Expert group joint opinion

Evaluation Procedure: Assessment of Study Field

Higher Education Institution: University of Latvia

Study field: Education and Pedagogy

Experts:

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Summary of the Assessment of the Study Field and the Relevant Study Programmes

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The University of Latvia is in the mid-period of implementing its strategic plan for 2021-2027 and the study field “Education and Pedagogy” (further – SF EDU) is justified in accordance with the scope of activity of the University of Latvia (further – UL), strategic development directions, development needs and development trends of the society and economy. The UL reasonably reduced the SF EDU from 22 SPs and shaped the field into 7 following SPs:
1. Short cycle (first level) professional higher education study programme "Preschool Teacher",
2. Professional bachelor (first cycle) study programme "Teacher of Primary Education",
3. Professional bachelor (first cycle) study programme "Teacher",
4. First cycle professional higher education study programme "Teacher",
5. Academic master (second cycle) study programme "Educational Sciences",
6. Academic master (second cycle) study programme "Technological Innovation and Design for Education" and
7. Joint academic doctoral (third cycle) study programme "Educational Sciences".

The third mission of the UL, particularly in the field of Education Sciences, is evident in terms of social impact. This field contributes significantly to the development of human and social capital in the regions. The study field demonstrates high potential, especially regarding PhD students who feel they are treated as Executive students and integral members of the academic community. This supports their development into a new generation of researchers.

The academic staff respects students' personalities and incorporates their experiences into the studies. This approach helps to promote a new academic culture based on a co-creation attitude. Students and graduates are ambitious and serve as excellent ambassadors dedicated to the country's growth. They exhibit a high level of commitment to contributing to the educational improvement of the country for e.g., their study books/manuals are used in other universities, too. The teaching staff values both innovation and internationalisation. The lecturers develop teaching tools that encourage students to learn independently: robotics, drones and other elements of modern technology are part of the curriculum.

Almost the same quality of provision is demonstrated across all branches, and the UL is perceived as a high-quality brand by all stakeholders. Students appreciate that higher education is close to home and work for local citizens, as this supports community feeling and community building.

Leadership is evident in the management team (the faculty, the field, and study programmes), and this team can lead the field and study programmes to the next stage of development in research, studies, and social impact.

Considering the information gathered, experts would like to highlight the following areas:
- When the Experts met students during the on-site visit, they got the impression of good relations between teachers and students: a warm feeling dominates in the context of the study atmosphere.
- Some lecturers also are working at general educational institutions, which makes study more practical, and helps students to cope in the labour market. There is an increased student demand for teaching staff practical experience in the general education system.
- Students in branches value the possibility to study near the home, however – action to raise the number of students is needed.
- As most of the lecturers teach in several curricula, the cooperation between the staff in the study

programmes is strong. Also most scientific articles are written by many authors.
-The average publishing-activity is high, but unequal: some members of the academic staff have over 60 articles, others 10 times less.
- Ph.D. and Master students assist the academic staff in organising conferences - for them it is useful to hear the scientific presentations/discussions.
- Active cooperation with foreign researchers within the framework of international institutions, participation in conferences, workshops and networking events allows the teaching staff to include current problems and research directions in the content of study courses.
- In all study programmes the aims, objectives (goal, tasks) are strongly linked with the SF EDU strategy priorities.
Study programmes correspond to the current trends and industry needs globally as well as current Latvian policy planning documents for 2021-2027 and there are equivalent study programmes in universities in Latvia.
- Learning outcomes are formulated in the student-centred approach according to the conventional best practices and are integrated in the various teaching and assessment methods of the study courses and are mapped against the study courses results.
- The number of graduated students have been achieved as planned and the impact from the economic and social aspects to dynamics of the number of students respected. The employment indicators of the graduates of the study programmes are high.
- System for library resource use and logistic support for study materials is well managed and student-centred. Strategy of provision of these resources allows students in Riga and regional branches equal and well organised resource accessibility.

Generally speaking, the study field is excellent, however, there is room for improvement regarding internships in the study programmes, particularly in strengthening components of observation and reflection on students' performance. The content of some study programmes (e.g., preschool teacher) must be more closely related to the age group of learners, and greater attention should be paid to the students' ability to transfer skills to the daily context of classrooms. STEM education should have a dedicated advocate to improve cooperation between the Faculty and subject matter faculties.

Nevertheless, experts would like to highlight some tasks for the future development of the study field. There is a high demand to open a Special Education study programme (speech therapy, logopedia) with a focus on inclusive education. Although there are elements of inclusive education in the current study programmes, expertise from a new or re-opened study programme would support other study programmes more deeply. This would also help to strengthen research in inclusive education and may help to raise the number of students in the branches, too. It is highly recommended to open a Doctoral School and to increase international activities to a greater extent.

I - Assessment of the Study Field

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1.1 Management of the Study Field

Analysis

1.1.1.
The Strategy of the University of Latvia (further – UL) sets out strategic goals that points out a unique study offer and high competitiveness of graduates, a development and excellence oriented personnel policy and an inclusive, collaborative and innovation oriented culture, and defines the areas of activity of the UL in accordance with the Constitution of the UL (SAR, section 2.1.1). UL is in

the mid-period of implementing its strategic plan for 2021-2027 and the goal of the study field “Education and Pedagogy” (further – SF EDU) is justified in accordance with the scope of activity of the University of Latvia, strategic development directions, development needs and development trends of the society and economy. The self-assessment report (further – SAR) also provides and aligns SF EDU with other national strategies that are focusing on direction for change in education and science, civic awareness, technologies and the economy. Set of the national guidelines also support strengthening research-based, innovation-oriented higher education and providing opportunities for the development and growth of academic staff.

The SAR (section 2.1.1) and the meetings during the site visit with management of the faculty and branches indicate that the aim of the SF EDU which is to provide excellence and internationalisation-oriented, interdisciplinary high-level studies and research in six strategic directions of the University's activities is clearly defined and attainable and related to the UL Strategy 2021-2027. Six strategic directions focus on research excellence, study development, contribution to society, talent development, environment and governance, and organisational culture (SAR, section 2.1.1). Meetings with all target groups and stakeholders of the SF EDU provided evidence that the field is matching these directions. The aim of the SF EDU is specified by 8 tasks (SAR, section 2.1.1) that focus on enhancing qualities of studies, research, academic staff, promotion of digital technologies, and dissemination of knowledge and expertise. These attributes and actions of management demonstrate that the SF EDU is proactive and making an impact on society.

The interconnection of the study programmes included in the study field is clear and logical since 2020 when gradual changes have been implemented at the national level regarding studies and research. The SF EDU includes 7 study programmes (further – SP) under recent accreditation procedure since the last accreditation in 2013. Moreover, the UL has a long standing tradition in the SF EDU. The expert group is reviewing SP’s that fall under the study field "Education and Pedagogy". The SAR indicates reduction of 22 SP’s in total according to the decision of the Advisory Council for the New Development of Teacher Education of the Ministry of Education and Science (MoES) in 2018. The main reason for this decision was to decrease the fragmentation of study programmes and to strengthen the joint use of resources. An important shift to a new quality of the SF EDU was developed in accordance with the information report "Proposals for conceptually new competency-based teacher education in Latvia" published by the MoES in 2017 (SAR, section 2.1.1), which emphasised the need to provide conceptually new competency-based teacher education in Latvia and transform studies to meet new challenges in competency-based teacher education. This shift also gave new impetus to the role of Master's study programmes in education sciences, which should provide further education opportunities for those who have acquired a professional qualification in teaching in areas such as educational research, knowledge culture, didactics and management of education systems. The development of a Master's level study programme for educational technologists was launched to meet demands of preparing a strong network of change agents who will develop and implement a modern approach to the teaching/learning process and provide support for the education and successful entry of new teachers into Latvian schools. In order to ensure resource sharing and synergies between the different competences of universities at doctoral level, a single joint doctoral programme in the field of education sciences in Latvia was established.

As a result of these changes in the national policy the UL reflected them into the institutional strategy and the SF EDU reasonably was shaped into 7 following SPs:
1. Short cycle (first level) professional higher education study programme "Preschool Teacher",
2. Professional bachelor (first cycle) study programme "Teacher of Primary Education",
3. Professional bachelor (first cycle) study programme "Teacher",

4. First cycle professional higher education study programme "Teacher",
5. Academic master (second cycle) study programme "Educational Sciences",
6. Academic master (second cycle) study programme "Technological Innovation and Design for Education" and
7. Joint academic doctoral (third cycle) study programme "Educational Sciences".

1.1.2.
The SAR provides (section 2.1.2) an extensive SWOT analysis that was developed by a working group of representatives of the SF EDU and the study field (SF) Council. 11 items of strengths were identified dominantly in the area of research, qualities of academic staff (e.g. researchers have the capacity to publish in high ranking (Q1/Q2, top 50% citation) scientific journals) and collaboration with educational institutions, employers and social partners. 6 areas to be improved are also dominating in the area of research (e.g. payment for scientific activities, needs for expanding international cooperation) while the area of studies directly is not foreseen as the area for improvement. 7 opportunities are listed in SWOT and they are mostly related to attracting more funding to research projects, increasing the scientific and academic qualification of researchers and teaching staff and expanding cooperation with other Latvian and foreign higher education institutions. 6 threats are also related mostly to scientific work, low prestige of the teaching profession, demographic situation in the country, which influences the decrease in the number of students in teacher education and educational sciences study programmes.

The SWOT analysis of the SF was based on discussion and evaluation of the content, organisation and implementation experience of SPs included in the SF. The main sources of the SWOT are solid and reliable and taking into account the proposals made by students for the improvement of the study process, the selection and renewal process of the academic staff; employer recommendations; sources of funding, material and methodological support; scientific activities of the academic staff of the study field; the strategic development documents of the UL and Faculty of Education, Psychology and Art, the development opportunities of the study field, including the planned relocation to the Academic Centre of the UL, of which the new faculty is currently under construction (as for June 2024).

