarding the management and organisational processes of the College. According to the SER, experts had the opportunity to receive partial information on how the quality management process was organised related to certain stages of the study process – study programme development, course planning and implementation, examination planning and control. The self-assessment report states (p. 17) that all phases of quality development and assurance, except the first (planning), are described in detail in the Quality Management Policy of the College. The Quality Management Policy of the College mainly describes the phases related to the study process itself, not to the quality management mechanism of the institution itself. As indicated in the self-assessment report, the Quality Management Policy is developed so that all parties involved in the educational process evaluate, search for and analyse the causes of non-compliance, as well as identify measures to eliminate them, but at the same time the College does not have a mechanism and risk/cause analysis, evaluation, and prevention. The College has frequently used Pearson as a quality management auditor in its self-assessment report and the Quality Management Policy, as well as referred to it during a face-to-face meeting with administrative staff. Although the report states that Pearson has carried out regular audits, it was possible to document one such audit during the on-site visit (25–26 May 2020). According to the summary of Pearson's audit, it is clear that Pearson has audited three BTEC education programmes (the implementation of which in the Latvian education space is not legally established). Accordingly, Pearson has evaluated the content and evaluation of the study programmes, rather than the College as an educational institution as a whole and has not evaluated the first-level professional higher education programme officially implemented by the College. The internal quality management mechanism reflected by the College is related to the internal quality management of the study programme, it does not form a mechanism for the internal quality management of the College as an institution. There is also no clear, comprehensible mechanism regarding the parties involved in the self-assessment process. Although, as noted above, the information is described in the self-assessment report and in the Quality Management Policy, this information was not confirmed during the on-site visit. Persons involved in the discussion were not able to provide information (except the acting director) on how they are involved and what their role is in the internal quality management mechanism.

During the meeting with the acting director of the College, it was confirmed that she was responsible for Quality Management, (see also information given in criteria 1).

The goals of the Quality Management Policy are partially related to the strategic directions.

Principle 4 of Public Information within the Quality Management Policy of the College (Pg. 40) states that information provided by the College should give a fair and accurate reflection of the higher education it offers. Taking into account the fact that the College issues first level professional higher education diplomas that are not recognised by the state and awards the professional qualification of hotel service manager (Level 5 of the Latvian Qualifications Framework), which is stipulated in a learning agreement that includes a clause stating that it is a non-accredited educational institution, it constitutes a breach of good practise in the College activities, which threatens the prestige of education not only within the College itself but throughout the higher education area.



### **3. The internal quality assurance system and its procedures are effective. Indicators for achieving the aims and objectives of the higher education institution/ college have been determined.**

The College does not have internal quality procedures in place to cover all College activities, so their implementation is ineffective. Confirmation about the existence of such procedures and their functioning was not provided to the experts during the visit. The College has partially developed procedures related to the assessment of study results. The College has no indicators to achieve its goals, although the SER states that one of the strategic goals is to reach 150 students in first-level professional higher education by 2022, and the only indicator for achieving this goal is obtaining accreditation. Within the College, it is not clear who is responsible for the flow of information and statistics, their accounting, analysis. During a face-to-face meeting with the administrative staff, including the study programme director, the head of the Academic Department, the internal quality auditor and the acting director, no one could tell how many students and graduates were in the first level professional higher education programme. This number was different for each and they differed from the information submitted in the framework of the SER available in the State Education Information System and reflected in the reports on the Latvian higher education by years<sup>1</sup>. Representatives of the College explain this situation by the fact that data on the number of students are obtained for different time periods.

In this case, the information provided by the representatives of College administration also differed from the information provided by the students and lecturers of the College. For example, being asked whether students from third countries were studying at the first level professional higher education programme, the representatives of the College answered “no”, while the students and lecturers confirmed that their groups included about two-thirds of students from third countries, such as Pakistan, Uzbekistan, etc. (*see also information given in criteria 2*)

### **4. The internal quality assurance system has been developed in compliance with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG).**

The internal quality management system of the College partially incorporates the standards and guidelines of the European Higher Education Area (hereinafter – ESG); as noted above, the internal quality system is not fully in line with ESG 1.1, as it is not clear what internal quality assurance processes the College has. Regarding ESG 1.4, the experts did not receive any confirmation that the College had established procedures and tools for collecting and compiling information, although at the same time separate internal regulatory enactments have been developed and published. It should be noted that according to ESG 1.4 the College misleads both prospective students and graduates by issuing a diploma and its supplement which are visually similar to a state-recognised diploma.

Moreover, in this diploma that is not recognised by the state, the College indicates that the graduate receives a first level professional higher education diploma and is awarded the professional qualification of hotel service manager, which corresponds to the fourth level professional qualification, as well as Clause 5.1 of the diploma supplement indicates “*further study opportunities: the diploma of first level professional higher education gives the right to continue education at the higher education level and to obtain the 6th professional qualification level of the LQF/EQF. Continuing studies at Bachelor or second level higher professional education programmes, transfer of credit points is possible*”. At the same time, Section 9 of the Law on Higher Education Institutions (2 November 1995) (hereinafter – LHEI) determines the conditions under which state-recognised diplomas can be issued, and one of these criteria is that the respective HEI or college has to be accredited.

During the expert visit, ESG 1.7 integration into the internal quality system of the College was partially confirmed, i.e., the College monitors student progress; it has some information about the graduates and their career, as well as student surveys are conducted. However, no confirmation was obtained on how other information (finances (income, expenses), material and technical base, equipment, staff,

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<sup>1</sup> Higher Education Statistics published by the MoES, <https://izm.gov.lv/lv/publikacijas-un-statistika/statistika-par-izglitiba/statistika-par-augstako-izglitibu>

cooperation, cooperation partners, competitiveness, dynamics of the number of students, advertising, etc.) related to the activities of the College is collected and analysed, and how it is used to ensure the internal quality of the College.

During the evaluation visit, students confirmed that they had chosen to study at this College because after the graduation they would receive two higher education diplomas – Latvian and British (BTEC). BTEC does not offer higher education but instead qualification. The Acting Director of the College states at the website of the College that *“graduates of BTEC programmes who graduate from the SCHOOL receive the same diploma as British college graduates. It is no different and offers the same opportunities as to British young people, including the opportunity to continue studies at the most prestigious British universities. At the same time, the SCHOOL students save a lot of money and can start an international level education in their usual environment – here in Latvia.”* Although getting acquainted with the information about BTEC 5 provided at the home page of the College, in Latvia BTEC study programmes are considered to be non-formal education, because as a result of studying at BTEC programmes an educational document recognised by the Latvian state is not issued, but rather an educational document recognised by Great Britain.

During the visit, the administration of the College could not confirm the legal basis for the implementation of other state qualification programmes in Latvia, as well as Clause 16 of the College Admission Regulations of BTEC 5 (UK diploma) educational programmes *“In order to obtain a Residence Permit for full time studies in Latvia HOTEL SCHOOL is going to register Non EU Citizens to equivalent study programme developed and accredited in Latvia.”* This information indicates that the College's requests for Residence Permit for Non-EU Citizens indicates a false purpose of entry.

The College misleads potential students about the diploma they will receive<sup>2</sup>. The diploma is drawn up in accordance with Cabinet Regulation No 202 (16 April 2013) “Procedures for Issuing State-Recognised Documents Attesting Higher Education”. By issuing such diplomas, which the experts ascertained during their visit, the College has not complied with the requirements of Section 9 of the LHEI, which stipulates that an HEI or college is entitled to issue state-recognised diplomas for the acquisition of the relevant study programme, if the condition *“the relevant higher education institution or college is accredited”* is met. Relevant Regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers No. 141 (20 March 2001) “Regulations regarding the State Standard for First Level Professional Higher Education” stipulate that *“a diploma regarding first level professional higher education, that also attests to the acquired fourth level of professional qualification, shall be received by a student who has acquired the programme and passed a qualification examination, obtaining an evaluation therein that is not less than 4 – “almost average”*. Thus, only a document attesting state-recognised vocational education certifies the acquisition of certain vocational education and professional qualification. After a face-to-face meeting with a college graduate who received such a diploma, the experts obtained confirmation that the graduate had started studies at an HEI in Latvia, being enrolled in the 3rd year to obtain a bachelor's degree.

##### **5. Study programmes are developed, approved, and reviewed in compliance with the strategy and internal regulatory enactments of the higher education institution/ college by involving the teaching staff, students, representatives of employers, and other stakeholders.**

To ensure the development of the study programme, the College has developed internal regulatory enactments – The Procedure for the Development, Examination and Updating of the Study Programme and the Procedure for the Development, Updating and Use of Study Course Descriptions. The academic staff is involved in the development and improvement of study courses. Students can express their opinion about the study programme, its content, etc., in the form of a questionnaire. Head of the curriculum is responsible for the study programme development process and is supported by the College Council.

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<sup>2</sup> College issued diploma and its supplement sample for the higher education study programme, [http://hotelschool.lv/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/VPO\\_diploma\\_paraugs\\_2020.pdf](http://hotelschool.lv/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/VPO_diploma_paraugs_2020.pdf)

The Quality Management Policy of the College states that employers are involved in the planning, development and implementation of the study programme; however, this was not confirmed during the meeting with employers. The representatives of the College also mentioned that there had been some meetings with industry representatives, but not regularly. One of the employers indicated that he participated in the work of a Final Examination Commission. Employers positively assessed the international study environment and students' knowledge of a foreign language, as well as the fact that the College provided good basic knowledge and organised lectures outside the College premises, i.e., in hotels, in the real work environment.

