

# **DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES VELIKA GORICA 2022-2026**

## **QUALITY POLICY AND SWOT ANALYSIS**

(Revision 1.)

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## 1. Introduction

The University of Applied Sciences Velika Gorica currently has a Development Strategy 2022-2026 in force, drafted by the Committee for the drafting of the proposal of the Development Strategy of the University of Applied Sciences Velika Gorica 2022-2026, consisting of 13 members. The Committee was appointed on the 15 July 2021 by the decision of the then Dean of the University of Applied Sciences Velika Gorica, Ivan Toth, PhD, col. prof., associate professor. While the Strategy was being drafted, the opinions of all other employees of the University of Applied Sciences Velika Gorica were taken into account.

The aim of this document is to verify the implementation of the Strategy to date, or to recognize the new strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats, and harmonize them with the new organizational structure. With the aim of continuous improvement of all activities at the University and the response of the University to the opportunities and threats in accordance with the internal strengths and weaknesses, the working group for the revision/harmonization of the Development Strategy of the University of Applied Sciences Velika Gorica has conducted a revision of the SWOT analysis, current mission and vision of the University and harmonized the document with the new organizational structure and defined strategic goals. Other members of all key stakeholders of the University (employees, teachers, external associates, students, alumni, businesspeople etc.) were invited and became involved in the procedure for the revision and harmonization of the Development Strategy of the University of Applied Sciences Velika Gorica 2022-2026 and other activities related to this process.

The following members were appointed to the working group for the revision of the Development Strategy of the University of Applied Sciences Velika Gorica 2022-2026:

1. Tamara Čendo Metzinger, PhD, col. prof.
2. Sanja Kalambura, PhD, col. prof.
3. Mirela Karabatić, M.Sc., sen. lect., dipl. oec.
4. Marjana Kuliš, lect., prof.
5. Ivana Rubić, PhD, sen. lect., mag. educ. philol. angl.
6. Marko Toth, PhD, sen. lect., mag. psych.
7. Igor Milić, sen.lect., mag. ing. admin. chris.
8. Vesna Valdec, adjunct. lect., mag. oec.
9. Jasna Jursik Stranjik, prof.
10. Antonio Klobučar, mag. geogr., mag. oec.
11. Dijana Dijanić, mag. pol.
12. Mario Grgić, adjunct lect., mag. ing. techn. inf.
13. Ivan Dino Maričić, bacc. ing. admin. chris., student
14. Igor Božičković, bacc. ing. opt., representative from the business sphere

Gendered terms apply equally to all genders, regardless of the gender in which they are expressed.

For practical reasons, the University of Applied Sciences Velika Gorica is often shortened to University in the text, while the Development Strategy of the University of Applied Sciences Velika Gorica 2022-2026 is shortened to Strategy.

**The University of Applied Sciences Velika Gorica** is a private higher education institution, which started operating in 2003 when it obtained work permit from the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports. It was established in accordance with the Act on Scientific Activity and Higher Education, while its founders were the City of Velika Gorica, the College of Occupational Safety and Health from Zagreb, Technology Transfer Centre of the Zagreb University's Faculty of Mechanical Engineering and Naval Architecture. In the meantime, the City of Velika Gorica became the sole founder of the University. In December 2024, Tamara Čendo Metzinger, PhD, col. prof. was elected to the position of the Dean of the University for the period of four years, and is the person authorized to represent the University.

The University is located at the address Zagrebačka ulica 5, 10410 Velika Gorica (OIB: 09032023114, ID No.: 01745069).

The University has a total of 71 employees (teaching and non-teaching staff), while a large number of external associates from various institutions and business entities likewise participate in the teaching activities.

The University of Applied Sciences Velika Gorica currently performs one short-cycle study programme, five undergraduate professional study programmes and four specialist graduate professional study programmes in the scientific field of technical sciences, that enable attendees to acquire knowledge and skills necessary to perform occupations for which there is a real demand in Croatia and beyond its borders.

Higher education institutions represent one of the main factors in continuous economic development, and the University of Applied Sciences Velika Gorica is oriented towards people eager to gain knowledge, who will one day be active factors in the development of the whole society.