As a result of the SWOT analysis the Development Plan (further – Plan) of the SF for 2022-2027 (SAR, Annex 4_Goal and development plan of the SF_EN.docx) was developed to achieve the set goals for the SF EDU. This Plan is consistent and identifies general objectives and more specific sub-objectives for each goal, for which the responsible persons are also identified. In order to check whether the sub-objectives have been achieved, the indicators to be achieved and the corresponding values at the start, at the mid-term and at the end of the plan are defined. An example of consistency is the following (SAR, Annex 4_Goal and development plan of the SF_EN.docx):
- Study field goal 1. To ensure the quality of research in education sciences and pedagogy, the visibility of its results in publications and scientific events, and its relevance and recognition in higher education and society;
- Objective 1.1. To strengthen the excellence of research and quality of research results in education sciences and pedagogy;
- Sub-objective 1.1.1. To ensure the renewal of academic staff in the study field;
- Results to be achieved: Renewal of the number of newly elected professors, associate professors (number of newly elected professors, associate professors);
- Quantitative indicator: for the period of 2022-2027;
- Responsible persons: Dean, Vice-Dean of Science, Heads of structural units.

Discussions on the Plan involved the academic community, employers and students. The procedure

was transparent, democratic, and followed up by improvements at each step. Different levels of management took an active role in the development of the Plan (SAR section 2.1.2).

1.1.3.
The seven SPs of the SF are implemented in the cooperation of the 5 departments (Department of Education Sciences and Pedagogical Innovation, Department of Teacher Education, Department of Psychology, Department of Preschool and Primary Education, Department of Art and Technology) as well other UL faculties (Faculty of Biology, Faculty of Geography and Earth Sciences, Faculty of Physics, Mathematics and Optometry, Faculty of Humanities, Faculty of Chemistry) (SAR, section 2.1.3) and these involvements fulfil academic needs of the 7 SPs.
The Regulations (SAR, section 2.1.3) on the UL SF are set up and determine the procedure for the management, quality assurance and development of study fields at the UL. These procedures describe the functions and operating principles of the respective Study Field Council, qualification requirements, responsibilities, and rights of the head of the SF, SP director, and the head of the sub-programme of the respective study field.

The SAR (section 2.1.3) and the meetings with the management groups during the visit at the faculty indicated that responsibilities are clearly delegated among different managerial levels (SAR, Annex 5_Scheme of the management of the study field Education and Pedagogy and its study programmes_EN.docx). The Academic Department is responsible for the development and functioning of the study quality assurance system and delegates the study quality assurance to the Faculty. The responsibility for the development of the SF and quality of implemented SPs lies with the head of the SF and dean, SPs directors, and sub-programme directors. Each lecturer is responsible for the quality of the content and implementation of the study course, research activity and professional development. This cascade of the management structure of the SF EDU and the corresponding study programmes ensures input from each level into the development of the SF EDU. Wide participation in the management structure is also ensured by representatives of students (the SF Council, Faculty Council, The Study Programme Quality Assessment Commission) whose voice is also heard in student surveys and decision making.

Branches of the UL in the regions are operated by the branch director who is acting in close cooperation with the director of the Regional Center (further – RC). The meetings with management teams in branches indicated that responsibilities are clearly identified and the operational structure is functioning well. The director of the RC is visiting branches frequently, however, responsibilities of this RC are limited by managerial operations. However, there is a gap in how the RC is involved in the internal management structure of the faculty. The RC is acting as an intermediate body between a Branch and management of the faculty while the Branches can be directly connected to the Faculty in terms of demand and content issues of the SPs.

Involvement of supporting staff is sufficient and experts got confirmation that support in all branches of the UL regarding sources in library and IT are in place.

1.1.4.
The SAR (section 2.1.4) and the meetings with the representatives from the QA body of the UL provided evidence that a system has been set up and procedures developed for the admission of students by a set of requirements (listed 5 documents in SAR section 2.1.4) that are approved and published in various communication channels. There are also normative regulations of two documents governing recognition procedures. Admission requirements and procedures are classified according to three types of SPs, namely, undergraduates SPs, post-graduates SPs, and doctoral SP. The procedure identifies complete information on the admission procedure, registration fee, tuition

fee, and a number of study places available in admission of a particular year. If the entrance examination procedure is applied, then there is information on composition of the examination boards.

In postgraduate SP's that allow for prior education in various fields, the entrance examination is used to determine the correspondence of the candidate's prior knowledge to the field of the study programme. Yet, the criteria and form for the entrance examination for every SP is not clear from the publicly available information, thus the potential students might not be fully informed before the admissions. Admission in doctoral studies takes place centrally. The applicant must submit the topic of the doctoral thesis and supervisor should be agreed upon (SAR section 2.1.4). The applicant's eligibility is assessed by the doctoral council of the branch of science.

The recognition of the study period, professional experience, prior formal and non-formal education is available for students and regulated by two approved procedures at the UL (SAR section 2.1.4). The procedures are clearly described and transparent in terms of application opportunities. During application, documents confirming the achieved learning outcomes must be enclosed/attached – certificates, employer's statements, recommendations, project results, job descriptions, etc.

Learning outcomes achieved through professional experience may be recognised only in the part of the SPs that includes an internship or as intended learning outcomes in the study course of the SP or study module, which confirm acquired practical knowledge. The SAR provides data (section 2.1.4) that the procedure is taking place and during the self-analysis procedure there were 560 students in all branches, who have study courses recognised; and 790 students whose study courses have been recognised since the start of admission in the SPs in the autumn semester of 2020. Generally, the procedure was started in 2019.

Study course recognition in undergraduate and postgraduate study programmes is conducted mainly when students return from international exchange programmes. It is also possible to reference academic activity, which is conducted outside of a doctoral study programme, to the requirements of the respective doctoral study programme, also to recognise study courses or internship taken at the UL or other HEI, including international exchange programmes. Requirements for the referencing of academic activity admissible in the doctoral study programmes are defined in the recognition regulation and procedure.

Offered opportunity by the UL to perform recognition of learning outcomes achieved through non-formal and extra-curricular education, including, continuing education programmes, is rarely used.

1.1.5.
The SAR (section 2.1.5) and meetings with the QA team of UL confirmed that the system for assessing achievements of students is consistent in a way of matching all required components in study course descriptions, namely, information on the conditions, aim, tasks, requirements for obtaining credit points, study course content, organisation of study process through contact classes, organisation and tasks of the students independent work, intended learning outcomes (knowledge, skills, competence) and their assessment methods and assessment criteria. During the on-site visit demonstration of the e-learning environment and the ULIS indicated that these descriptors are available to students.

Students are informed of the organisation and implementation of studies in the SP (SAR, section 2.1.5), but when starting each individual study course, the academic staff confirmed that they inform students specifically about the organisation, content, requirements, intended learning

outcomes, study course final examinations and assessment criteria, as well as explains the integral quality of the study course for achieving overarching learning outcomes of the study programmes. Students can familiarise themselves with the assessment criteria and conditions and the binding procedures in the study course descriptions and the UL e-learning environment, as well as at the beginning of each course during the first class, when each lecturer introduces students to the course organisation, briefly describes the requirements for interim assessments and study course final examinations, describes grading criteria, assessment and examination procedures, by not changing these requirements and grading criteria throughout the semester. Assessment procedure is described in the Quality Management Handbook, p. 46-48, and is verified by the section "Assessment" on the UL website.

The specificity of the methods used in course examinations and the process of assessing students' achievements in the SP's of the SF EDU is that through assessment students also indirectly learn how to assess learners. Formative assessment practices, as well as the involvement of students in self-assessment and peer assessment during mid-term examinations are an integral part of assessment in the SPs of the SF. Combined organisation forms of examinations (oral, written, practical) are used, as well as multi-stage forms of examination. Several courses have more than one lecturer, so they are all involved in the assessment of student performance.

The SAR (section 2.1.5) and descriptors of the courses identify that there are two types of assessment in each study course: the interim assessment (the total grade for interim assessments not less than 50% from the total grade) and the study course final examination (grade not less than 10% of the total grade). The study course final examinations may be conducted in writing or orally or in a combined form (written and oral). To assess students' achievements, the form of assessments and methods are chosen in correspondence to the teaching methods used in the study process, during contact classes and in the organisation of students' independent work.

Taking an examination is a mandatory requirement for obtaining credit points for the completion of a study course. The procedures and criteria for the interim assessments are determined by the responsible structural unit. The study course grading is calculated in the UL Centralised Recording System according to the algorithm specified in the course description, considering the grading obtained in the interim assessment(s) and study course final examination, and recorded in the examination report.

Types of interim assessments include quizzes, individual work, practical work, laboratory work, reports, papers, and other types of work according to the profile of the study course. The number and type of interim assessments are specified in the study course description. For the student to receive grading for the completion of the study course, the grading acquired in the study course final examination should be a passing grade. The completion of the course can be assessed as successful even if the study course final examination has failed, and such possibility is defined in the study course description. The overall grading of course completion is calculated in the UL e-learning environment according to the algorithm specified in the course description, considering the grading obtained in interim assessments and study course final examinations. Learning outcomes (further – LOs) are evaluated on a 10-grade scale and transparent descriptors (criteria) are provided for assessing students' knowledge, skills, and competence in each study course.

The needs of students and the relevance of assessment methods and procedures to the achievement of the objectives of study programmes are analysed and developed, considering the experience of academic staff, by analysing LOs achieved by students and the results of surveys conducted over several academic years. In the surveys, students recognise the importance of clearly

formulated intended learning outcomes and defined assessment criteria, as well as the regular feedback on students' achievements in the study process. To ensure this, the academic staff systematically analyse their experience, collaborate with colleagues, analyse students' achievements, and improve course descriptions and e-study environment by developing assessment criteria that correspond to the intended learning outcomes, thus providing the basis for the assessment.