**6. The study process at the higher education institution/ college has been developed and is organised by applying the principles of student-centred learning and ensuring the recognition of competences acquired outside formal education or through professional experience and the learning outcomes achieved in prior learning.**

The College has developed the Regulation on the Recognition of Competences Acquired outside Formal Education or in Professional Experience and of the Learning Outcomes Achieved in Previous Education. Until now, the Regulation has only been applied to the internship. Lecturers should be more involved in the implementation of student-centred studies in their subjects. The College has developed eight student-centred education principles (Pg. 25, SER), which is good, but, unfortunately, lecturers did not know anything about it and the principles are not in coherence with the general outcome-based study principles and European Commission recommendations (e.g. learning outcomes (which student should obtain after finishing the particular course/module/curriculum) are in the centre of study development (inc. preparation) process etc.).

Students are involved in the evaluation of the study process at the College; student surveys are organised twice a year, the results of the surveys are summarised and analysed. According to the Regulation of the College, the students are involved in the work of the College Council. However, during the meeting, they could not tell what specific issues were discussed at the Council and what their role was. The lecturers also could not explain what kind of support they provide to students, what teaching/pedagogical methods were used in the study process.

Although experts did not have the opportunity to ascertain a specific procedure for resolving students' complaints, during the conversation with students they confirmed that their complaints were heard.

*Conclusions by specifying strengths and weaknesses of the described criteria*

The College has developed a Quality Management Policy that is publicly available, as well as it has internal regulations. The College draws up a self-assessment of the study field every year, gaining also experience in the development of self-assessments for the College. The administrative team of the College is small; thus, there is an impression that everyone at the College is responsible for everything, there are no specific competencies and responsibilities distinguished, which also makes it difficult to get clear information about quality management processes at the College. Although the Quality Management Policy describes the activities and responsibilities of each, in practice this mechanism does not work. There is also not clear who is responsible for college self - assessment report who is involved in college self - assessment process. In the discussion with students about their involvement in the quality management process and motivation to study, none of the students do not perceive higher education as a value in and of itself, but more as an opportunity to acquire skills to work and get two diplomas at once. It is not a good "signal", higher education is not only important for getting good practical competencies, but also for continuing studies; employers also confirmed the mentioned need for continuous studies.

***Strengths:***

- Involvement of students in the assessment of study quality and provision of feedback;

- Knowledgeable and motivated Head of Academic Department;
- On the way to the development of the quality management system, the College has written the Quality Management Policy, internal regulatory enactments regarding admission, recognition of previous experience and education, organisation of studies and examinations and organisation of internship, protection of personal data.

**Weaknesses:**

- The Quality Management Policy has been written but needs to be improved to cover all procedures related to the internal quality management of the College and must be implemented in practice.
- The internal quality management processes at the College are not clearly defined, as well as it is unclear how their implementation takes place, how the processes are monitored, how the implementation and performance of the processes are analysed and evaluated, and who is responsible for them.
- The College has not fully recognized and identified the standards set by the ESG and has not paid special attention to them (ESG 1.1, 1.4, 1.7, 1.8).
- Student-centred learning/education is not fully understood and applied.
- The students are aware that they will get two recognized diplomas after the graduation, but the validity of the diplomas, according to the Latvian regulation is unclear.

Criterion	Evaluation			
	Excellent	Good	Average	Poor
1.			X	
2.			X	
3.			X	
4.			X	
5.		X		
6.			X	

### III. Resources

#### Analysis

- 1. The infrastructure<sup>3</sup> of the higher education institution/ college is suitable for the needs and specific features of the higher education institution/ college, and it contributes to achieving the aims of the higher education institution/ college. The infrastructure is available for the students and the teaching staff to achieve the learning outcomes. The higher education institution/ college uses a systematic approach to long-term development of the infrastructure resources.**

The College building is located in the Old Town of Riga in Smilšu Street 3 and managed by the Founder on the basis of a long-term lease contract; the contract is valid until 2025 moreover with an agreement draft for further expansion when the Hotel School becomes accredited. The area of the premises currently being used is **480 m<sup>2</sup>**, which includes:

- 3 auditoriums with high ceilings and large windows that provide lots of daylight, equipped with tables, chairs and multimedia systems (portable computer, projector, sound equipment) and whiteboard, flipchart. Mostly everything is in neat condition, except some traces of wear on chairs, projectors with VGA cable only (instead of HDMI);
- 1 computer class with 16 computers, connected to the Internet with *Microsoft Office* PC software package as well as professional hotel management software (*Micros Opera*) installed. According to the study field and industry requirements, the College should consider the need for the demo versions of other PMS's (ie. HORES, Hotsoft) and Revenue Management tools (OTA Insight, EZ RMS, Benchmarking Alliance), customer review management (Trust You);
- A training restaurant with tables, chairs, professional equipment necessary for guest service: coffee machine, blenders, shakers, crockery, cutlery, tableware, textiles, decorations, etc.;
- Professional kitchen with modern equipment, such as convection oven, induction stoves, cooker hoods, stainless steel kitchen tables and shelves, cold table, dishwashers, etc., all brand new and high standard;
- Library with a study room and computers with a permanent connection to the internet for students' independent work. It also has a scanner, a printer and a copier; the College subscribes to 2 online databases Emerald (EN) and e-Lanbook (RU) and several international scientific magazines. It is appreciated that the College has established a library to provide support to the students and academic staff, and it is gradually supplementing the library with the available literature, as well as providing access to databases;
- 6 offices for the academic and general staff, equipped with office furniture, computers, printers and scanners;
- Moodle online study platform. User friendly and helps as a tool to achieve learning outcomes;
- Support rooms (wardrobe, corridors, toilets, storages) are mostly in good condition yet the wardrobe needs to be replaced with personal lockers. No changing rooms noticed at the time of visit which would be necessary for kitchen and restaurant subjects;
- The Dormitory is split into an area of 517 m<sup>2</sup>, which is the space used for student accommodation. Apartments that are used to host College students and other guests are within a walking distance from the College. The apartment management is overseen by a subsidiary of the College, called Ltd "HS Apartments".

The above-mentioned infrastructure is sufficient to maintain a suitable environment for up to 50 students in split study schedules with required space, needs and features for the study aims and outcomes. This marks the needed capacity for doubling the current student count. However, several areas have been noted which would not comply to this statement and where improvements are needed and will be listed further in this document. The higher education institution/ college uses a systematic approach to long-

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<sup>3</sup> The term "infrastructure" used herein refers to the study provision of the higher education institution/ college.

term development of the infrastructure resources. Part of this has been described in self-assessment, however a specific plan was not observed.

2. **The material and technical provision of the higher education institution/ college is suitable for the needs and specific features of the higher education institution/ college, and it contributes to achieving the aims of the higher education institution/ college. The material and technical provision is available for the students and the teaching staff to achieve the learning outcomes and it is provided on a long-term basis. The higher education institution/college plans the development of the material and technical provision.**

As this is a privately owned and managed College, the premises as well as the material provisions are suitable and fully cover the aims and study process. Remarkable observation is that Hotel School has invested significantly to provide fully equipped professional and contemporary fitted kitchen, hired a pro executive chef from the industry as teaching staff, established their own library, computer class as well as subscription is provided to Emerald and E-Lanbook tourism article databases which all are accessible to the students at their convenience.

The plan and goals are set out in the Development Strategy of the College for 2016-2022, several of which have been fulfilled already. Continuous refurbishment takes place every year but the most impressive is the brand-new kitchen equipment and tools for the study process.

A future expansion due to more students would be supported by adding 5th and 6th floors in the same building, which would make for almost 1100 m<sup>2</sup> available in total, including a large auditorium on the 6th floor. Preliminary rent agreement/consent has been composed with the Landlord as well as architectural plans drawn for the re-development.

As the College looks forward to completing its next important step and becoming accredited, this paves the way to materialize their student growth potential and expansion strategy.

3. **Financial resources required to ensure the performance of the higher education institution/ college are available for the higher education institution/ college, and they are sufficient to ensure a high-quality study process. The availability of the financial resources is being ensured. The higher education institution/ college uses a systematic approach to long-term development of the financial resources.**

The College is funded by the Founder with no State capital nor subsidy, in full control of resource usage and in line with the Education Law Ch.III p.29 on the financial and material provision. The College has been on a stable financial path throughout the last 5 years\*<sup>4</sup> and although the number of students is relatively small, the figures show that there is a slight profit each year (2-8 % from the total revenue). Comparatively, the support for research and attendance of scientific conferences is managed via systematic approach, long-term development and gradually increased financial resources (from 1 to 5% over the last years). The current study process is sufficiently managed and does not raise doubts of misconduct as per interviews of teaching staff, active students and graduates.

The fact that the College has not increased its base capital (2844,00 EUR) since launch raises doubts. Moreover, as financially it has been thoughtfully managed so far and profit is year over year. This does not raise any limit though towards their proficiency but would improve credibility if it gets raised.

4. **The methodological support of the higher education institution/ college required for the implementation of the study process is suitable and sufficient for the purpose of implementation of the study programmes relevant to the study directions (study fields). It is actively applied in the study process, and its availability on a long-term basis is ensured.**

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<sup>4</sup> Balance sheet of 2019, provided printed on spot during our site visit

In line with the College Development Strategy 2016-2022, the College sets a promise to continue to develop a methodological basis for the College academic staff and students so that they can implement research work that is based on current scientific knowledge and professional field requirements. The plan includes 19 methodology courses provided for the teaching staff where each of the teachers have their responsible section to be led.

*Moodle* and *e-hotelschool.lv* (academic intranet) hold fragmentally prepared syllabuses and methodological guidelines for the design of study papers and the elaboration and presentation of qualification papers in the College and materials for the academic staff.

There are clear expectations of methodological work described for teaching staff and their support being led according to plan by the Director of the Academic department, the Director of the Study Program. The methodological work is being purposely planned and implemented through the organization of methodological meetings of the academic staff, seminars as well as individual consultations. However, there are still imperfections and confusing, unfinished information under the syllabuses, the outcome-based learning principles where they are not defined, or confusing outcomes being stated in the *e-hotelschool.lv* (where some teaching materials, student independent work descriptions and test assignments should be in accordance with the College requirements, regularly updated course description and materials according to the latest updates and scientific knowledge in the hospitality sector, however some courses have this more properly covered than other (i.e. Marketing in Hospitality vs. Conference and Banqueting management)).