**Study programmes** currently offered by the University of Applied Sciences Velika Gorica are the following:

- ***Professional short-cycle study programme:***

1. Digital technologies

- ***Undergraduate professional study programmes:***

1. Computer Systems Maintenance
2. Crisis Management
3. Aircraft Maintenance
4. Optometry
5. Motor Vehicles

- ***Graduate professional study programmes:***

1. Crisis Management

2. Information Systems
3. Logistics Management
4. Optometry

The Statute of the University of Applied Sciences Velika Gorica and the Act prescribe and determine the status of the institution, its legal status, activities, and internal structure of the University.

**Activities of the University** include:

- organization and implementation of professional study programmes and other study programmes in accordance with the Act on Higher Education
- performing highly qualified development and research activities, as well as scientific activities, within requirements in line with specific regulations
- organization and implementation of educational programmes not considered to be study programmes in terms of law, which are based on the principles of lifelong learning
- organization and implementation of adult education programmes, as well as professional training and specialization programmes
- publishing, library, and IT activities related to its primary field of activity
- retail sales of books and coursebooks for students
- organization of training courses, seminars, professional and scientific conferences, as well as organizing the taking of professional and other exams needed to obtain relevant permits, authorizations, licences etc.
- providing services to business and other entities within the public and private sector, with the aim of contributing to the development and improvement of the quality of the University's activities or the rationalization of University's equipment
- market research, public opinion polling, provision of counselling and consulting services, for the purposes of performing the University's activities, if they are usually or to a lesser extent performed alongside the previously mentioned activities
- taking care of the students' standard of living, which is implemented through the organization of students' accommodation, food and catering services, and the activity of student employment service.

**Governing bodies of the University** are:

- **Governing Council** – governs the University, takes care about the performance of the University's activities and protects the University in accordance with the founding act and the Statute of the University.
- **Dean** – represents and manages the University, is responsible for the legality of University's activities, and in her work has the rights and obligations of the director of the institution. The dean is the head of the University who manages the University within the framework specified by the Statute and the legislation.

- **Expert Council** – expert University body which discusses and decides on academic, professional, teaching, and scientific issues related to the University’s activities, within its powers determined by the legislation, the Statute, and other general acts of the University.
- **Other governing, advisory, and professional bodies** whose foundation, composition and competence are regulated by the Statute or other general acts of the University.

As an advisory body, the University also has the Quality Department, which includes two committees: the Committee for Quality Assurance and Improvement at the University of Applied Sciences Velika Gorica and the Internal Audit Committee.

## 2. Organizational structure of the University

The University is constituted and organized as a single unit with two interconnected and mutually aligned subsystems: the academic subsystem which is structured through the teaching, professional, and scientific organizational units of the University (studies, departments, and centres) and the business subsystem which is structured through the business, legal, and administrative organizational units (deanery, services, offices, departments, sections, and student offices).

- **Studies**- perform teaching and scientific-professional activities from one or more scientific areas. The University of Applied Sciences Velika Gorica performs 1 professional short-cycle study programme, 5 undergraduate professional study programmes and 4 specialist graduate study programmes.
- **Departments**- coordinate the teaching activities of the professional study programmes in the fields for which they were established.
- **Centres**- perform specific scientific and professional activities important for the University’s operations.

Several centres have been established at the University: Centre for Scientific and Professional Activity, the Centre for Lifelong Learning and Education, and the Centre for Career and Psychological Support.

*The Deanery* is an organisational unit of the University which performs professional, administrative, statistical, accounting, bookkeeping, technical and other tasks that enable the successful operation of the University.