The SAR provides justified information on assessment of students' achievements in final examinations and the final thesis according to the SPs of different levels. Applied procedure and requirements for graduation ensure that students will demonstrate achieved LOs. Criteria of different applied methods are described and relevant to measure achieved LOs.
During the site visit experts received confirmation from bachelor students that flexibility is taken into account and study schedules can be combined with work in school. Students of MS programmes expressed that expectations are exceeded, good balance of academic/research and practical/professional work in terms of learning outcomes and they are always invited to participate in research projects. It was noted that sometimes interim grades are not presented promptly, which is stressful with summary grading. PhD students admitted that study content and assessments are complementary to the PhD research - all activities are aligned.

1.1.6.
The SAR (section 2.1.6) and demonstration of e-learning environment during on-site visit provided evidence that the UL respects the principles of fair and responsible conduct as stipulated in two regulations that are publicly available to staff of the UL and its students.

The UL developed a procedure for verifying the originality of text using similarity detection tools, such as the Turnitin and the Unified Computerised Plagiarism Control System. Recently this System is being used by 30 HEI in Latvia. The System automatically compares the uploaded graduation papers of the UL with study papers of previous years (starting from 2005) from UL and other HEI, and in the event of a certain percentage match, the authorised persons from faculties are sent an overview of these test results, whereby the same text snippets from different authors are simultaneously viewed. Individual teaching staff members check the work submitted by students during the mid-term and final examinations using the most popular Internet search sites, as well as plag.lv and similar solutions.
Despite tools being presented to avoid and prevent plagiarism no data is provided to support effective use of above mentioned tools.

Conclusions on this set of criteria, by specifying strengths and weaknesses

The aims of the SF EDU are clearly defined and related to the strategic development of the UL as well as meeting needs of the countries' development regarding new human resources in the field of education and providing opportunities for lifelong learning for those who would like to enter this field from other industries and careers. The SF EDU and the relevant seven SPs comply with the main directions of the UL regarding research, study development and impact to society and economy. The portfolio of SPs is reasonable and interconnection of the SPs is clear and logical representing undergraduate, postgraduate and doctoral level studies.

Strengths:
1) The SWOT analysis provided justified background for the Development Plan of the Study Field 2022-2027.

Weaknesses:
1) Relation of the management in branches with different management levels of UL is not balanced when the regional center is responsible for managerial issues rather than intermediating in terms of demand and content issues of SPs.
2) Monitoring of anti-plagiarism is not supported by data/evidence as only the process and applied tools are presented.

1.2. Efficiency of the Internal Quality Assurance System

Analysis

1.2.1.
The UL has developed a thoroughly regulated quality assurance (hereinafter – QA) system to plan and monitor QA across its structure, including Faculty of Education, Psychology and Art (FEPA) and regional branches where study programmes are implemented as well. This system is based on UL's Study Process Development Plan until 2030, UL Scientific Activity Development Plan until 2030 and the UL Strategy 2021-2027 as well as the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG) for quality assurance in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) and the legislation of Latvia (SAR, p. 11-12). Quality assessment and its management is described in the Quality Management Handbook (herein after – QMH) which is only partially available publicly across various pages on the UL website. The QMH is based on ESG and the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM) Excellence Model, providing clear structure and alignment with these crucial QA frameworks.

In UL, the Head of Administration is responsible for creating, monitoring and improving the quality management system, while the UL Quality Manager implements, maintains and improves it on the operational level. The administration of various units (faculties, institutes, agencies, etc., and their respective deans, directors) is responsible for ensuring quality management within their units, according to the UL's regulations. Likewise, the responsibilities for maintaining the quality assurance system are described for each employee and student. Employee work is overlooked by their direct administrator, while student performance and involvement in QA is coordinated by their study programme director. Moreover, student involvement in the QA on administrative and decision-making bodies is coordinated by the Student Council and is regulated by various UL's by-laws and specified in the Law on Higher Education Institutions of the Republic of Latvia (QMH, 34-35). The quality of studies is monitored and improved by the Department of Studies and Quality Assessment Board of Study programmes, professors, Study Programme Director, Head of the Study Field, Study Field Council, Dean of the Faculty, and Faculty Council.

Overall, UL has developed a well-structured, clearly hierarchical and thorough QA and quality management policy and action policy that describes the procedures and responsibilities of various stakeholders involved in the operations of the UL. During on-site visits, the experts received confirmation from administration, teaching staff, students, and partially from employers in Riga and regional branches that the system is implemented and monitored throughout the facilities and structures of UL. While the system is based on the participation of various stakeholders that are precisely defined (QMH, table 3.6), on-site visits indicated that the involvement of graduates and employers, especially in the regions, could be improved (more under criteria 1.2.4. of this report).

The system is designed for continuous improvements and regular monitoring (e.g., bi-annual quality revision by the deans, regular feedback surveys of various kind, routinely meetings with various stakeholders), under the strategic plans and development vision of the UL and ESG for quality assurance in the EHEA likewise. In experts' opinion, the efficiency of the system can be validated by the academic and scientific achievements, as well as the satisfaction shown in the feedback from

the students, employers and graduates of the FEPA (on-site visits). It is advised to improve the transparency and clarity of the QA system and management within UL by publishing the QMH on UL's website as an integral part of the daily operations of UL. Given how well UL has structured its QMH in accordance with ESG and EFQM, this handbook can serve as an example of good practice for other institutions in Latvia.

1.2.2.
The procedures for the development and review of the relevant study programmes of the study field and the feedback mechanisms are regulated by UL's QA and management system. The development of new study programmes is regulated by the by-laws of the UL Study programmes and Continuing Education programmes, it is logical and efficient. The review of the existing study programmes is an integral part of the quality monitoring and planning of the field of study over a six-year period, cascading its goals and objectives down to the level of each study programme and regularly monitoring the requirements of stakeholders, currently, in accordance with the UL Strategy 2021-2027 (SAR, p. 44).

For the evaluation of studies, student, graduate and employer satisfaction and to monitor the profile of enrolling students, the Regulation On The Procedure Of Regular Surveys For The Evaluation Of Studies At The University Of Latvia is approved (by UL Ordinance No. 1-4/260; hereinafter – Regulation). The Regulation describes the procedure of regular surveying of various stakeholders for continuous improvements, including the study field and corresponding study programmes. 8 different surveys are conducted to gather feedback from students, such as: survey on study courses and the work of the teaching staff to obtain information for improving the study process and improving the quality of studies; survey at the beginning of the studies to obtain information for the improvement of student recruitment measures; survey of the first study year’s students on their study experience to obtain information for the improvement of the study environment and the promotion of student adaptation; survey on testing out another study programme (if relevant); survey of the final study year’s students on their study experience and survey for doctoral students and residency students to obtain information for the improvement of the study environment and study process, as well as for improving the quality of studies; survey for exchange students to collect the student experience at the UL and to evaluate the areas in which improvements are needed; survey on termination of studies to identify the main reasons for discontinuing studies to facilitate the reduction of attrition (Regulation, approved by UL Ordinance No. 1-4/260). More about how these surveys are used and analysed is described under criteria 1.2.4. of this report.

The graduates who graduated from the UL in the previous year receive an alumni survey to find out information about graduates' professional activities and further life courses, as well as to find out the opinion of graduates about the education they received at the UL. Employers receive a survey once every 3 years to find out the opinion of employers about the conformity of the knowledge, skills, and competencies acquired by the graduates of the UL with the requirements of the labour market, as well as to obtain proposals for improving the quality of studies (Regulation, approved by UL Ordinance No. 1-4/260). More about how these surveys are used and analysed is described under criteria 1.2.4. of this report.

The results of the surveys are analysed as summaries and have limited access, according to the type of the survey. Students receive a summary overview of some of the surveys. From the student perspective, the evaluation of the study courses is available only to some members of the Students Council, after signing a declaration of non-disclosure of limited access (Regulation, approved by UL Ordinance No. 1-4/260). According to the on-site meetings with students, indeed, students do not receive feedback on their feedback, resulting in a lack of motivation to fill out the surveys and a

general lack of transparency (on-site visits). Additionally, information regarding the provision of feedback is not publicly available, therefore, there is a clear lack of communication and mechanisms to involve a wider range of stakeholders, not only students or employers with already established collaborations, to be involved in the QA of the study field and UL in general.

On the administration level, the Academic Department conducts study courses and teaching staff assessment monitoring twice a year after the end of each study semester, paying special attention to exceptionally good ratings (7/7) and ratings that need improvement (≤5,75 out of 7). The results are analysed by the dean, the study field director, and the study programme director. The study field director then creates an action plan for improvements to the studies. Additionally, the Study programme Quality Assessment Commission is informed about the monitoring results twice a year, while Deans of faculties, heads of departments, and/or study programme directors organise meetings with the teaching staff and student self-governments of faculties at least once per year to discuss the results. Every 6 years, the results of the survey on study courses and teaching staff's work are used in the process of election and re-election of academic staff (Regulation, approved by UL Ordinance No. 1-4/260).

To summarise, the feedback mechanisms (including feedback to students, employers) are defined and are logical and efficient. It is advised to develop a mechanism to collect feedback from the graduates more than once after graduation with a greater time distance than one year to have a greater overview of the competencies the graduates developed during their studies. Additionally, feedback on students' feedback should be implemented in the QA system, for example, by providing students with an overview of the feedback gathered and an action plan to address the issues. Moreover, the mechanism of providing feedback should be publicly available to all stakeholders as well as procedures on how one can be involved in the QA of UL. The procedures for the development and review of the relevant study programmes of the study field are clear, logical and not available to the public.