The Hotel School carries out strong internship strategy and organizes regular site inspections where students visit active hotels of various standards and capacities, meet with heads of departments and general manager, giving the students hands-on experience and evaluation of standards, service and product. This is an essential part to acquire oneself in the real hospitality industry.

To conclude the abovementioned there are strong and important points being carried out already so far covering the study directions and learnings essential for hotel industry management, also plans and goals have been set and being accomplished, and some areas that need perfection.

**5. The informative provision of the higher education institution/ college is available, and the higher education institution/ college uses a systematic approach to long-term development of the informative provision.**

The College Development Strategy 2016-2022 has also set goals for informative basis improvement for the College Academic staff and students so that they can implement a research work that is based on current scientific knowledge and professional field requirements. In addition, the College shall ensure that the mandatory literature in its library is available in sufficient quantity for the growing number of College students. The investment in library materials so far is rather small and questionable; however, if this approach is due to Emerald database use and access to other large-scale libraries such as Turiba Business School, then it is understandable. Several important and popular books that are often compulsory in tourism management studies have been observed present (*Kotler, McGuire, Hudson, Bowie, Buttle*).

The study materials provided by the College's own published sources in its library are rather simple and cover basic levels as sources for studies. For instance some of the materials and tasks given there are too simple for higher education (e.g. in the materials for the course Professional English (related to the course "Mūsdienų viesmīlības industrija") exercises for the higher education students were about filling the gaps in sentences, when the right words are given at the beginning of the exercise. Even if this particular exercise is aimed for English language studies, the study language is English and the content and aim of this exercise is still too simple ). We would like to point this out as an important part of raising the bar of expectations and study outcomes

There are 72 of the College's own edited and printed brochures available at the library however it is considered more as additional literature and vocational level than higher education. Therefore, it would be highly advised to reconsider the compulsory literature reading list in several study subjects where these materials are in the top 1-4 list. Right now, there is no evidence on future library expansion action plan, nor specific funding for new book acquire yet it is understandable that having useful database subscriptions with generously available articles on hospitality and tourism, the information provision is partly covered.

### *Conclusions by specifying strengths and weaknesses of the described criteria*

Infrastructure, resources and technical provision is sufficient to maintain a suitable environment for up to 50 students in split study schedules with required space, needs and features for the study aims and outcomes. This marks the needed capacity for doubling the current student count within next 2 years. The infrastructure has been constantly developed and represents a solid level that meets expectations for higher education needs. The College is funded by the Founder with no State capital nor subsidy, has been on a stable financial path throughout the last 5 years and although the number of students is relatively small, the figures show that there is a profit each year over year.

Interviews with existing students and graduates show a true engagement in the study process and teamwork. It clearly indicates the leadership of academic staff and director as well as professional pursuit of teaching staff. A strong advice would be to strengthen the academic proficiency by recruiting more qualified lecturers, expanding the scope of studies by reinforcing the list of mandatory related books which students should get acquainted with and use in their self-studies, as well as introduce more outsourced specialists and experts from the field of hospitality.

#### **Strengths:**

- The College carries out strong internship strategy and organizes regular site inspections
- great location and condition of auditoriums
- College management follows and improves the gaps noted by previous experts and assessment.
- The plans for Methodological support and growth of teaching staff proves College's will towards delivering a high-quality education for the students.
- preliminary rent agreement with the Landlord as well as architectural plans drawn for the expansion with extra 1100 m<sup>2</sup>.

#### **Weaknesses:**

- There is just one hotel's specific platform/database/programme (Opera) available in the computer class.
- The wardrobe needs to be replaced with personal lockers. No changing rooms noticed at the time of visit which would be necessary for kitchen and restaurant subjects;
- The fact that the College has not increased its base capital (2844,00 EUR) since launch raises doubts. Moreover, as financially it has been thoughtfully managed so far and profit is year over year. This does not raise any limit though towards their proficiency but would improve credibility if it gets raised.
- E-hotelschool.lv should be thoroughly filled in under each course with clear and exact learning outcomes, descriptions and compulsory and advised literature sources for studies for theoretical base as well as more expanded view on the themes and business approaches that the course covers.
- There are 72 of the College's own edited and printed brochures available at the library however it is considered more as additional literature and vocational level than higher education. Therefore, it would be highly advised to reconsider the compulsory literature reading list in several study subjects where these materials are in the top 1-4 list.

Criterion	Evaluation			
	Excellent	Good	Average	Poor
1.		X		
2.		X		



3.			X	
4.		X		
5.			X	

## IV. Teaching Staff

### Analysis

1. The aims, objectives, and planning documents of the higher education institution/ college with regard to the policy of the development and motivation of the academic staff are clearly defined and attainable.

The development strategy of the College (2019) identifies eight strategic development directions; the third is the strengthening of staff capacity. It outlines that it is significant to promote the professional development of staff in two fields: hospitality industry and pedagogical didactics, as well as to provide informative, organisational and financial support for the professional development of staff. Additionally, the seventh strategic direction on internationalisation states that at least 20% of the academic staff should participate in international mobility. SER (Pg. 38) shows that two lecturers have participated in international mobility in 2019 (one lecturer – three visits, and another lecturer – one visit).

According to the State Education Information System (03.07.2020.), the College has eight persons registered as elected academic staff (six lecturers and two docents). One person does not have an end date for their employment at the institution. This information confirms the provided information in the SER (Appendix 5). The College has eight guest members of academic staff (three guest docents and five guest lecturers). One of the guest docents has mentioned in the CV that (s)he works as a docent in the College. From the elected staff, only one staff member has a doctoral degree (in the field of philosophy). In addition, three guest docents have a doctoral degree (pedagogy, business, economy).

Not all members of academic staff are mentioned on the website of the College (retrieved on 23.07.2020.) as well as on the e-learning platform *Moodle* (retrieved on 24.07.2020.). There is no clear principle on how to display academic staff members for the potential and present students.

In the SER (Pg. 30) two internal normative acts are mentioned: The Academic Job Role Regulations and as an additional internal regulation – Job Description of a Lecturer/Docent. In the *Moodle* environment, the Academic Job Role Regulations (2018) is available in the Latvian language. The Academic Job Role Regulations explain the main rights, duties, tasks, organisation of work, including specific tasks for lecturer and docent, and responsibilities for the academic staff, the procedure of election, requirements for candidates, principles for guest teachers, procedure of ending work relations and appellation procedure at the College. The description of tasks of the lecturer (Paragraph 23.1. of The Academic Job Role Regulations) includes the preparation of publications and participation in international conferences, but for a docent, who has a higher position and requirements, there is no such requirement mentioned. The Job Description of a Lecturer/Docent was not provided for the expert team. It remains unclear whether this specific internal document copies the content of the previous document (The Academic Job Role Regulations).

The College has two procedures that support academic staff to increase their professional performance:

- The Procedure on Allocating Professional Development Funding to Academic Staff is elaborated (2018) and the annual action plan for professional development is produced;
- The Procedure on Allocating Science and Research Funding for Academic staff is elaborated (2018). During the meeting, the teachers mentioned that this is significant support for them to

write publications and to participate in international conferences. More in depth explanation is provided in section V of this report.

The Salary Payment Procedure for Academic Staff clearly elaborates the principles of payment for the work of academic staff. The Procedure on Academic Staff Evaluation identifies that academic staff can receive the remuneration coefficient (maximum 20%) for the following academic year based on the annual evaluation (four assessment steps, including student evaluation).

During the meeting with academic staff, the teachers indicated that there was a college event for employees twice a year, but according to the answers provided, it could not be classified as a tool for teacher motivation.

**2. The attraction and selection of the teaching staff of the higher education institution/ college, including the teaching staff from abroad, are regulated procedures implemented in practice, which are complied with and ensure the selection of qualified and suitable teaching staff.**

The Academic Job Role Regulations include a procedure for the election of academic staff, requirements for lecturers and docents, and the voting procedure of candidates. During the expert visit, experts saw minutes of the College Council meeting when elections of academic staff have taken place. The minutes of the meeting correspond to the Academic Job Role Regulations. On the College website, experts saw the last announcement of academic staff vacancies for several study courses. The content of vacancy announcement is very general and there is no link to Annex 1 of The Academic Job Role Regulations, which includes criteria in five fields: research qualification, pedagogical qualification, organisational competence, professional experience and other formal criteria. The text of the announcement also includes an indication that the applicant may apply for a number of study courses. It creates a higher workload for the teacher, and in a college program this also means that students meet fewer teachers and get more uniform knowledge, not so deep in the particular subject of study.

As the study plan and feedback from the meeting with students shows, some teachers teach a large number of study courses from the overall curriculum, for example in compulsory part of study courses, one teacher is responsible for 22% or 5 study courses. According to provided Study programme plan (during the expert visit), these teachers also are in charge of development of qualification paper. During the meeting students said that they would like to “see more faces” and “teachers who are deeply involved in the particular topics and know how to deliver the classes”.

The College has only a few elected academic staff members who teach industry core study courses, for example for 35 KP in specific compulsory courses teach five elected teachers. In order to implement higher education study programmes, it is also important to provide more insight into the development of the sector, not just professional skills, in sector-specific study courses. Also, conversations with teachers identified the fact that guest teachers and teachers in general study courses aren't closely involved in the overall development of the program.

The College has experience in hiring foreign staff (in 2020 from Vietnam, in 2018-2019 from France and Russia), particularly in hospitality industry subjects. During the expert visit at the College, experts heard negative feedback from students about a foreign teacher who does not have clearly identified deliverables/ assignments at the beginning of the course. During the expert meeting with students, they mentioned a fact that it is really important to be active and to talk with head of the Study department about any problems. The problem was resolved over a certain period of time, but until then student workload was affected.