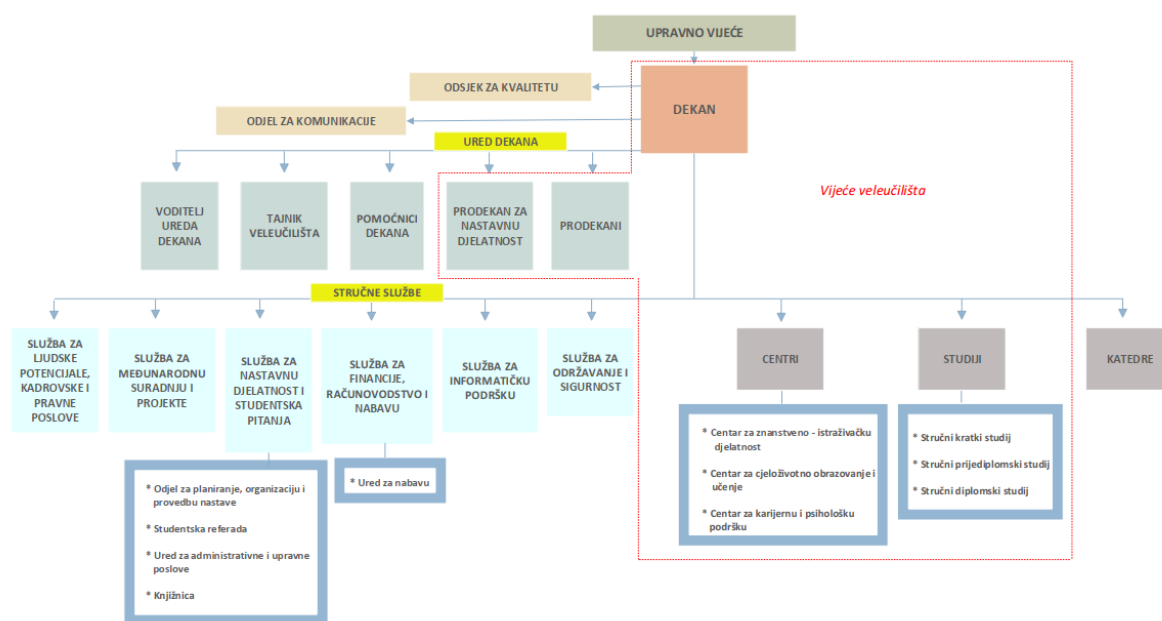
The Deanery is managed by the Dean, and it consists of the following organizational units:

- *Dean’s Office (consisting of the dean, dean’s office head, dean’s assistants, secretary of the University, vice-deans including the Vice-Dean for Teaching Activities)*
- *Quality Assurance Department*
- *Communications Department*
- *Human Potentials, Personnel and Legal Affairs Service*
- *International Cooperation and Projects’ Service*

- *Teaching Activities and Student Affairs Service (consisting of the Department for the Planning, Organization, and Implementation of Classes, Student Office, Office for Administrative and Management Affairs, and the Library)*
- *Finances, Accounting and Procurement Service (including the Procurement Office)*
- *IT Support Service*
- *Maintenance and Security Service.*

Organization and structure of the University, jobs and positions at the University, as well as the requirements for individual jobs, the list and description of tasks for each job position are regulated in detail by the Book of Regulations on the Internal Organisation and Structure of Job Positions and the List of Job Positions of the University of Applied Sciences Velika Gorica.

The outline of the organisational structure of the University of Applied Sciences Velika Gorica is shown below.



### 3. Methodology for the drafting of the Strategy and compliance with strategic documents and recommendations

The drafting process for this Development Strategy is defined in phases as follows:

1. Appointment of the working group members for the implementation of revision/harmonization of the Development Strategy of the University of Applied Sciences Velika Gorica 2022-2026.

2. Preparation and conducting the workshop – SWOT
3. Preparation and sending of an online form for data collection regarding the stakeholders
4. Collecting obtained data and filling in the form
5. Consultations with the working group/the public regarding any comments on the document
6. Drafting of the final version of revision/harmonization of the Development Strategy of the University of Applied Sciences Velika Gorica 2022-2026
7. Presentation of the revision/harmonization of the Strategy
8. Adoption of the Strategy revision by the University's bodies.

The Committee for the drafting of the Development Strategy of the University of Applied Sciences Velika Gorica defined the strategic objectives for the period 2022-2026 in accordance with the conducted analysis of the state and trends of development needs and potentials in higher education. Through this revision of the Strategy, the objectives previously defined by the Development Strategy of the University of Applied Sciences Velika Gorica 2022-2026 and realized up to date were analysed. Subsequent to the internal audit of the situation at the University and the analysis of external factors, a new SWOT analysis was made, as well as a new Quality Policy, in order to adapt the Development Strategy of the University of Applied Sciences Velika Gorica 2022-2026 to the current strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, and to harmonize it with the institutional development needs and capacities, as well as the national and European strategic and legislative framework.