1.2.3.
The mechanism developed for the submission of student complaints and suggestions is regulated by the Regulations On Lodging And Review Of Students Proposals And Complaints At The University Of Latvia (approved by UL Ordinance No. 1-4/501). This regulation describes the steps and rules of submitting and evaluating the complaints/suggestions and the responsible persons through the procedure. The procedure is not anonymous and is strictly regulated in order to be registered in the documentation system. Perhaps it can be the reason why students and employees prefer to solve the issues unofficially – the most commonly used and effective mechanism for providing feedback from students is direct outreach to the administration who then solves the problem promptly (interviews with students and graduates during on-site visits). This approach is so common that neither of the stakeholder groups could describe the UL regulated procedure for collecting feedback, except the regular feedback surveys described under the criteria 1.2.2. of this report. From one side, this indicates signs of a positive culture and climate where mutual trust, collaboration and respect are present. On the other side, this system can be viewed as a barrier to thorough quality assessment and analysis on the managerial level due to a lack of data collection – if the majority of issues are solved via word-of-mouth and one-on-one communication, it might suggest a lack of structured reporting for statistical data and proper overview of the daily operations within the faculty and regional branches. Meanwhile, as indicated under criteria 1.2.2. of this report, students lack feedback on the feedback they have provided after each study semester. At the same time, students indicate overall satisfaction with their studies and emphasise the unimportance and quick problem-solving of the irregular issues that do occur (on-site visits).

1.2.4.
The UL collects data through various regular surveys, as indicated under criteria 1.2.2. of this report. Each semester every student is expected to provide feedback on the study course and teaching staff. Students receive various other surveys throughout their study cycle to monitor and improve their study experience. Graduates receive a survey only once - 1 year after graduation – to evaluate their satisfaction with their studies, while employers receive a survey once every 3 years to evaluate the study quality through their experience with UL's graduates.

Yet most of the graduates in the regional branches indicated that after graduation they have not been involved in the collaboration with UL, and thus QA of the study field. Likewise, regional authorities and some employers were not confident regarding their involvement in QA, although some did indicate irregular meetings with the heads of the branches for their needs assessment (on-site visits to the branches). Some employers are involved in the student's qualification work assessment which is a positive trait, and the majority of employers in Riga approve regular communication with faculty members to provide feedback regarding students' internships and their needs for continuous QA of the study programmes (on-site visit in Riga).

During the on-site visits, the experts had 3 meetings with employers, 7 meetings with graduates and 8 meetings with students. During these meetings, the efficiency of the QA system was clearly assured. Moreover, most of the meetings approved the great importance and connection between students and the study programme directors in Riga or the head of the branch in the branches; employers emphasised similar close collaboration. Yet the collection of data regarding student complaints and suggestions might have some shortcomings, as described under criteria 1.2.3. of this report.
Additionally to the regular feedback surveys of satisfaction described under criteria 1.2.2. of this report., UL collects data on characterising the number of applicants and matriculated students and their profiles to control, analyse and forecast the dynamics of the number of students; performance and various metrics describing their relations with UL to control the progress of student's studies and the implementation of the study programmes, and to obtain information for planning and efficient use of study resources (SAR, p. 49), thus ensuring regular collection and analysis of information (statistics) on the study programmes corresponding to the study field. Meanwhile, issues with the University's Information System are listed as a shortcoming to the effective use of the data, since study programme directors and heads of study fields are forced to spend a lot of time manually extracting and processing some of the data needed for the analysis (SAR, p. 51-52). Some irregular issues with the IT system were also indicated by the students and heads of the regional branches (interviews with students and heads of regional branches during on-site visits).

1.2.5.
The information published on the website of the UL about the study programmes corresponding to the study field partially corresponds to the information available in the official registers. On VIIS, there is information about 13 study programmes, while UL implements only 7; the overlapping content should be communicated with the administration of the system and removed. The information is published in all languages of implementation of the study programmes.

The Academic Master (Second-cycle) Study programme "Educational Sciences" is a good example of providing applicants and students with important information regarding the study programme that other descriptions on UL's website lack – a description of the entry examination, including evaluation criteria, learning outcomes and additional materials for the study content. In most cases, study programme descriptions lack information on the study organisation (percentage of online courses, weekdays/weekends/evenings, etc.), study content by semesters, teaching staff, the page is not

interlinked directly to the application page and information regarding scholarships and study fee discounts. All these components are important for the potential applicant during the decision-making process regarding their potential studies. Significant improvements should be made to the description of the “Preschool Teacher” study programme for Riga by taking as a good example the descriptions for the same study programme on the websites of branches.

Conclusions on this set of criteria, by specifying strengths and weaknesses

The UL has developed and maintains a quality assurance system, based on internal strategies and development plans, ESG, EFQM, and legislation of Latvia which contributes to achieving the aims and learning outcomes of the study field and the relevant study programmes. The system ensures continuous improvement, development, and efficient performance of the study field and the relevant study programmes. The system could serve as an example of good practice and thus is encouraged to be made public to various stakeholders. The procedures for the development and review of the relevant study programmes of the study field and the feedback mechanisms (including feedback to students, employers, and graduates) have been defined, yet improvements should be made to increase transparency and communication with students to address the feedback they have submitted. The involvement of graduates in the quality assessment could be improved. The statistical data collection mechanism established by UL ensures regular collection and analysis of information (statistics) on the study programmes corresponding to the study field, yet data on student complaints and suggestions on a daily basis might be missing, since students and employees prefer to solve problems unofficially. That also indicates a culture of mutual trust and respect that was absorbed during multiple meetings at the on-site visits and can be seen as an indicator of great management throughout the faculty. The information regarding study programmes published on the website needs significant improvements to provide applicants and students with important information regarding study content and organisation.

Strengths:
1) The Quality Assurance System is based on the European Standards and Guidelines for quality assurance in the European Higher Education Area and the European Foundation of Quality Management Excellence Model, and is interlinked with various strategic development documents of UL, thus ensuring a well-developed system for continuous quality assurance through every entity in the institution.
2) Overall, students, graduates, employers indicate overall satisfaction with the quality of studies and recent graduates and current interns serve as change leaders in the schools they are working in.
3) Great leadership throughout the faculty and regional branches, based on a culture of excellence, mutual trust, support and respect.

Weaknesses:
1) Lack of public transparency and clarity of the QA system and management within UL.
2) Students do not receive feedback on the implementation of their feedback in the regular surveys.
3) Stakeholder engagement in the quality assurance of UL operations could be increased, especially that of graduates.
4) UL's IT system has some significant shortcomings, such as manual extracting and processing of the data from feedback surveys.
5) The information about study programmes published on the UL website lacks important, student-centred information regarding study content and organisation.

Assessment of the requirement [1]

1 R1 - Pursuant to Section 5, Paragraph 2.1 of the Law on Higher Education Institutions, the higher education institution/ college shall ensure continuous improvement, development, and efficient performance of the study field whilst implementing its internal quality assurance system:

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The Quality Assurance System and continuous improvement procedures are described in the Quality Management Handbook. The efficiency of the system was confirmed during the on-site visits via multiple representatives from the managerial structures of UL.

2 1.1 - The higher education institution/ college has established a policy and procedures for assuring the quality of higher education.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The policy and procedures are described in the Quality Policy of University of Latvia and Quality Action Policy of the University of Latvia.

3 1.2 - A mechanism for the development and internal approval of the study programmes of the higher education institution/ college, as well as the supervision of their performance and periodic inspection thereof has been developed.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The mechanism is regulated by the by-laws of the UL Study programmes and Continuing Education programmes, described in Regulation of Study Programmes, Regulations on the University of Latvia Study Field Management.

4 1.3 - The criteria, conditions, and procedures for the evaluation of students' results, which enable reassurance of the achievement of the intended learning outcomes, have been developed and published.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The procedure is described in the Quality Management Handbook, p. 46-48, and is verified by the section "Assessment" on UL website. The study course descriptions and more detailed information is publicly available in the Course Catalogue on UL website.

5 1.4 - Internal procedures and mechanisms for assuring the qualifications of the academic staff and the work quality have been developed.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The procedures are described in the Quality Management Handbook, p. 32, 52-54, 58-60, 65-67; in the Human Resource Management Policy. The quality assurance of the academic staff is under the supervision of the Vice-Rectors.

6 1.5 - The higher education institution/ college ensures the collection and analysis of the information on the study achievements of the students, employment of the graduates, satisfaction of the students with the study programme, efficiency of the work of the academic staff, the study funds available and the disbursements thereof, as well as the key performance indicators of the higher education institution/ college.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The University of Latvia collects the mentioned data as described in SAR, p. 49-52 and as summarised in this report, Section I.

7 1.6 - The higher education institution/ college ensures continuous improvement, development, and efficient performance of the study field whilst implementing its quality assurance systems.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The Quality Assurance System and continuous improvement procedures are described in the Quality Management Handbook.

1.3. Resources and Provision of the Study Field

Analysis

1.3.1.
The financial security of an HEI shall be drawn up in accordance with the law and the relevant Cabinet regulations and internal laws and regulations. The financial resources are used for the continuous conduct of the study process, financing the remuneration and the costs related to the study process. UL (SAR, p. 55) indicates that the fees include both the teaching work and the costs associated with the study process. At the same time, during interviews with teaching staff in Riga and regional branch (RB) management, experts have identified that the remuneration of teachers does not currently include payment of working hours related to mobility. RC leadership says solving the particular problem has been launched in the month of May 2024 because previously funding has not been sufficient to address the problem.