**3. The teaching staff's professional and didactic needs for improvement are identified in a target-oriented manner. Appropriate improvement measures are offered and implemented. The outcome and efficiency of the taken measures is being assessed.**

The College has taken into account the recommendations of the experts in accreditation the study field, which has resulted in the establishment of the Regulations on Allocating Professional Development Funding to Academic Staff; as well as that the annual action plan has been elaborated for the didactic and methodological development of the academic staff. The College will pay tuition fees for these training courses. As evidenced by the SER and the discussions with academic staff during the visit, that the elected academic staff who also do administrative work are more active participants in training and College activities (for example, in developing the strategy). These key staff members of the College are more employed by the College as others, but it gives a warning about weak engagement by academic staff overall in college operation.

Furthermore, the SER (Pg. 37) shows that in 2020 the course “The didactics of higher education” (160 hours) has been scheduled twice for one and same docent and also for two lecturers. Whether the activities planned in 2020 have been carried out under the conditions of COVID-19, the experts cannot determine. In 2019, six lecturers participated in the same programme (four of these lecturers no longer work at the College), four lecturers participated in the Professional Development Programme in Pedagogy (72 hours) (three lecturers no longer work at the College). In total, of the 8 teachers who completed pedagogical courses by 2019, half are no longer employees in the college, indicating low human resource management efficiency.

The academic staff has also taken part in other types of courses for professional development such as education programme “Basic Labour Safety Knowledge Educational programme” organized by the learning centre “Specialists, course “Front Office Operation management” organized by American Hotel&Lodging Educational Institute etc. Whether training plans for professional development are in line with the teacher's evaluation action plan cannot be evaluated because the individual developments plans are the sensitive information.

The College has developed The Procedure on Academic staff evaluation which consists of five parts: academic work, research work, professional development, methodological and organizational work and assessment by students in 10 fields. Together there are a total of 44 criteria. The teacher performs self-assessment on all criteria at the end of the year of study. Then, an evaluation is carried out by the Administrative Commission, composed of 3 people. Paragraph VIII of the procedure includes an action plan for the next academic year (actions for improvements, type of necessary training of didactics and planned research activities). The planning task concerning the academic staff and their development is the responsibility of the director of the College. The director of the study programme follows the prepared assignments.

#### **4. A support system for the teaching staff, including local and from abroad, has been developed and implemented in an efficient manner.**

Overall, a support system for the academic staff is established. According to the SER (Pgs. 32, 35-40), it can be pointed out that there are the same beneficiaries (few people) for different support activities, including mobility visits. The range of beneficiaries of support resources should be expandable, including guest lecturers and staff who are only teaching. Guest lecturers and guest docents are a crucial part of a successful and high-quality study process. The Academic Job Role Regulations point out that guest lecturers and guest docents have the same rights, duties and tasks as elected staff, only excluding participation in the elected management institution bodies of the College. The support for guest teachers needs to be increased.

The experts could see from the course descriptions and provided answers of academic staff during the meeting that the knowledge acquired of didactics was not yet fully used in the development of study courses. Teachers should be more closely involved in the implementation of student-centred studies in their course. The experts observed that some teachers cannot explain what is meant by a student-centred education approach and/or how they apply those principles in their teaching practice, the same problem was seen in the syllabuses, which weren't following the student-centred principles (eg. course design should start with the learning outcomes - what students should know and do after this particular course

- i.e output based not input (what teacher can teach) based). According to the SER, the director of the study programme is responsible for methodological support for the teachers.

Teachers are satisfied with the working conditions in the College and their research activities are encouraged by the financial support for participation in the conferences or mobility trips.

### *Conclusions by specifying strengths and weaknesses of the described criteria*

One college study programme of 90 KP is being implemented in the college, resulting in only 7 elected academic staff in the college and with a PhD degree. The small number of academic staff involved in the development of the college and study programme is seen as a threat to successful future development.

The internal regulatory documents regarding academic staff have been developed and implemented according to the national normative rules. The number of academic staff is small, resulting in some teachers being loaded in administrative work, who are also more familiar with the College rules and overall study curriculum. Experts saw the necessity to present the planning documents and internal regulatory acts to all the academic staff, including guest lecturers and docents.

In general, the system created by the college to increase education and professional competence is good. Existing experience indicates that there is a change of academic staff, which requires balance between the amount of training and other motivation tools among academic staff, so that everyone has the opportunity to learn new skills and knowledge.

The director of the College determines the number of academic staff positions, and the director is involved in almost all processes related to academic staff development. The role of the director of the study programme should be more relevant to the planning and development of the academic staff.

#### ***Strengths:***

- The planning documents are elaborated and include motivation mechanisms and support actions for the academic staff;
- The regulatory background of hiring academic staff is developed and implemented;
- The College also employs a foreign teacher;
- The internal regulatory documents are elaborated and implemented, providing support for the improvement of didactics and the latest news in the industry.
- The College has an annual plan for academic staff outlining who will take part in courses and seminars;
- The Procedure on Academic staff evaluation is developed and if it is correctly implemented then it is teacher-centred to achieve higher performance.

#### ***Weaknesses:***

- The low engagement of the academic staff in setting up strategic planning documents and insufficient information and communication work with academic staff on the latest planning documents and internal regulatory acts;
- The academic staff capacity is limited, particularly elected staff in core study courses;
- Not all of the academic staff members are mentioned on the website of the College as well as on the e-learning platform *Moodle*;
- The description of the tasks of a docent does not include writing research articles and participation in international conferences;
- Not all the teachers understand principle student-centred education;
- Students are not satisfied with foreign teacher level of didactics (Spring, 2020);
- Insufficient feedback to academic staff after the academic staff evaluation and pedagogy & didactic training courses;

Criterion	Evaluation			
	Excellent	Good	Average	Poor
1.		X		
2.		X		
3.		X		
4.		X		

## V. Scientific Research or Artistic Creation

### Analysis

1. **A structure and management system have been developed and implemented for activities in the field of scientific research, it is well-considered and effective, and it contributes to the attainment of the aims and objectives of college.**

The College has developed and endorsed the Scientific Research Activity Strategy for 2016-2022 and established a Research and Project Department for which the manager draws up an annual activity plan, coordinates scientific research activity, its implementation and accountability. The College scientific research activity complies with the strategy, the study direction, and the relevant study programme implemented at the College. According to the College Development Strategy, one of the priority directions of development is “*the development of the research potential on Hospitality Business research field’s direction*”.

It should be noted that the College allocates considerable funds for the development of scientific research activities every academic year. A large part of the funding comes from Erasmus + project funds with the aims: to explore the regional specifications of hotel activity and to establish contacts with employers for internship organization; to share experiences, obtaining knowledge on ECVET and work environment-based training; to master the use of modern technologies in the field of hotel marketing and quality management and other. The College has implemented these significant projects both as a leading partner and as a partner: Erasmus+ Program, KA2 Project "Education for Sustainable development and Global Citizenship"; Nordplus Adult programme project "Digital Course in Nordic/Baltic Culinary Arts for Adults (adult Educators and adult Learners)", exchange projects of academic and research staff "X-Culture" in the University of North Carolina at Greensboro” and others. For example, in the academic year 2017/2018, the total expenditure for carrying out scientific research work at the College was 18 875 EUR, in the academic year 2018/2019 the total expenditure for carrying out research work at the College was 19 925 EUR. Researchers are reimbursed for the publication of articles and conference fees, mostly.

The main scientific research activity tasks for 2016-2022 include human resource development, international cooperation, promotion and motivation for research and its funding. In order to achieve the aim and objectives, the College has set out operational scientific research activity tasks with clear performance indicators (numbers of indexed scientific publications, scientific publications in international peer-reviewed journals, number of conferences and so on).

The effectiveness of scientific research activity is assessed annually. At the end of the year, the Director of the Research and Project Department of the College draws up a report on the execution of the plan, which, together with the suggestions for further management of the scientific research activity at College, is analysed and confirmed by the College Council.

2. **The established directions of the college in the field of scientific research and comply with the strategy, the study directions (study fields), and the relevant study programmes implemented at**

**the college, and they are in line with the contemporary trends of the sector, the labour market needs, and scientific trends.**

During the meeting, the administration of the college provided the experts with annual research plans and reports on their implementation, which showed the effectiveness of the implementation of the planned activities. The lecturers of the College published articles in indexed scientific databases (6 articles) and 20 publications in international reviews and other publications, participated alone and with students in international conferences, and conducted seminars (9 conferences and seminars in which 7 students participated). The themes and objects of scientific research activity and their results are in line with the direction of college studies (the main topics of scientific articles and reports in conference were marketing in hospitality industry, sustainable hospitality business, quality management in hotel businesses).

During the meeting with experts, both the lecturers and the students confirmed that they were informed about the possibility of carrying out scientific research activity in the College. Part of the scientific research activity was carried out in collaboration with colleagues from other Latvian and foreign HEIs as well (University of Derby, ISMA, Turība University and others).

Scientific research activity is an official part of academic staff annual workload, which states that the academic staff (teachers) must carry out research, prepare and publish manuscripts, participate in conferences and science projects. During the meeting with experts, the lecturers and the head of the Research and Project Department confirmed that the research activity is planned according to the priorities (research directions) and is reported on an annual basis, as it is part of the lecturer's workload as well. The lecturers, the head of the program and some of the administrative staff also mentioned that they are encouraged to participate in scientific research activity by reimbursement of expenses incurred for the publication of articles or conference participants.

After analysing the SER and during the meeting with experts, stakeholders (lecturers, administrative staff, students and graduates) found out that the College has no commercial applied research.

The use of scientific research results in teaching is weak – teachers could not confirm how they use the research results in lecturing. It is also worth noting that the scientific research carried out should be more focused on its applied nature, thus furthering the mission of the College and impact on society, and the business environment.