## 4. Mission, vision, and social responsibility

**The mission of the University of Applied Sciences Velika Gorica** is to implement the activities of higher education and lifelong learning through the continuous development and improvement of high-quality and specific study programmes and lifelong learning programmes based on the principles of social responsibility, academic excellence, and market competitiveness. The University contributes to the responsible and sustainable development of the social community through the education and training of experts prepared to respond to contemporary challenges and needs of the labour market.

**The vision of the University of Applied Sciences Velika Gorica** is to become a distinguished modern institution of higher education, which will be competitive at the national and international level due to the specificities and internationalization of its study programmes and lifelong learning programmes. By networking with partner institutions and real sector stakeholders and encouraging mobility and development of scientific-research work, our aim is to educate competent experts and future stakeholders in social development through the acquisition of practical knowledge and skills during their studies and lifelong learning aligned with the highest Croatian and European standards, as well as the contemporary needs of the labour market.



**Social responsibility of the University of Applied Sciences Velika Gorica** is manifested in the fact that the University encourages systematic and sustainable development through its activities and business operations, as well as exerting a positive impact on the society and the environment. The University's infrastructure is likewise adapted for all students, employees, and associates, thus allowing undisturbed work, enrolment, and attendance of the study programmes. Promotion of equal opportunities, non-discrimination, and equality are the fundamental principles in all fields of higher education activity at the University.

## 5. Quality policy and SWOT analysis

### Quality policy

The quality policy of the University of Applied Sciences Velika Gorica is aimed at quality assurance through the constant improvement of both the teaching and business processes and relationships' quality in realistic conditions, which enable the high-quality selection and high standards of the University's students.

The management of the University ensures quality appropriate for the University's strategic objectives. The policy provides the framework for the continuous improvement of the quality assurance system's efficiency.

The quality policy is known and understandable to all University stakeholders.

The quality policy is periodically audited through the evaluation of the University Management of the quality management system based on the ISO 9001:2015 standard, internal audit report in accordance with the ESG standards and the external independent periodic audit.

The quality policy is implemented through:

- clearly defined objectives and standards of the development of the quality system in strategic and planning documents
- constant engagement in the implementation, evaluation, and revision of the quality system in the organization of all organizational units of the University, as well as the students and external stakeholders
- continuous improvement of the study programmes and lifelong learning programmes in line with labour market needs and based on the latest professional developments, technologies, and scientific-research work
- continuous improvement of the teaching process through the use of new technologies, digital tools and student-centred teaching
- continuous advancement of teaching and non-teaching staff, by encouraging and monitoring their work and professional development
- meeting the requirements for the improvement and enhancement of the teaching process set by the teachers, students, and all other stakeholders for the realisation of quality objectives

- motivating the staff, associates, students, and all stakeholders to adopt a responsible and creative approach to work obligations in order to realize strategic objectives and develop human potentials
- motivating and including students in the work and development of the University
- establishment of partnerships with external institutions and business entities upon which the efficiency of the teaching process depends, as well as the development and maintenance of good relations with state institutions
- promotion of quality culture at all levels of the University
- promotion of excellence and academic honesty
- development of the University as a socially responsible higher education institution which contributes to the development of the local community, region, and society
- promoting the scientific-research work of teachers in cooperation with students and the economy
- transferring practical knowledge from the business sphere and involving corporations in the teaching process
- supporting the development of its position as an important higher education institution which maintains and seeks high quality in the field of higher education, implementing lifelong learning and education programmes, as well as the implementation of scientific and professional projects
- quality improvement in accordance with the ESG standards, the international ISO 9001:2015 standard, legal regulations, and stakeholder requirements
- rational use of University's resources.

## SWOT analysis

### STRENGTHS

- Our employees and external associates are focused on student success through mentorship activities and bilateral intergenerational exchange of knowledge, skills, and experiences.
- Tradition and recognisability at the macro and micro-level with a specific and multidisciplinary study programmes created in cooperation with the needs of the economy and the local community.
- Study programmes are comparable to similar study programmes abroad, which offers opportunities for student and teaching staff exchange and vertical mobility for all study programmes.
- Specific teaching methods and techniques (development of critical thinking, collaborative learning, student-centred teaching) and the use of the Gaudeamus system (Moodle platform) for the application of e-learning and other digital tools in the teaching process.
- Systematic support to the development of generic skills (*soft skills*) in students at all study programmes and a high percentage of students who gained employment after graduating from our study programmes.