Financial sources consist of state budget funding and tuition fees. With regard to tuition fees, experts were convinced that the existing revenues allow for the sustainable conduct of the study process, as well as student interviews confirm that their size is optimal. The management of Bauska and Tukums RB expects significant interest in study programmes in the coming years, which is related to additional state funding for pedagogical study programmes.

RB funding is managed by RC, which finances management costs and costs related to the conduct of the study process in RB. In interviews with all RB management, experts learned that in proportion up to 26% (exact % mentioned in interviews in Jekabpils RB) of all study programme revenues, the university's own funding is channelled, thus limiting the available funding for improving employment conditions in branches.

The Faculty also carries out extensive work to attract additional funding by implementing projects that have an impact on the development of innovations in the acquisition of pedagogical study programmes. During expert visit to faculty (14 th of May, 2024), its leadership demonstrated the availability of a diverse set of robotics and physics training tools acquired through participation in ERASMUS and other innovation cooperation projects. During the visit to Bauska RB experts also observed the study process and noticed that robotics materials are used in combined preschool and primary education SP yet not ensuring their application according to the actual learners' learning abilities in specific age group. Students from RB confirmed that they are informed about their opportunities to participate in projects but due to mobility usually do not take part in projects (SAR, p. 56).

1.3.2.
The study process is currently provided in the Faculty of Pedagogy, Psychology and Art of the UL, Imanta 7 line 1, Riga, and RB of UL (Bauska branch, Cēsis branch, Jēkabpils branch, Kuldīga branch, Madona branch, Tukums branch). The infrastructure is suitable for the conduct of the study process, it enables the study process to be ensured for groups of students of different sizes. In the coming years, depending on the progress of UL development projects, the faculty plans to move to the newly formed House of Letters (SAR/- House of Scriptures) in UL joint campus, according to information provided by faculty management during interviews (SAR, p. 58). During RB visits,

experts also had the opportunity to visit and assess the facilities available for the studies. Given that the infrastructure is owned by the university, RB takes advantage of the opportunity to generate, maintain and develop additional revenue. At the same time, experts observe that some institutions have limited inclusive accessibility (e.g. Tukuma RB). Although a study process may be organised in the premises, they are technologically and organisationally less modifiable for the group work organisation.

The maintenance of the infrastructure is ensured centrally, the necessary infrastructure improvements are eligible for annual application by the units and duly approved applications are implemented within the limits of the available budgetary resources. In expert interviews with students, it was noted that in some cases students are not prepared for the situation that material-technical elements used in the study process are not available in educational institutions where they are having internships or are employed. In this respect, more observations have been included in the evaluation of study programmes.

During the evaluation process of the study field, experts listened to information in several interviews that the methodical and study process of STEM education is organised in co-operation with other UL faculties. The information provided in separate interviews was contradictory, for example, interviews with faculty instructed that mathematics didactics and methodology are developed in the faculty, while interviews with students indicated that students perform mathematics methodologies and practical work in another faculty using its resources and laboratories.

The material and technical base necessary for the course of the study process shall be maintained in the faculty. It has several technology labs that allow technology-related study courses to be conducted. At the same time, mobile equipment - robotic kits, STEM equipment - is used and taken along to implement the study process at all RB, as well as the materials from the FEPA library in Riga (on-site visits). It is provided that materials are purchased in united system that is common for whole SF.

1.3.3.
The UL library operates in accordance with the laws and regulations in force, it has been accredited as a national library until 2027 (SAR, p. 58). In the Faculty of Pedagogy, Psychology and Art operates one of its thematic branches, which provides support for the study process of pedagogy study programmes with study materials and resources.

During the library visit, experts had access to both a book repository and electronic resource availability sites. Support in the library is provided by associated employees (visit on 14th of May, 2024).
Funding for restocking is based on the number of students, according to the information provided by the management the number of students allowed to provide resources for current study materials, preferably electronic. In order to ensure restoration, it is possible for teaching staff to apply for the necessary resources annually and the necessity to purchase them is evaluated by the Dean of the Faculty and the responsible employee of the library.

During RB visits, students and graduates expressed high appreciation of the faculty's established practice of providing electronic literature demand for studies and a logistics system that accordingly ensures the delivery of these required literature supplies from Riga to all RB for the study process. RB executives are also involved in this process, which during interviews confirmed that support for electronic resources or a literature order for studies is provided by themselves on a daily basis, but all students have been provided with an introductory course on resources shared in the library, work

in the common catalogue and resource utilisation capabilities (also SAR, p. 59).

1.3.4.
The UL Moodle study platform, fully accessible to students and teaching staff, is used to conduct the study process (SAR, p. 68). Both study materials and organisational information are placed on the platform and a section of the forum is available to ensure effective communication in the study process. At the same time, students during interviews (15th of May - 17th of May 2024) point out that other social communication networks with teaching staff are also widely used, which suggests that the possibility of developing such functionality in the system used by UL should also be assessed in the future development process.

The platform used for study administration is being improved (the second, improved version is being used). The functionality of the system ensures the administration of data both at the level of personal data and for the organisation and recognition of the study process. Systems are integrated with each other to ensure easier access through authorisation to all electronic resources used in the study process.

The study process is organised not only in person but also remotely. Microsoft apps are used remotely to conduct the study process, providing access to Office 365 programmes as well as MS Teams (SAR, p. 68). At the same time, UL provides BigBlueButton technology as an alternative to MS Teams' remote organisation of the study process.

Experts obtained a high assessment of students and alumni in interviews regarding the availability and usability of Moodle's learning platform during the study process. As students of RB assessed, the availability and functionality of Moodle course content is ensured, students stressed that digital accessibility, opportunity to follow course learning, availability of electronic resources ensures equal quality of access to study process as for students in Riga.

1.3.5.
The UL is attracting teaching staff in accordance with the laws and regulations in force and internal rules of procedure. SAR report (p. 70) indicates that the composition of the teaching staff has been variable, thus responding to the process of improvement or development of the study process. In interviews with the teaching staff, experts assessed extensive cooperation between the teachers of different study courses, as well as strong cooperation of the teaching staff with the faculty management, including in relation to their involvement not only in study management, but also in development, participation in innovation projects. The UL has both requirements and procedures in place for the selection of teaching staff and regular assessment procedures for teaching staffs' elected positions are being implemented, the latter being implemented in 2021 (SAR, p. 71). At the same time, although the attraction of elected teaching staff, the monitoring of work is carried out in accordance with national and internal legislation, experts found in interviews with teaching staff that the development of the professional development of teaching staff with employment contracts is based on the voluntary choice of certain development directions, possibly organised on a consolidated basis, would be more effective for faster development of the FEPA itself (interviews on 14th of May, 2024).

Understanding the ability of teaching staff to meet the high qualifications requirements, experts found in interviews that students point to the necessity of providing more practice and real case studies during the study process, noting that teaching staff engagement is shaped by theoretical understanding, less by practical techniques to solve real-life problems. In interviews with teachers, experts found that their practice in educational institutions (education levels according to study

programmes) is voluntary or involves the introduction of piecemeal projects, so experts point out that effective solutions are needed to promote the development of the professional competence of teachers by directly providing a systemic approach to practise and thus enabling more effective support to students' needs in the study process.

1.3.6.
Teaching staff have a wide range of opportunities to participate in professional development activities. Their participation in research projects and international cooperation projects is also encouraged by promoting exchange of experience and development of competence in the study-related direction (SAR, p. 75). There have been identified aims for individual professional development and monitored results for reaching these aims. There are surveys used for evaluation purposes as well as monitoring of quantitative indicators (number of participants, number of available courses, etc.). Teaching staff highly evaluated the opportunity of internship programs in 17 education institutions provided through SDMP project (interviews on 14th and 15th of May, 2024; SAR, p. 74).

Understanding the ability of teaching staff to meet the high qualifications requirements, experts found in interviews that students point to the competence of teaching staff lacking in the course of study in relation to the situations students face on a day-to-day basis in an educational institution, noting that teachers' vision is shaped by theoretical understanding, less by practical techniques to solve real-life problems. In interviews with teaching staff, experts found that their practice in educational institutions (education levels according to study programmes) is voluntary or involves the introduction of projects, so experts point out that effective solutions are needed to promote the development of the professional competence of teachers by directly providing a systemic approach to organized internship programme in relevant education level institutions and thus enabling more effective support to students' needs in the study process.

1.3.7.
Teaching staff have opportunities to engage in study, research and administrative work, while the SAR report includes information that the employment of some teaching staff individuals is not balanced (SAR, p. 79), especially for those who carry teaching, research and administrative duties. During interviews of teaching staff experts noticed wide opportunities for professional development and career. Workload frequently is impacted by intensive participation in projects that are not balanced with reduction of other duties like study trips, internship programme etc. (interviews with teaching staff, 15th of May, 2024). According to the SWOT analysis, there are some weaknesses in the study field: for example, the system of payment for scientific activities (for scientific publications and writing the project applications) is not good enough; also more active renewal of young scientists and academics is needed, to ensure the continuity of career development opportunities (SAR, p. 20).

Experts gained testimony in interviews about the teaching staff's options for workload formation. FEPA provides flexibility in the field of research and teaching activities within budget and study programme needs. Most teaching staff hold more than one position in FEPA/UL, still recognizing that research activities usually have lack of capacity.

1.3.8.
UL has introduced student support measures for students, paying particular attention to timely support in the study process. Department of Study Service has a special role of providing support (SAR, p. 80) yet during interviews with students (15th -17th of May, 2024) identified SP directors as crucial support for students for academic or social matters. Student interviews in all RB indicate the

high importance of support provided by RB leaders, who are actively involved in resolving student problems with faculty or special conditions in the study process. Interviews with all RD leaders (interviews on 16th and 17th of May, 2024) approves that drop out rate since pandemic has decreased but it demands active preventive work done by the leaders also solving such problems as individual solutions for study process solutions for employed students, active participation in apprenticeship opportunities for students.