### *Conclusions by specifying strengths and weaknesses of the described criteria*

Structure and management systems have been developed and implemented for activities in the field of scientific research. It is well-considered and effective, and it contributes to the attainment of the aims and objectives of the College. The established directions of the college in the field of scientific research comply with the strategy, the study directions (study fields), and the relevant study programmes implemented at the College. The established directions of the college in the field of scientific research is relevant to study programmes implemented at the college, but are they in line with the contemporary trends of the sector, the labour market needs, and scientific trends are difficult to say, because College has no commercial applied research and the use of scientific research results in teaching is weak

#### ***The strengths:***

- Structure and management systems have been developed and implemented for activities in the field of scientific research (scientific research activity is supported financially as well);
- A scientific research activity is a planned activity and is consistent with the College's strategic documents and objectives. The scientific research activity is productive and carried out with students and representatives of other HEIs;
- A clear separation of scientific research directions is in line with the study programme implemented at the College as well.

#### ***The weaknesses:***

- The College does not conduct commercial applied research and experimental development (so it is difficult to say that the scientific research is in line with labour market needs);
- Scientific research carried out at the College should be more focused on its applied nature, both for teachers and students. The use of scientific research results in teaching is not active enough.

Criterion	Evaluation			
	Excellent	Good	Average	Poor
1.		X		
2.		X		

## VI. Cooperation and Internationalisation

### Analysis

1. **The strategy and directions of international cooperation and internationalisation are defined, and they comply with the strategy and aims of the higher education institution/ college.**

According to the College Development Strategy 2016-2022, the mission of the College is “*to provide quality higher professional education in the field of hospitality and to help launch a career at leading hospitality companies both locally and globally.*” The vision of the College is “*to become a recognized and internationally competitive HEI, which prepares highly qualified and motivated specialists – the leaders of the future hospitality industry.*” The overall objective of the College is “*to provide high-quality professional education in the most demanded professions of the hospitality industry that are competitive in the international labour market and are in line with the requirements of the first level professional higher education standard of the state and the professional standards*”. One of the tasks of the College activity set in the strategy is “*to cooperate with Latvian and foreign HEIs and employers in the field of professional education*”. One of the main principles in College activity is internships within the framework of the studies for every student at high-level hotels in Latvia and abroad, thus allowing them to gain international work experience in world-renowned hospitality brand companies. Close cooperation with employers of the hospitality sector abroad, many students involved in mobility programs and studies offered in English allow educational service export – all these are defined as strengths of the College.

Strategy and directions of international cooperation and internationalisation are defined in the development strategy of the College for the time period 2016-2022. The 7th strategic direction of the strategy is International co-operation and internationalisation, which includes following tasks:

- to promote College collaboration with recognized universities of Europe and the world and research centres of a similar profile, as well as hospitality industry employers abroad;
- to motivate students to work in high-level foreign hotels, thus facilitating their integration into the European labour market;
- to involve educators in international cooperation projects, building strategic partnerships to tackle common challenges in the hospitality sector and developing innovative pedagogical concepts and methods.

The College has set strong intentions to prepare specialists who are competitive in the international labour market and defined how they will achieve this goal and by which minimum level they should progress every year. KPIs have been set:

- every year at least 25% of students and 20% of academic staff participate in mobility programmes;

- academic staff is involved in at least 1 international cooperation project per year.

Provided information in the SER, meetings during the evaluation visit and a list of the projects shows that so far both indicators have been achieved.

**2. The forms of international cooperation implemented by the higher education institution/ college and stakeholders for cooperation contribute to the attainment of the aims set by the higher education institution/ college and comply with the internationalisation strategy.**

To implement internationalisation, the College is currently working with the following universities:

- University of Derby, Centre for Contemporary Hospitality and Tourism, Buxton (Great Britain). Memorandum of understanding concluded. Until now no student has continued studies in Latvia, as the memorandum was signed only in 2019, so 2020 will be the first year when it will be possible to use the opportunity for mobility between the College and University of Derby. Until now the cooperation has been active in two areas - participation of the Derby's staff in an international conference organised by the College and academic staff mobility;
- Business and Hotel Management School, Luzern (Switzerland) – several mobility projects;
- Swiss Hotel Management School, Montreux (Switzerland) – experience exchange of administration.

Agreements with 3 above-mentioned institutions include Articles which provide graduates with the right to continue studies in Bachelor Programs of these institutions, but there is no information or evidence of such practice.

Cooperation agreements are also concluded with institutions from outside Europe: Hebei Vocational College of Tourism in China (concluded 07.11.2019. Both sides agreed to open an establishment of International Tourism College in China and Latvia and recognize each other's credit points and academic qualifications. Expand overseas internship and employment to provide overseas internship and employment opportunities for the students from both colleges) and Guru Nanak Khalsa Group of Educational Institutions in India.

During the time period 2017-2019, the College implemented the Erasmus+ strategic partnership project "Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship" for the exchange of innovations and good practices under the KA2 sub-programme, within which an international team of researchers developed methodologies and materials for the integration of the sustainable development goals 2030 of the United Nations into learning content at the level of adult education (higher education) and tested them in sessions organized for educators and students. As part of this project, the College cooperated with European research institutions such as the Global Learning & Skills Partnership in the UK and the Stichting voor Educatie-, Cultuur- en Migratie in the Netherlands.

There are projects in the preparatory stage, which show active work on the development of international cooperation of the College (with *Is-Step by Step Consulting* and *Dania Academy*).

A responsible practise is to monitor students' foreign internship processes. The College staff is involved in the internship organization by scheduling trips to visit the foreign employers, and to agree upon the internship program and documentation, and to verify the accommodation conditions provided to the students. The supervision is carried out also during foreign internships.

Cooperation with employers is broad and well-developed, the College has created a network of foreign partners, providing internships to College students across European hotels in Italy, Spain, Greece and Germany. Foreign employers cover the grant, accommodation and catering costs and in some cases also flight tickets and insurance. Every year the foreign hotel representatives contact the College, as well as personally visit the College to present the internship placement opportunities.



In cooperation with foreign employers, the College implements professional development activities for its academic staff. The College academic staff regularly goes to foreign hotels via mobility projects to check the work organization, the guest service standards, the use of modern technologies and the implementation of sustainable tourism and business principles in hospitality services.

**3. There is a system of incoming - outgoing mobility of students and staff in place, the teaching staff and students are aware of it and avail of this opportunity, and it brings added value to the implementation of the study process and study quality.**

An outgoing mobility of students and staff is in place, the teaching staff and students are aware of it and avail this opportunity. According to views of all parties (academic staff, administration, students and employers) this brings added value to the implementation of the study process and study quality.

During the visit all parties admitted that they know about possibilities of taking part in international cooperation and mobility programs, which seems to be an inalienable part of the study programme. Students admitted they use the opportunity to carry out their internships abroad because they are given an opportunity to get international experience and to practice in exceptionally good conditions.

Although the College is not a member of Erasmus+ Charter, the students and academic staff mobility is possible and supported through the different mobility-oriented projects, funded also by Erasmus and other donor organisations. The project-based mobility is available for the students and staff, but due to the short-term character of the projects (mostly the funding is given for 1 or 2 years) in general, this funding system is vulnerable and do not give longer confidence.

*Conclusions by specifying strengths and weaknesses of the described criteria*

The strategy and directions of international cooperation and internationalisation are defined in the updated College Development Strategy 2016-2022, and they comply with the aims of the College. There are various forms of international cooperation implemented by the College and stakeholders and it contributes to the attainment of the aims set by College and comply with their internationalisation strategy. Directions: cooperation with foreign educational institutions and employers in the field of professional education, internships, mobility programs of academic staff and students, participation in international cooperation projects, professional development activities for its academic staff, studies in English.

Outgoing mobility of students (internship) and administration/academic staff is in place, every group is aware of it and avail this opportunity, which brings added value to the implementation of the study process and study quality. Both students and employers admitted that the strong international environment and active cooperation is a strength which makes the College and this programme exceptional on the Latvian market.

***Strengths:***

- Variety of cooperation partners and regions: The College has developed cooperation with several (10) higher education and research organisations in the hospitality area from different countries;
- Active steps to develop international cooperation;
- Progress indicators (KPI) of this strategic direction have been set and are being achieved;
- Personal responsibility in choosing partners and managing daily performance: The College is monitoring students' foreign internship processes by inspections of foreign employers, verifying accommodation conditions provided to the students, etc. The supervision is also carried out during foreign internships. Inspecting every hotel, they will cooperate with to get practical evidence of their high quality and standards is a very responsible attitude when launching cooperation with new partners.

***Weaknesses:***

- There is no fully accountable information or explanation on criteria used by College to choose cooperation partners except that they should be high-level (globally recognised, 4-5-star hotel chains) and have a good reputation;
  - There is no internationalisation action plan;
- There is no Erasmus+ Charter, which gives long-term agreement possibilities, not ad-hoc based projects.

Criterion	Evaluation			
	Excellent	Good	Average	Poor
1.		X		
2.		X		
3.		X		

## VII. Activities of Students' Self-Governance

### *Analysis*

1. **A students' self-governance has been established, and, in terms of the structure and performance, it is efficient. The students are aware of self-governance and its functions, and they are involved in the activities of self-governance. The management of the College provides support to facilitate students' representation and activities of students' self-governance.**

A students' self-governance institution has been established by the name of the Students' Parliament (hereinafter – SP). The SP consists of elected students of the College, who further elect the Board of the SP – the president, vice-president and secretary. Their role is the direct management of everyday activities as well as financial paperwork. SP objectives, obligations and rights, as well as election procedures, are regulated by the Student Parliament Regulations approved at the College Council on January 11th, 2018 (Hereinafter – SP Regulations). Students are actively involved and informed of the existence of the SP through internal social channels, e.g. during the visit students emphasized their advantage of being a small college, because they can use a common WhatsApp chat room for all students of the College, through which all information regarding student activities is given. The SP organizes annual elections at the start of the academic year; the current SP representatives, however, note that they were not privy to the election procedures going on before the day of elections when they were invited to participate, which is generally not considered good practice.