- ERASMUS+ charter and a long tradition of international cooperation, organisation of BIP programmes with partner institutions from EU member states, organisation of international scientific-professional conferences and our own publication of the ADRS scientific journal.
- Efficient and good cooperation of students and teachers with the Student Office, the library, the IT Service, the Centre for Career and Psychological Support and the Centre for Lifelong Learning and Education.
- Our lecture halls, laboratories and learning spaces are well-equipped and orderly, while our students are provided with individualised support through tutoring and individual consultations, as well as taking care of their mental health.
- Diverse offer of additional activities for students through the participation in thematic conferences, exhibitions, workshops, volunteer activities and public health actions.
- Ensured requirements for the implementation of professional practice according to the principle of learning through work.
- Our own publishing activity and a large number of our own published textbooks, availability of other course materials on the Gaudeamus platform.
- Membership and influence of the University in national and international organizations and bodies.
- Continuous education of employees and enabled scientific work of teachers, the possibility of involving teachers in the implementation of EU-funded projects and various lifelong learning programmes aimed at the professional development of students and employees, as well as preparing secondary school students for the matura exams.
- Highly developed cooperation with the business sector through the joint development and conducting training sessions on corporate sustainability.
- Very high percentage of full-time employed teachers who hold a doctoral degree.
- Integrated quality assurance system in accordance with the ESG standards and ISO 9001 in a highly developed stage.
- News bulletin titled Gaudeamus as a source of information on student activities and the activities of teachers/employees of the University.

### **WEAKNESSES**

- Financial stability dependent on tuition fees and the number of students.
- Lack of subsidised accommodation and meals for students in Velika Gorica.
- Variable productivity of professional and scientific papers of individual lecturers, assistants, and expert associates.
- Uneven number of lifelong learning programmes by study programme fields.
- Long-term non-existence of a systematic approach to the increase in employee motivation.
- Uneven emphasis on the professional and practical content of final theses by individual study programmes.
- Absence of online study programmes and study programmes offered in English.

- Low level of activity of the Student Assembly of the University of Applied Sciences Velika Gorica.
- A high number of part-time students, whose attendance of fieldwork is complicated due to work obligations.

### **OPPORTUNITIES**

- Specific features of the microregion within which the University is located and the growing demand for qualified professionals – especially in STEM fields.
- Strengthening international cooperation by exchanging students, teachers, and non-teaching staff, the possibility of greater cooperation in international EU-funded projects.
- Internationalisation of study programmes and the development of joint study programmes, as well as the establishment of online study programmes in English.
- Attracting non-EU students with the current study programmes.
- Continuous development of teaching staff by utilizing our alumni network from all study programme fields.
- Quicker adaptation to the labour market which opens opportunities for creating programmes for new target groups, increasing need to acquire micro-qualifications, creating programmes in cooperation with the labour market needs.
- Fourth industrial revolution which brings the need to develop new skills and professions, while emphasizing the development of collaborative learning and the use of technologies.
- Further infrastructural development and modernization of the University.

### **THREATS**

- Demographic and economic crisis at the national and EU level.
- Inability to use budgetary resources, unequal position of teachers/employees when compared to the employees of public higher education institutions.
- A high number of enrolment places at higher education institutions in the Republic of Croatia when compared to a dwindling number of high school graduates.
- An increased offer of similar study programmes in Croatia and abroad, as well as online study programmes.
- Rapid technological changes which require constant investments in infrastructure and resources.
- Demanding criteria for teachers' career advancement.

*This Development Strategy of the University of Applied Sciences Velika Gorica 2022-2026 – Quality Policy and SWOT analysis (Revision 1) was adopted by the University Council of the University of Applied Sciences Velika Gorica on its 9<sup>th</sup> session in the academic year 2024/2025, held on 4 June 2025, while the Governing Council adopted this document on the 6<sup>th</sup> session of the University of Applied Sciences Velika Gorica's Governing Council, in academic year 2024/2025, held on 12 June 2025.*

CLASS: 602-03/25-15/039

REG.NO.: 238/31-132-056-25-01