While UL has a career support counselling system in place, most students are already employed in the education system and the biggest challenges, according to expert interviews, relate to the balance of study and work, which in some cases raises the risk of early school leaving (interviews with students, 15th to 17th of May, 2024).

Scholarships, study tuition fees, additional resources, such as labs, sports facilities, are accessible and provided equally to all students. Scholarships are distributed by centralised evaluation of academic achievements.

Conclusions on this set of criteria, by specifying strengths and weaknesses

Within the framework of the study field, a sustainable access to the availability and development of resources of the study process has ensured. The necessary infrastructure is maintained and developed with the planning of faculty integration into the common campus of the university in the coming years. Faculty management has directed development projects, promoting access to technologies in the study process within the framework of projects. The university has built student-centred resource provision, promoting library accessibility. The university has at its disposal the necessary teaching staff for the implementation of the study process.

Strengths:
1) The UL develops a systemic approach to the identification, planning and development of resources, which ensures the responsibility of its infrastructure resources for the conduct of the study process.
2) The library and electronic resources security system developed by the faculty is highly valued among students, and provides full support for the study process at any place of study.
3) The measures implemented by the Faculty to support students with study process resources during the study process are oriented towards reducing the risk of early school leaving students and the overall indicators indicate positive dynamics.

Weaknesses:
1) Shared responsibility of the organisation of the didactic and study process with other faculties creates situations in which a fragmented approach has developed for the development of certain fields of study content (especially regarding STEM), thus creating risks, which are related to the joint involvement of study teachers in the process of preparation of teachers of the educational field of successive different levels.
2) The professional knowledge and competences of the participating teaching staff are largely related to their professional individual objectives, as a result of which teaching staff who do not practise in the educational system are weaker prepared for students' willingness to work with current real-time educational institution problems, as well as in the acquisition of practical skills.
3) The material technical equipment used in the study process is used simultaneously in several study programmes, without assessing the exact needs of the certain age learning process and the conformity of the equipment used with the requirements of the particular education standard.

1.4. Scientific Research and Artistic Creation

Analysis

1.4.1.
According to chapter 2.4.1. of the SAR, the JDSP "Educational Sciences" has been developed in accordance with the informative report of the Ministry of Education and Science "Proposals for conceptually new competency-based teacher education in Latvia". The study programmes of the study field are implemented in the cooperation of all departments of the FEPA. UL's study programmes in specific fields of study are also available in UL branches across Latvia. Most of the lecturers teach in several curricula: the cooperation between the staff members in study programmes is strong.

The main thematic areas of research of the lecturers are related to the quality of education, history of education, philosophy of education, technology enriched learning, inclusive education, educational psychology, educational policy and comparative research, which means that the scientific and applied research fields of the academic staff of the study field are very diverse and correspond to the goals of the University of Latvia.

According to the Annex 11 (CV-s of teachers), the scientific activity is high. The lecturers of the study field are involved in the development of sections of the Latvian National Encyclopaedia on educational topics. Lecturers also are experts of the Latvian Academy of Sciences. They have been editors of several collective monographs in several international publishing houses (for example, Springer, Routledge, IGI Global) and the Academic Publishing House of the University of Latvia.

Scientific and creative activity is significant, according to the curriculums of teachers: they publish the results of the research in conference proceedings, journals, and monographs. Between 2018 and January 2023, the total number of scientific publications by academic staff in journals indexed in Scopus is 89 and in WoS is 96; the highest Hirsch index in the Scopus database for one lecturer is 11. The exact information can be found in the subchapters of this report.

As (according to SAR chapter 1.1.), the mission of the UL is expressed in the motto "For Science and Fatherland", the study field `Educational Sciences´ support the aims of the institution: the UL contributes to global science, higher education, knowledge, technology transfer and innovation, and ensures the growth of Latvian democracy and culture, the development of the Latvian language and the prosperity of the national economy - as is stated in the chapter 2.4.1. of the SAR.

1.4.2.
According to chapter 2.4.2. of the SAR, the content of study courses is based on the research results of lecturers. In the course descriptions, lecturers' publications are indicated as both mandatory and additional sources of information. Most publications are written by several authors, which is a sign of good cooperation between the staff. Here is an example from the list of publications in the Annex 15 of the SAR:
- Daniela, L., Kristapsone, S., Kraģe, G., Belogrudova, L., Vorobjovs, A., & Krone, I. (2022). Searching for Pedagogical Answers to Support STEM Learning: Gender Perspective. Sustainability, 14(21), 14598. MDPI AG. Retrieved from http://dx.doi.org/10.3390/su142114598.

According to the CV-s of lecturers (SAR, Annex 11), participation in scientific conferences is active: the average number during the last 6 years, per person, is 8. The headlines of publications, conference-presentations and projects are connected to the themes of this study field, which is a sign of commitment. The participation in international projects and conferences not only contributes

to the professional development of the teaching staff, but also allows the study process to have an international dimension, exposing students to the latest knowledge and research in education, and encouraging students to internationalise their studies.

For example, the involvement of faculty members as experts in the national project "Competence Approach in Curriculum" provides an opportunity to learn more about pedagogical thoughts. There are good experiences in a project that has studied children's speech development and created methodological recommendations for promoting children's speech development in Latvia, which have been integrated into the study course "Play and Interdisciplinarity". Active cooperation with foreign researchers within the framework of international institutions, participation in conferences, workshops and networking events allows the teaching staff to include current problems and research directions in the content of study courses.

In the meetings with doctoral students and teaching staff, the Experts got the impression of high activity/quality of science/teaching integration. For example - doctoral students participate in professor´s grant´s as researchers; there also are resources in the UL for visiting the international conferences, as was told to the Experts during the on-site visit. Ph.D. and Master students assist the academic staff in organising conferences - for them it is useful to hear the scientific presentations/discussions. Experts found that scientific research and the outcomes thereof are integrated in the study process in the study programmes of all levels.

1.4.3.
According to Annex 16, of the SAR, several cooperation agreements have been concluded with foreign universities, which allow for the involvement of visiting professors in PhD and Master's study programmes. In chapter 2.4.3. of the SAR, it is stated that each year the study field welcomes visiting academic staff from partner institutions, mainly under the Erasmus+ programme. Also teachers are ready to visit universities abroad: according to Annex 19, the total number of outgoing teachers in 2022/23 was 17, the average from 2017/18 till 2021/22 was 11,2.

According to chapter 2.4.3. of the SAR, the academic staff of the study field “Educational Sciences” have been involved in 43 research projects in the period 2020-2023, as is written in the Annex “Participation of the academic staff of the DSP “Educational Sciences” in research projects”. Joint research projects are carried out, and international conferences are organised in research groups, involving both lecturers and doctoral students. For example the academic staff of SP "Preschool Teacher" and "Teacher of Primary Education" note (in the SAR, p. 85), that the involvement of faculty members as experts in the national project "Competence Approach in Curriculum" significantly provides an opportunity to learn more about current issues in pedagogical thought; to conduct study courses and involve students in discussions to update the experience of pedagogical practice, as well as to interest students in exploring topical issues. Lecturers in the field of natural sciences report that, as both the performers and leaders of several scientific projects, they regularly involve the most able students in scientific projects and collaborations, as stated in the SAR, p. 85.

Since 2001 the researchers of the UL are members of ATEE (Association of Teacher Education in Europe), regularly organise ATEE international conferences and publish conference proceedings indexed by Web of Science. The professor involved in the JDSP "Educational Sciences" was the Link Convenor of the European Educational Research Association (EERA) Network 17 (Histories of Education) from 2018 to 2021. Another professor is the EERA (European Educational Research Association) Trustee, and another is a member of the Scientific Committee of the fifth World Congress of Latvian Scholars (2023), as stated in the SAR, p. 86.

According to the Annex 11 (CV-s of teachers), the teaching staff of this study field is good in foreign languages: many professors/lectures have three foreign languages (English, German, and for example French or Russian or Lithuanian). The possibilities of international joint-work have been used actively: during the reporting period 23 Erasmus+ projects have been implemented. There also is a close cooperation established with the US Embassy, to attract Fulbright´s scholarship. The doctoral study programme has included exchanges with doctoral students and supervisors at Oxford Brookes University; University of Helsinki; University of Leuven; Lithuania; Taiwan; USA, etc.

1.4.4.
According to chapter 2.4.4. of the SAR, one of the criteria for assessing the qualifications of professors and associate professors is their involvement in and leadership of research projects. Every year the UL FEPA organises a competition for research projects funded from the base/performance budget with the aim of promoting the development of scientific research in the fields of education, psychology, sports and art. The academic staff collaborate with each other and with students, to carry out joint research and to develop scientific articles for publication in scientific journals, indexed in the Web of Science and/or Scopus databases.

According to the SAR(p, 84), as a diverse opportunity for every member of the UL family is the UL participation in FORTHEM (Fostering Outreach within European Regions, Transnational Higher Education and Mobility https://www.forthem-alliance.eu/), which offers opportunities for mobility, research cooperation between partner universities. It was the academic staff of the study field “Education and Pedagogy”, who were among the first to offer open courses in this alliance, and our students have the possibility to choose courses from the partner countries of the alliance.

According to the SAR (p. 85), the elective courses included in the study programmes are usually related to the research areas of the academic staff. They integrate their research experience, proven results and developed methods into their study courses, thus ensuring that students continuously acquire the up-to-date knowledge and skills. For example, participation of the teaching staff in activities organised by the European Chemistry Thematic Network (ECTNA) benefits the development of chemistry courses/curricula, teaching methodology and current research.

There is a system in the UL to motivate publishing in refereed-journals: authors get financial support - as was told to the Experts in the meetings, during the on-site visit. But the Experts also were told that the workload of the academic staff is demanding: besides the high teaching responsibilities it is not easy to write many scientific papers.