Students involved in the SP voiced approval of the College managements' support of their actions, which, materially, includes the possibility to receive tuition fee discounts every year, however, it is questionable whether this is a support mechanism managed by the College (explained under criteria No 3). There is also the opportunity to go on paid self-development training for areas important for the SP. Such training has so far included a fully funded international cruise seminar regarding intercultural business communication for the SP president in 2018, and global citizenship training in Portugal for the SP secretary in 2019. Other than this, management and academic personnel take part in student-organized events and provide assistance if necessary; SP representatives also note that in the case of confusion regarding SP Regulations, the College management helps with their interpretation.

2. **In terms of performance, the students' self-governance complies with the provisions set forth in the Law on Institutions of Higher Education. Whilst carrying out its activities, it represents the students in issues related to the academic, material (social), and cultural life. There are procedures in place that allow students to be elected to collegiate authorities of the College.**

The SP organizes several cultural events per year, e.g. in the academic year 2019/2020, these were the Halloween and Christmas Balls that were open to all students and personnel of the College. Student representatives also indicate that it is their strong wish to participate in student recruitment activities, as these directly impact the number of students in the College and therein the amount of SP members they can amass, leading to possible improvements in the quality of College and SP work. Due to this they actively participated in the International Education Fair “Skola 2020” and Open-Door Days at the College and intend to continue this tradition in the coming years.

Student representatives note that, despite the SER mentioning SP contributions to feedback mechanisms, helping to organize and analyse the results of the annual student satisfaction surveys, the SP does not participate in the quality assessment or quality feedback regarding the study process, emphasising the size of the College not having the necessity of them acting as a middle-man in the process, including surveys, which they only participate in as individuals and did not note any involvement in their analysis or organization apart from advertising their fulfilment to students. Other notable involvement in issues regarding student academic affairs has been the SP’s constant representation on the College Council, and the SP secretary’s participation in the College Methodical Seminar in June 2020, but no other relevant tasks have been outlined in the last written report on the SP performance to the College management. Students note that there have been academic issues, but they have been resolved without the representation of the student self-governance by the affected parties filing formal complaints.

Representation in material/social student affairs can be described as weak. The management of general SP financial affairs and organization of cultural events is not considered direct material/social representation. The only notable involvement in material/social student affairs would be the student representation in the College Credit Grant Commission (hereinafter – the CCG Commission) and the distribution of tuition fee discounts, both of which are described as currently problematic further in the analysis.

Overall, the evidence regarding performance points to notable weaknesses in representation regarding academic and social affairs of students, whilst the SP is focused on cultural affairs and indirect action (student recruitment, self-development). Experts find that perhaps a solution to the lack of action or, indirectly, the lack of understanding of these matters could be improved if the SP members and its board members were to organize an exchange of experience with the student self-governance institutions of other HEIs or the national student union in accordance to the SP Regulations noting cooperation with other institutions/organizations and the president’s duty to represent and disseminate information regarding the SP outside of the College as well, including local and international levels. During the visit, student representatives note that they have attempted to organize collaborative cultural events with other student self-governance institutions, but they have not come to fruition. Perhaps a more academic, general meeting would improve the potential partnerships before organizing more massive events.

There is an established procedure for student representative election to the College Council and it is part of SP Regulations. During the meeting with the SP president and two student representatives in the College Council (one current, other former), the persons involved did not portray a full understanding of the procedures regulated by their Regulations, as they could not describe the procedure necessary to withdraw a student representative from the College Council, even though it is clearly defined in the SP Regulations and the persons present were the former and current representatives to whom this would directly have applied at the time of their transition. The SP representatives note that they know the content of the SP Regulations as far as their active work goes and are not knowledgeable in the procedures that they have personally not encountered during their term. Furthermore, student representatives note that the only collegiate authority they are involved in is the College Council. SER notes that students are also part of the CCG Commission, which they are not informed of nor is it (or any other representative function in collegiate institutions or possible election thereof) noted in SP Regulations. This may be because, according to management, there have been no cases of credit grant applications in the last year, however, in this case, the student self-governance is not informed of their possible involvement in these processes and may or may not react accordingly in the event of the re-establishment of the commission. This and other notes during the visit shed light on weak organizational succession regarding information management of the SP.

### 3. The procedures for financing of the students' self-government comply with the Law on Institutions of Higher Education.

According to Section 53 of the Law on Higher Education Institutions (hereinafter – LHEI), the College provides base financing for SP from their yearly budget and Student Parliament Financing Arrangements have been approved by the CEO of the College Board on June 12, 2019. SP Regulations note that “the activities of the SP are funded according to the College Budget Law” and make no mention of Student Parliament Financing Arrangements, nor can the College Budget Law be identified. Experts note this may be a translation error, as the original states “*no Koledžas budžeta likuma noteiktajā apmērā*”, whereas “*likuma*” may have originally been intended to be LHEI. However, this is phrased vaguely and unclearly in both versions. In 2019, this financial base consisted of EUR 1545 (*Studentu parlamenta budžets 2019/2020. m.g.*), which makes for more than 1/200<sup>th</sup> part of the total College expenditure in 2019/2020 (additional information, pgs 5-6) that is the minimum requirement established by LHEI. LHEI states: “[SP] shall be financed from the budget of the [college] in an amount, which is not less than one two-hundredth part of the annual budget of the [college]”. The term “annual budget” is to be understood in the light of its general meaning, namely the amount of revenue and expenditure. Considering the fact that budget expenditures are formed on the basis of budget revenues, the 1/200<sup>th</sup> part should be calculated from the budget revenues of the College, but these were not provided, therefore this part cannot be calculated from the revenue, only from the expenditure.

After analysing the expenditure, it is ascertained that approximately 24% of the SP budget (EUR 391) is allocated to tuition fee discounts for active participation in College’s social life for the active members of SP. The Discount Application Procedure (No 1-15/3) does not mention the management or disbursement of discounts through SP. SP Regulations note the members right to “qualify for tuition fee discounts that are applied for an active participation in the SP” and the president’s duty to “nominate candidates for a tuition fee discount competition due to an active participation in the work of Student Parliament at the end of the semester”, however, the distribution of student tuition fee discounts is not attributed to SP and there is no information or regulation regarding this use of SP funds. During the visit, students do not in any way note this as an SP initiative, but a support mechanism from the College, which is misleading and signals a lack of awareness of their individual processes and financial management as an independent institution.

Another disconcerting aspect of the SP budget is the allocation of 9% of available funds (EUR 144) to the remuneration for assistance in organizing events to the responsible staff of the College, in this case, the Director of the study programme and one of the study programme lecturers. SER notes that “the organizational support for SP activities is provided by the College staff – the Director, the employees of the Academic Department and the Academic staff members. They offer their assistance with the organization of the documentation of the SP, the organization of the meetings and the events” (Pg. 61), and remuneration of College staff through SP would be considered bad practise unless they are participating as an independent, self-employed, outsourced specialist for specific needs of the SP, e.g. a DJ or cleaning service, which is not the case as the budget position states “remuneration of the employees of the College responsible for the supervision of the event”. Any extra remuneration for supervision should be issued by the College with respect to LHEI Section 53. Paragraph 4.: “Management bodies of higher education institutions and colleges have a duty to support and promote the activities of a student self-governance body”, and overall the necessity of event supervision by a member of the academic staff should be reviewed in consideration of the organizations’ independence.

#### *Conclusions by specifying strengths and weaknesses of the described criteria*

A students’ self-governance is established, has formal regulations regarding student representative election to collegiate authority institutions (College Council), realizes and participates in cultural and self-developmental activities regularly and receives a base funding from the College, however the SP also has notable weaknesses in the field of full representation in all relevant student affairs (e.g. lacking in activity concerning student academic and social interests) as well as lacks overall awareness of their regulatory obligations outside of everyday constraints (e.g. if an event only happens once a year, for example the election of College Council representatives, its’ mechanism is unknown to the current SP board until this event), has incomplete understanding of their existing tasks and involvement in ongoing annual processes (e.g. not being aware of or

having any procedures for representation on the CCG Commission), and financial management (e.g. not being aware of their direct financial participation in tuition fee disbursement; providing remuneration for College staff).

**Strengths:**

- There is an established students' self-governance with real, active, legitimately elected members that realize activities regarding student life.
- The SP has strong communication channels with the rest of the College student body.
- The College provides support for SP via a regular financial base and opportunities for self-development, as well as assistance with event organization.
- The SP strongly indicates their dedication to the matter of student recruitment for the College as a strategic task for the further development of SP.
- There is an established procedure for student election into the College Council as the single collegiate authority institution.

**Weaknesses:**

- The students' self-governance deals comparatively little with student academic affairs and chooses to stay out of them if such cases occur; the SP is not involved and/or informed of possible involvement in the annual quality assessment procedures at the College despite the SER mentioning it.
- The SP is not aware of and/or working in the field of student social/material representation; the SP is not aware of its representative functions at relevant committees (CCG Committee).
- The SP is fairly uninformed regarding the functions and contents of the SP Regulations regarding the formal procedures of student representative change in the College Council.
- The SP Regulations are poorly formulated in regard to SP funding.
- The SP has warped awareness of their involvement in and has no regulation regarding the procedure of tuition fee discount disbursement from their organizational funds, whereas 24% of the full budget is allocated to this procedure without official regulation or information regarding this source.
- The SP allocates funds for the direct remuneration of basic organizational/functional support provided by College staff.