1.4.5.
According to chapter 2.4.5. of the SAR, for more than 20 years, the faculty has been organising international students' conferences (International Students' Research Conference), where students actively participate by presenting their research findings, engaging in scientific discussions with their peers and academic staff members. Scientific & applied research and professional activity in this field are closely linked to all levels of study (Bachelor, Master and Doctoral), complementing and improving the study process. For example, according to the SAR, within the study course "Academic Practice 1 and 2", students are involved in applied research. They cooperate with UL scientists and participate in projects, implemented by the UL FEPA: OECD PISA, OECD TALIS, IEA PIRLS, IEA TIMSS.

The doctoral students, who are elected as research assistants at the Pedagogic Scientific Institute of Pedagogy of FEPA, work together with the teaching staff in international research projects. Both Ph.D. and Master students assist the academic staff in organising conferences (as was told already).

According to the SAR (p. 83), the implementation of the JDSP "Educational Sciences" contributes to the overall objectives of the study field at different levels by ensuring excellence-oriented, internationalised and interdisciplinary high-level studies and science integration, specialising in several areas of competitiveness, focusing on the internal mobility of doctoral students and increasing the research capacity of universities, which justifies the implementation of a doctoral level study programme.

There is evidence, gathered during the site visit, that in this field of study, that some of the graduates are teachers of the UL already, which is the sign of a fruitful work.

1.4.6.
According to chapter 2.4.6. of the SAR, in cooperation with the UL Innovation Center, several teaching staff of the study field were involved in the project on digitalization of study courses: as a result the students helped the teaching staff to improve the e-courses. Students and teaching staff of the faculty have created the digital platform DigiKlase, for collecting and classifying diverse digital learning materials.

Robotics, drones and other aspects of modern technology have become part of the curriculum. This knowledge not only enhances the learning experience of students, but also helps them prepare for a technology-rich future. The teaching staff develop teaching tools that encourage students to learn independently. For example the Experts saw in the Bauska branch, on 17.05.24., during the on-site visit, how modern technology was used in the study process: the excitement of students was evident.

The teaching staff regularly participate in conferences and seminars to share their innovative experiences and learn new ideas from colleagues around the world on both the content and pedagogical aspects of sciences in higher education institutions. According to the CV-s, lecturers actively present research papers both in their home country and abroad, about innovative teaching methods.
The doctoral study programme traditionally includes cooperation agreements with foreign research institutions. According to the SAR (p. 89), innovation is fostered when professors involve doctoral students in teaching courses, jointly designing course content and exchanging experiences in using different methods to activate the study process in new ways.

The academic staff representing other faculties of the University, indicate that they try to use the professional development courses (non-formal education and continuing education) offered by the FEPA for the academic staff, which are valuable in order to improve their pedagogical work as lecturers at the University: one department offers innovative courses to others.
All the solutions mentioned here, which are applied in the study field, experts see having a positive impact on the study process.

Conclusions on this set of criteria, by specifying strengths and weaknesses

This set of criteria is fulfilled in every aspect of the requirements. The teaching staff values both innovation and internationalisation. The lecturers develop teaching tools that encourage students to learn independently. Students are involved in scientific activities from all levels of the study. Lecturers are highly valued experts of Latvia, their study books/manuals are used all over the country.

Strengths:

1) The relevance of the curricula to the study field is determined by the specificity of educational sciences, which includes research and science-based studies.
2) High internationalisation in the context of science and teaching.
3) For more than 20 years, the faculty has been organising international students' conferences (International Students' Research Conference).
4) The academic staff collaborate with each other and with students to carry out joint research and to develop scientific articles for publication in scientific journals.

Weaknesses:
1) Workload and demands on the academic staff at the university are unbalanced in terms of teaching, research and administrative duties.

Assessment of the requirement [2]

1 R2 - Compliance of scientific research and artistic creation with the level of development of scientific research and artistic creation (if applicable)

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

All requirements are fulfilled: in this study field the focus is on science integration, specialising in several areas of competitiveness and increasing the research capacity of the university. The main thematic areas of research (the quality of education, history of education, philosophy of education, technology enriched learning, inclusive education, educational psychology, educational policy and comparative research) are very diverse and correspond to the goals of the UL.

1.5. Cooperation and Internationalisation

Analysis

1.5.1.
Regarding cooperation with higher education institutions in Latvia, FEPA has reported cooperation with three Latvian universities - Daugavpils University, Liepaja University and Rezekne Academy of Technologies (SAR, Annex 16_List of partnership and cooperation agreement_EN), which takes place within the framework of the joint DSP "Educational Sciences" of the study field. Since all study programmes also include internships, there is cooperation with internship sites. The list of cooperation partners can be found in Annex 16. A total of 27 agreements have been signed with Latvian municipalities, which include a clause on the provision of internships (applies to study programmes conducted at UL branches) (SAR, Annex 16). The study programmes of the study field are also implemented in the regional UL branches (Aluksne, Bauska, Cesis, Jekabpils, Kuldiga, Madona, Tukums) coordinated by the UL Regional Centre (RC). The UL RC facilitates cooperation between the UL and local municipalities. UL RC has also concluded cooperation agreements with the mentioned municipalities, which provide for the types of cooperation that contribute to the achievement of the objectives and learning outcomes of the study area (internship opportunities for students, assistance in awarding scholarships to students, joint organisation of conferences, cooperation in the use of libraries).

The reasons and criteria for the selection of cooperation partners are explained in detail and linked to the respective study objectives and study programmes (SAR, p. 90). Some of the main criteria for selection of partner municipalities include interest and willingness of municipalities for raising the level of education of the population, implementation of the concept of lifelong learning and faster development of the municipality's economy, as well as supporting the provision of practices in

municipal institutions for students and possibility of finding a future job in the place where they live. Some municipalities also develop research directions for qualification, bachelor and master thesis topics for the UL students that are in line with the development programme (of the respective municipality).

It is noteworthy that for many undergraduate students, the internship becomes their first or regular job. From the discussions with the university and branch management, graduate groups and students in the branches, the expert team concluded that there is good cooperation with the internship sites, that the study programmes meet the market needs and that internships for students are an integral part of these programmes. All participants in the site visit's interviews agreed that the collaboration through internships contributes positively to the achievement of the learning outcomes of the study programmes. Discussions with students, graduates and teaching staff, as well as employers, indicate that the study programmes enhance students' employability, especially at the regional level.

The SAR also points out that the academic staff of the field of study are active in various professional and non-governmental organisations relevant to the subject as well as in other educational institutions (in schools or kindergartens as secondary employment) and can thus address potential students (SAR, p. 91). Members of academic staff in the field of study are also active on social media and participate in discussions and broadcasts.

1.5.2.
Close and long-term cooperation with the institutions from abroad is established when carrying out research projects (mostly participating in interdisciplinary Erasmus+ projects such as "Development of Teachers' Skills for Educating Preschool Children with and through Digital Technologies"; "Reducing the Impact of the Fourth Industrial Revolution in Indian Society: Education Reform in Teacher Education and Continuing Education"; "Children with Rare Diseases and Their Inclusion in Basic Learning Environments"; "Man Hubs - an online repository for the collection and use of good practices of inclusive education in formal and non-formal education"; "Neurodiversity in the Workplace: Supporting Young People with Autism Spectrum Disorders to Enter and Succeed in the Workplace"). The list of cooperation partners can be found in SAR Annex 16. The criteria for the selection of cooperation partners are only explained for the JDSP "Educational Sciences". However, it is clear from the description of the collaborations with various foreign institutions that these are specifically geared towards achieving the development goals of the study field, the implementation of study programme-related courses and the associated research (SAR, p. 91). From the discussion with the management of UL, the experts learned that every cooperation offer from foreign companies is subject to an assessment, after which a decision is made as to whether a contract will be concluded with this company. There are collaborations with 7 foreign universities in similar fields of study and study programmes with which cooperation agreements have been concluded; they are linked to two SPs: 2ndC EduTech and 3rdC EduSc. The study field "Education and Pedagogy" has established good cooperation with several foreign universities: Universidade do Algarve, Universidad de Alcala and Universidad de Alicante in Spain, University of Ljubljana in Slovenia, Palacky University in Olomouc in the Czech Republic, University of Jyväskylä in Finland, University of Tartu in Estonia. Students have the opportunity to participate in an Erasmus+ mobility, which lasts one semester but has recently been extended to one year. The short-term mobility includes joint project proposals, Erasmus guest lecturer exchanges and meetings at conferences and seminars. There is also cooperation with various international organisations and their representations in Latvia (Latvian UNESCO Commission, Goethe Institute, British Council, etc.). The JDSP "Educational Sciences" has cooperation agreements with several foreign universities (e.g. the University of Hamburg in Germany, the Catholic University of Leuven in Belgium, the University of Vilnius in Lithuania, the

University of Osijek in Croatia) and also organises visiting professors from abroad (Estonia, Finland, Germany, Lithuania, Cyprus). The teaching staff of the JDSP "Educational Sciences" has given guest lectures for doctoral students at the Mikola Romeris University in Lithuania and at the University of Osijek in Croatia. There is also cooperation between the MSP “Educational Sciences” and foreign institutions (e.g. the University of Klaipėda, the Private University University of Education of the Diocese of Linz, Austria). The selection of cooperation partners that correspond to the department's study programmes is based on common research interests, the identification of partners through publications and/or jointly conducted projects.

1.5.3.