Criterion	Evaluation			
	Excellent	Good	Average	Poor
1.		X		
2.			X	
3.		X		

## VIII. Compliance of the Activities of the Higher Education Institution/ College with the Provisions of Regulatory Enactments

No.	Compliance with regulatory enactments, arising out of the provisions	Fully compliant	Partially compliant	Non-compliant	Justification
1.	Decision-making bodies have been established at the higher education institution/ college, a rector has been elected or acting rector has been appointed, or the director of the college has been appointed in accordance with the procedure provided for in the <u>Law on Institutions of Higher Education</u> .		X		Decision-making bodies have been established. The Chairman of the College Board is currently also the acting director of the College. There is currently no director for the College, a vacancy has been announced.
2.	The <u>constitution</u> of the higher education institution or by-laws of the college have been approved.	X			The regulation of the College has been approved, Cabinet Regulation No 194 (03.04.2018.). At the beginning of 2020, amendment to the College Regulation were submitted to Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Latvia with request to submit then to the Cabinet of Ministers for approval.
3.	The sample of the and its supplement to be issued for the acquisition of the study programme complies with the regulations specifying the procedure according to which State-recognised documents of higher education are issued.		X		The sample of the diploma and its supplement attached to the SER comply with the requirements of Cabinet Regulation No 202 (16.04.2013.). However, taking into account the fact that the College has been implementing the first level professional higher education programme since 2015 and in the period so far, there have been graduates to whom the College has issued diplomas identical to those issued upon receipt of a state-recognised diploma, by issuing these diplomas (so far), the College has violated the provisions of Section 9 of the LHEI.
4.	The number of visiting foreign lecturers among the academic staff members complies with the provisions set forth in the <u>Law on Institutions of Higher Education</u> .	X			According to the information provided by the College, lecturers from Vietnam, France and Russia have been involved in the study process as guest lecturers/docents.
5.	The remuneration of the academic staff members complies with the regulations on remuneration to educators.		X		The remuneration of the academic staff indicated in the SER is organised according to the regulations. It was not possible to ascertain the type of contracts concluded with academic

					staff (employment or contracts for work-performance).
6.	The sample study agreement complies with the regulations on mandatory provisions to be included in the study agreement.		X		<p>In accordance with the requirements specified in Cabinet Regulations No 70 (23.01.2007.) “Provisions to be Mandatory Included in the Study Agreement”, the learning agreement does not specify a specific study period from – to; the handling of the student’s intellectual property is not specified (sub-paragraph 5.3.)</p> <p>In the learning agreement that is concluded with the existing students, Clause 1.1.5 stipulates that “Professional qualification to be obtained: hotel service manager (the 5th level of the Latvian Qualifications Framework)”. The College, as a non-accredited educational institution, misleads students by violating Section 9 of the Law on Higher Education Institutions, Section 32 of the Law on Education, and Cabinet Regulations No 141 (20.03. 2001.).</p>
7.	The students’ self-governance receives financing in accordance with the provisions set out in <u>Section 53, Paragraph four of the Law on Institutions of Higher Education.</u>	X			<p>According to Section 53 of the Law on Higher Education Institutions (hereinafter – LHEI), the College provides base financing for SP from their yearly budget and Student Parliament Financing Arrangements have been approved by the CEO of the College Board on June 12, 2019. The SP are provided a financial base which makes up more than 1/200<sup>th</sup> part of the College expenditures (as expenditure is based on revenue, this can be considered also in accordance with LHEI).</p>
8.	The results of the inspections performed by the State Education Quality Service within the reporting period have been taken into consideration and the deficiencies have been eliminated.		X		<p>The recommendations of the control authority State Education Quality Service have been partially implemented. Deficiencies related to entering student information into the State Education Information System have been eliminated, as in the Regulation of the College. The requirement “to stop issuing diplomas that are not recognised by state” has not been met; in 2020 such diplomas have continued to be issued.</p>
9.	The academic staff members of the study programme are proficient in the official	X			<p>Annex 5 of SER serves as evidence of compliance with this requirement.</p>

	language in accordance with the regulations on the level of the official language knowledge and the procedures for testing official language proficiency for performing professional duties and office duties.				
10.	Teaching staff members, involved in the implementation of the study programme, have at least B2-level knowledge of a related foreign language according to European language levels (see the levels under <a href="http://www.europass.lv">www.europass.lv</a> ), if study programmes or any parts thereof are to be implemented in a foreign language, or at least B2-level knowledge of the Latvian language, if the study programmes or any parts thereof are to be implemented in the Latvian language, and a teaching staff member has not acquired the secondary or higher education in the Latvian language.	X			Annex 5 of SER serves as evidence of compliance with the requirement.
11.	At least five staff members with doctoral degree are among the academic staff of a doctoral study programme, at least three of which are experts approved by the Latvian Science Council in the respective field of science. At least five staff members with doctoral degree are among the academic staff of a professional doctoral study programme in arts.				Not applicable.
12.	The academic staff of an academic study programme complies with the provisions set out in <u>Section 55, Paragraph one, Clause 3 of the Law on Institutions of Higher Education.</u>				Not applicable.
13.	There are procedures for the recognition of competences acquired outside formal education or through professional experience and learning outcomes achieved in previous learning in place at the higher education institution/ college.	X			Regulation on Recognition of Competences acquired outside formal education or in professional experience (approved College Council meeting 26.10.2019, protocol No 28)



## IX. Summary of the Compliance with the Requirements for the Assessment of the Higher Education Institution/ College

The assessment of the compliance with the requirements shall be carried out in view of the assessment of the criteria.

No.	Requirement	Fully compliant	Partially compliant	Non-compliant	Justification
R1	The qualification of the academic staff members, visiting professors, visiting associate professors, visiting docents, visiting lecturers, and visiting assistants complies with the provisions set forth in the Law on Institutions of Higher Education.	X			According to the State Education Information System (03.07.2020.), the College has eight persons registered as elected academic staff (six lecturers and two docents). The College has eight visiting members of academic staff (three docents and five lecturers). From the elected staff, one has a doctoral degree (in the field of philosophy), three visiting docents have a doctoral degree (pedagogy, business, economy). Qualifications of the all 16 members of academic staff meet the requirements appointed to their position and tasks.
R2	The academic staff development policy and incentive system developed by the higher education institution/ college comply with the aims and objectives set by the higher education institution/ college.	X			The College has staff development policy, activity plan and regular assessment of competences is carried out. Staff development policy and activities for staff motivation are in accordance with the College's aims.
R3	The study provision, informative provision (including libraries), material and technical provision, and financial provision comply with the requirements for the implementation of a study programme.		X		The only part that partially fulfils the scope of HE needs is the library and its stock. There is just one hotel's specific platform/database/programme (Opera) available in the computer class. Additionally, to Opera, access to demo versions of another PMS's (ie. HORES, Hotsoft) and Revenue Management tools (eg. OTA Insight, EZ RMS, Benchmarking Alliance), customer review management (Trust You) could be provided.
R4	The higher education institution/ college ensures constant improvement, development, and efficient performance, whilst implementing the internal quality assurance system, as provided for in Section 5, Paragraph 2, Clause 1 of the Law on Institutions of Higher Education.		X		Internal quality management system has written in the Quality Management Policy. The Quality Management Policy describes the activities and responsibilities of each, in practice this mechanism does not work. There is also not clear who is responsible for college self -assessment report who is involved in college self - assessment process.

R5	The provisions regarding autonomy, financing, and rights of the students' self-government are complied with.	X			The student self-governance is established and autonomous, consisting of elected student representatives. They have elected representatives on the College Council (which make up 20% of the total number of representatives) and hold suspensive veto rights in matters concerning student interests. The rights of the SP are documented in SP Regulations approved by the College Council, therefore internally officialising their right to implementation. The SP are provided a financial base which makes up more than 1/200 <sup>th</sup> part of the College expenditures (as expenditure is based on revenue, this can be considered also in accordance with LHEI).
R6	The data contained in the education quality monitoring system of the higher education institution/ college indicates improvement and development of the performance of the higher education institution/ college (in force as from 1 July 2019).		X		The college has a weak education quality monitoring system which does not reflect improvement and development of the performance of college. The provided data (eg number, of students, graduates' employment etc) were different in different sources and/or inaccurate.
R7	The higher education institution/ college carries out the activities in compliance with the requirements set in the legislation on higher education.		X		College has violated the provisions of Section 9 of the LHEI. Based on the State Education Quality Service letter No. 4ud-05e/619, during the inspections in 2019 and 2020 several significant deficiencies were identified at the College, which were instructed to eliminate; however, as the State Education Quality Service indicated when evaluating the information provided by the College, the Quality Unit of Supervision Department twice concluded that the College did not fully eliminate the non-compliances identified during the inspection.
R8	The non-compliances with the provisions set forth in the regulatory enactments as identified by the competent authorities and regarding the performance of the higher education institution/ college in the previous year have been eliminated prior to the decision in line with the deadline set by the mentioned authorities.		X		College has violated the provisions of Section 9, 10, 32 and 50 of the LHEI, Section 6 of the Vocational Education Law, and Regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers on the State Standard of First Level Professional Higher Education (No 141, 20.03.2001.) but have begun action to eliminate the non-compliance with LHEI Section 10, and the inspection of other violations is still in process (State Education Quality Service letter No 4ud-5e/619 "Par "HOTEL SCHOOL" Viesnīcu biznesa koledžu").

## **X. Assessment**

### **I. Aims, Objectives and Management of the Higher Education Institution/College**

The College's strategic development aims, and principles are set up in the College Strategy for 2016-2022. In general, the given eight strategic directions cover the activity area of the College. The mission and the vision of the College are in coherence and refer to the College's intention to be HEI which offers quality education for locally and internationally active hospitality specialists - future leaders of the sector. The growth in student numbers and study quality is clearly highlighted in the strategy. Although the KPIs and SWOT are presented in the strategy, the market analysis (and KPIs based on that) is not justified and enough evidence based. The College's current small size (number of staff and students) is both their strength and weakness. From the positive side this situation allows direct communication without barriers, but from the negative side this causes crucial and controversial roles for the administrative staff, fragmented job tasks and many different courses given by the same lecturer. At the same time the College is not well-prepared for the expected quick growth (KPI - from 20 students (23.07.20) to 150 students (year 2022)). The College has established good relationships with the employers, mostly for the internship, but there are no specific aims and indicators established for the collaboration with the employers. The information on the College's webpage is misleading when listing all of the institution's programmes on the same list and does not distinguish clearly between HE and other programmes.

### **II. Internal Quality Assurance System**

The College has developed the Quality Management Policy, and the self-assessment report also mentions the principles of quality management, which are partly related to one of the processes, i.e., the study process, its organisational and assessment issues. The set goals of the quality management policy also testify to the study process as the main quality management framework. The existing quality management system does not cover all the activities of the College as an institution in general, no attention is paid to other processes related to the activities of the College. The structure of the College has been developed and approved, but it is not clear who is responsible for which processes at the College (process owner); employees have a weak understanding of internal quality management, including internal regulations and involvement in the self-assessment of the College. Within the framework of quality management, no risk analysis is performed – the causes of risks, their impact, risk mitigation measures, risk prevention plans, etc. are not taken into account. Within the quality management system, the Deming Cycle principle (Plan–Do–Check–Act) is not fully observed.

### **III. Resources**

The College invests and develops its infrastructure, and this is also aimed in their strategy. The infrastructure meets in general the current needs of the College, but the College has made the plans in case of growth in student numbers. It can be positively brought out that the College is acting fully in using private and externally granted money and does not use state funding. There is a constant improvement plan for the infrastructure, which bases on stakeholders' feedback (calls to action) and the study programme needs. The improvement areas for the College are mainly in the field of study materials prepared by the teachers for the students - in some cases the level of the materials and chosen study methods are not appropriate for the HE first level. Some investments need to be done also in expanding the variety of available field specific platforms/programmes in the computer class and in enabling proper changing rooms for the students.

### **IV. Teaching Staff**

The College has elaborated and started to implement several internal documents which determine rules and support mechanisms for the academic staff in the College. The College has a small group of students in one study field as well as the elected academic staff is small and many of them are involved in administrative work at the same time. An important step is the targeted and meaningful implementation of the documents developed into the study process and in general at the College. The communication and informing process about academic rules and about available support mechanisms is not clear enough for all the academic staff, particularly for guest lecturers and guest docents. In academic work planning and the academic staff workload planning, the director of the study program has the role of executor instead of planner. The director of the College concentrates administrative and academic power that can influence academic freedom and academic ethics.

## **V. Scientific Research or Artistic Creation**

The College's recent efforts in the field of the scientific are remarkable, especially in involving students to the research process. Also, the percentage of the staff participating in scientific research is good. The College has created the support system for the staff to be more motivated and active in research. The developments in the scientific research area are planned in the College's strategy and covered with the necessary regulative and descriptive of implementation documents. Despite developments in the scientific research area, the College has no examples of applied research and they need to consider ways to bring more science results into studies.

## **VI. Cooperation and Internationalisation**

The College indicates the internalisation clearly in their strategy as one of the main strategic aims and horizontal principles to be followed in their every activity. As a small institution, the College has many internationally active partners from Latvia and abroad. There are various forms of international cooperation implemented by the College and stakeholders and it contributes to the attainment of the aims set by College and comply with their internationalisation strategy. The students and staff can participate in different activities which enrich their competences about other cultures, work principles and support their language and communication skills. Both students and employers admitted that the strong international environment and active cooperation is a strength which makes the College and this programme exceptional on the Latvian market. Getting the HEI accreditation, the College should apply for the membership of Erasmus+ Charter, clarify the principles of partners choice and requirements.

## **VII. Activities of Students' Self-Governance**

A functional, legitimate students' self-governance institution – SP – exists, but is only partially efficient. The College student body is aware of it due to the privilege of a small student body, as all information is given privately. Students are involved and interested in organizing activities with SP, but are poorly informed of the full functionality and responsibilities of SP. The SP represents students in cultural affairs but has weak representation and awareness of its necessity in terms of academic and social issues. Their focus is on cultural affairs, new student recruitment for the College and self-development opportunities. There is an established procedure to allow students to be elected to the College Council, but they are not aware of other collegiate authorities they could/should be a part of and the election to these is not stipulated in SP Regulations. The members of the SP have a weak understanding of their internal regulations and involvement in College procedures, e.g. the withdrawal of representatives from the College Council and financial management of tuition fee discounts, as well as overall financial management as an independent organization, which is skewed due to College influence. The College provides support via the provision of baseline finances in accordance to the law and financial aid for participation in self-development activities, as well as providing College space for meetings, while at the same time SP funds are used for student tuition fee discounts (without their awareness) and remuneration of College staff for providing organizational support to SP events, which is generally considered bad practise. While it does meet formal criteria for the establishment, representation and regulation, overall the work efficiency and meaningfulness of the SP can be evaluated as average.

## **VIII. Compliance of the activities of the Higher Education Institution/College with the Provisions of Regulatory Enactments**

The operation of the college basically complies with the Education Law (29.10.1998.), Law on Higher Education Institutions (02.11.1995.), Vocational Education Law (10.06.1999.), Cabinet Regulation No.141 (20.03.2001.).

The College activities have not complied with Law on Higher Education Institutions (02.11.1995.), Section 9., Cabinet Regulation No.202 (16.04.2013.), Vocational Educational Law (10.06.1999.), Section 6., Education Law (29.10.1998.), Section 27., Cabinet Regulation No.141 (20.03.2001.), Point 10., partially compliant with Cabinet Regulation No.70 (23.01.2007.).

## **IX. Summary of the Compliance with the Requirements for the Assessment of the Higher Education Institution/College**

The College has some elements of the internal quality system, but it is not involving the whole institution and its processes and is not a fully integrated, coherent and implemented system. The student self-governance realizes partial compliance with the activities provided in the LHEI, representing students in matters of cultural life and having little participation and/or awareness of the importance of representation in academic and social affairs.

There is some evidence of education quality monitoring in the College as stakeholder's involvement into the decision-making processes and some conducted surveys, but at the same time the use of the feedback and improvements decisions are not clear and transparent. The College misleads potential students about the diploma they can receive. Until being accredited HEI, the College is not allowed to provide or even advertise the opportunity to get a state recognized diploma. Also, the status of the BTEC diploma in Latvia is unclear.

## **XI. Recommendations for the Higher Education Institution/ College**

### *Recommendations for the elimination of the identified deficiencies on a short-term basis (within a year):*

1. The information at the webpage about the status and level of the study programmes must clearly show separately higher education and other programmes.
2. The College must recognise and apply the standards set by the ESG and pay special attention to the ESG 1.1, 1.4, 1.7, 1.8.
3. In order to achieve strategic goals to carry out risk analysis and establish a risk register.
4. Provide clear, truthful information about the diploma for all the stakeholders in every channel.
5. All the academic staff members need to be equally presented on the website of the College as well as on the e-learning platform Moodle.
6. The College needs to follow up that all the academic staff receives knowledge on didactics and afterwards applies it in teaching, including an appropriate use of learning outcomes in syllabuses. After learning the didactic and pedagogical courses, it is recommended to organize practical methodological seminars with aim to transfer obtained knowledge in practice.
7. The number of courses given by the same teacher, should be smaller - eg. not higher than three different courses per same teacher.
8. In order to achieve high quality of the study process, it is necessary to present the College support system and internal rules of the College for all the academic staff, particularly for guest lecturers and guest docents as well as for the elected staff who are not involved in administrative duties.
9. The College needs to establish clear aims (not only about the hotels' level or characteristics, but also about quality, variety and different activities of collaboration) concerning the collaboration with the employers.

### *Recommendations for improvement of the performance of the College on a long-term basis (within 2-3 years):*

1. More stakeholders and experts should be involved in the market analyse and strategy writing/developing process from the beginning, to get more appropriate bases for the strategic goals. Benchmarking with the best would be a useful information source.
2. The college's internal quality management system must be developed, and its practical operation must be ensured
3. The College needs to make preparations for the accepting students from 3rd countries - analysis (eg. risk analyse), admission process etc should be carefully planned and implemented.
4. The College needs to make preparations for the enlargement and build up the support processes in a way where key academic staff workload is reasonable, processes and responsibilities are clear and follow the PDCA principles.
5. After submitting the annual teacher evaluation report, feedback should be provided to the teacher in person. Results of the evaluation must be clear especially for the teacher.
6. We recommend carefully examine the methodical knowledge and experience level of didactics of foreign teachers.
7. In the next few years the student self-governance should take a more active stance and develop a strategic viewpoint regarding College quality assessment, including possible participation in quality assessment procedures.
8. In the next few years the student self-governance should organize onboarding meetings/events to inform and instruct the new members about the previous, continual and potential activities the student government has been or could be involved in.
9. In the next year the student self-governance should work on the exchange of experience between them and other student self-governance institutions or the national student union in order to improve their understanding of student academic and social affairs.
10. In the next year the student self-governance should review the SP Regulations regarding financial affairs, including an overview of their involvement in the financial upkeep of the tuition fee discount procedure. A more detailed description of financial management would also be beneficial to further functionality of the SP.

11. In the next year the student self-governance should review the necessity of direct remuneration of basic organizational support provided by College staff in accordance with the LHEI as well as the necessity of general event supervision by members of the academic staff.
12. It should be noted that the majority of academic staff work in other HEIs, so there is still a risk of ensuring the effectiveness of research in the future. It is recommended that measures be taken to manage this potential risk.
13. The college has striven to obtain real orders from business to conduct applied research and apply research results in the study process.
14. Emphasise on more expertise in sales & revenue learnings by adding modules that cover wider scope in PMS comparison studies, revenue management and its software (i.e EZ RMS), channel manager systems (i.e D-Edge, TARS, SiteMinder, WuBook, etc.).
15. More clarity should be communicated in the Methodological part for each syllabus, with learning outcomes, levels of expertise, research methods to be applied, compulsory literature (international authors vs. own lecturer brochures).
16. To develop thoughtful internationalisation action plan with clear criteria for choosing cooperation partners;
17. After successful accreditation to apply for Erasmus+ Charter, to ensure that mobility has a sustainable base - long-term agreement (not one-time project based).
18. The College must implement the strengthening of the academic staff capacity in practice, particularly with the aim of increasing the number of students.