In general, the study field actively works on implementing cooperation with foreign universities and academic organisations, other educational and cultural institutions. Foreign students are recruited as part of student exchange programmes (e.g. Erasmus+), which are organised at university level. Social networks are actively used to inform potential and current international students about current issues and processes. The system for recruiting international students is centralised (UL platform), but each faculty has its own separate marketing programme, which is published on the faculty's website. Most students come from European countries, especially from the post-Soviet countries, but also from Pakistan and Gana, – when the problem with the visa and the credit points system can arise. There are also certain admission requirements for international students, which include interviews in which the level of English language skills, motivation and reasons for admission are assessed.

The number of international students was 14 in 2021/2022 and 12 in 2022/2023, indicating a slight decline in interest; FEPA had a total of 7 elected international teaching staff for both 2021/2022 and 2022/2023 (SAR, Annex 17_Statistical data on foreign students and teaching staff_EN). The international students have good communication with the lecturers, who find the best form of study for them depending on the number of interested students (full-time lectures/seminars, group work or individual work). The lecturers on the study programme offer courses in English to foreign students (SAR, p. 94). In the interviews with the lecturers, the experts were told that the range of flexible, different types of courses and the opportunity for individual work in English were emphasised. Although the foreign language skills of the teaching staff are generally good, some of them still need to improve their English skills considerably in order to teach courses. On the other hand, there is no centralised system for informing international students about available study programmes, their requirements, enrollment procedures and the availability of teaching staff at the university level, which in some cases may hinder the recruitment of potential students for the study programmes.

FEPA has not presented a systematic plan for the recruitment of new students and teaching staff, but the SAR indicates that efforts have been made to promote student and academic staff mobility and to attract foreign students. There are plans to gradually increase the number of study courses taught in English to facilitate the internationalisation of the study field (see SAR Annex "Goals and Development Plan for the Study Field "Education and Pedagogy" for 2022-2027").

The number of guest lecturers and academic staff from partner institutions, especially as part of the Erasmus+ programme, is increasing every year. The mobility of staff and students in the field of study is strongly encouraged. In recent years, academic staff have participated in Erasmus mobility programmes in Mexico, Vilnius, Macedonia, Finland, Germany and Norway. Several lecturers continue to participate in Erasmus+ projects and collaborate with foreign colleagues on international research activities. The number of students coming to the country as part of mobility has decreased in the winter semester 2022/2023 compared to the winter semester 2021/2022, while the number of

students going to the country has increased by one student (SAR, Annex 18_Statistics on the outgoing and incoming mobility_EN). Both student and staff mobility in FEPA is quite limited and the exchange favours outgoing activities. One of the possible reasons why Erasmus+ mobility opportunities are not used more frequently is the fact that most students have a job alongside their studies. On the other hand, the SAR notes that the promotion of student mobility was one of the priorities for the development of the study field during the reporting period and is one of the most important development tasks for the coming period (SAR, p. 17). FEPA students have the opportunity to participate in Erasmus+ mobility internships and the internship is included in the student's study programme upon return. The recognition of learning outcomes from courses completed during outgoing mobility is well organised (SAR, p. 95). Although the SAR states that guest lecturers from Estonia, Germany and the USA were hosted by the Erasmus+ programme in the last academic year, the SAR Annex 19_Statistical data on the incoming and outgoing mobility of teaching staff_EN lists lecturers from Austria, Poland, Cyprus, the USA and Lithuania. It appears that the list may still need to be updated. In terms of international mobility, 15 lecturers from the study field were on exchange in the last academic year (SAR, Annex 19).

Conclusions on this set of criteria, by specifying strengths and weaknesses

Based on the analysis above , the experts conclude that the university and the field of study generally meet the criteria in terms of cooperation and internationalisation. Cooperation in the form of internships works very well with local authorities and educational institutions. Cooperation in research takes place primarily through research projects, some of which are international and involve several universities abroad. The recognition of learning outcomes from courses completed by students during outgoing mobility has been clarified. The department is actively working on the implementation of collaborations with foreign universities and academic organisations, other educational and cultural institutions. There are short and long-term collaborations with foreign universities that pursue similar fields of study and study programmes.

However, there is room for improvement in creating a clearer system and procedures for attracting international students and staff, as well as in establishing fruitful partnerships with foreign universities within and outside Erasmus+. The motivation of students to take advantage of Erasmus+ opportunities is not high enough, possibly due to the fact that most students are part-time students who study and work at the same time.

Strengths:
1) Good cooperation with national and international higher education institutions.
2) FEPA is recognised as an important stakeholder at the local level because teachers and students participate in many professional projects.
3) Quality management system in the part concerning cooperation with educational institutions, employers and social partners.
4) Well-established internship cooperation with Latvian municipalities/educational institutions where FEPA branches are located.
5) Interdisciplinary research practises.

Weaknesses:
1) Lack of mobility of students and teaching staff.
2) Lack of a clearly defined action plan for the development of internationalisation.

Assessment of the requirement [3]

1 R3 - The cooperation implemented within the study field with various Latvian and foreign organizations ensures the achievement of the aims of the study field.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The compliance assessment is fully met, as the institution cooperates with domestic and foreign institutions, especially in the area of teaching by pursuing similar subjects and study programmes (SAR, Annex 16_List of partnership and cooperation agreement_EN).

1.6. Implementation of the Recommendations Received During the Previous Assessment Procedures

Analysis

1.6.1.
In 2020, seven study programmes were licensed, and in 2022, they were included into study field. Recommendations were provided in both evaluations, the compliance with which is detailed in the SAR annex No 20 "Report on implementation of recommendations'' (in total 53 pages and 102 recommendations). Report on implementation of recommendations is detailed, well structured and experts appreciate the management team of the Faculty in dealing with this amount of recommendations from 2020.

It has to be noted that the previous accreditation of the study field was carried out in 2013 (Accreditation Commission Report 2011) and this procedure did not clearly distinguish the recommendations for the study field as a whole. Taking into account that in the meantime the Republic of Latvia has undergone the reform of general education, the reform of teacher education and educational sciences, the individual suggestions made in previous accreditation are no longer applicable to the study field in essence. In this SAR Annex 20 presents evidence (53 pages in total, Report on the Implementation of Recommendations) on implemented recommendations in the study programmes during different assessment procedures (study programme licensing, study programme inclusion into study field). The recommendations of the expert groups have been used in the development of the FEPA Development Strategy 2022-2027 and the Objectives and Development Plan 2022-2027 of the Study Field "Education and Pedagogy".

It is evident that the structure and content of study programmes have completely changed, as well as the infrastructure of the FEPA (adding Riga Pedagogical and Management Academy to the UL in 2017) has been improved and the study environment and its accessibility have been significantly modernised in recent years. The study programme directors, the FEPA dean and the vice-deans monitor the implementation of the expert recommendations made to the study programmes. The analysis of the implementation of each study programme was also conducted in the final stage of the SAR 8.2.1 project, as reflected in the study programme approval reports.

The meetings with the QA officers and management provided evidence that recommendations in two stages have supported reduction of fragmentation in the study programmes, strengthened resource sharing, and enhanced the quality of study programmes. Experts can classify, taking into account Annex No. 20 "Report on implementation of recommendations'', that short term recommendations across all SPs and its implementation mostly is reported regarding curriculum update (e.g. improved content of courses and strengthening coherence between theory and practice), students involvement into QA processes, and managerial issues (e.g. strengthening cooperation with RC and branches). Regarding long term recommendations, improvements are evident in the area of internationalisation and students' involvement in research. As a result of the recommendations, the implementation details of study programmes were mutually coordinated and

this allowed to strengthen monitoring across the study programmes (e.g. in SAR Annex No 20 "Report on implementation of recommendations'', page 46 regarding joined PhD study programme “The internationalization strategies developed in the UL and partner universities are implemented” and regarding other degree’s (Bachelor and Master) the UL Strategy 2021-2027 has been approved, which provides for the strengthening of international scientific networks, which is also used at the level of study programs. As a result of the recommendations, equal opportunities for all students to access study materials were promoted. For example, a unified e-platform Moodle environment has been created for doctoral students involved in doctoral study programme from all partner institutions of UL.

Latvian students in the both Master’s study programmes were given the opportunity to study courses together with Erasmus students arriving at UL, thereby providing broader opportunities for communication in English, gaining intercultural experience, and strengthening the international dimension. On the other hand, internationalisation still remains an area that is in progress, but to get the impact of this aspect usually requires more time when strategies and actions for internationalisation are adopted.

In conclusion, the recommendations made in the previous assessment procedures are consistently implemented and the academic staff of the study field is proactive in the sector of education and its interdisciplines.

Conclusions on this set of criteria, by specifying strengths and weaknesses

The study field of Education and Pedagogy was previously assessed in 2013 last time and since that period has undergone significant changes by reconstructing and re-licensing a portfolio of study programmes. The recommendations made in the previous accreditation of the study field are consistently implemented and the academic staff of the study field is proactive in the sector of education and its interdisciplines. Positive changes regarding internationalisation are quite slow and still in progress. To get the impact of this aspect usually requires more time when strategies and actions for internationalisation are adopted.

Strengths:
1) Recommendations of experts are considered for improvement of the study field and study programmes in terms of strategic thinking.
2) Good coordination of improvements and consolidation of resources among the study programmes.

Weaknesses: not identified.

Assessment of the requirement [4]

1 R4 - Elimination of deficiencies and shortcomings identified in the previous assessment of the study field, if any, or implementation of the recommendations provided.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

SAR Annex 20_Report on implementation of recommendations_EN.docx presents evidence on implemented recommendations from the previous assessment procedures. It has to be noted that recommendations of assessment of the study field in 2013 are not applicable and recommendations from 2020 are related just to single study programmes that were licensed recently. During this site visit interviews and presented evidence demonstrate strategic thinking of the UL and the leadership of the Faculty’s management to respond and eliminate deficiencies

regarding studies, research and internationalisation.

1.7. Recommendations for the Study Field

Short-term recommendations

To launch collection of data/evidence of applied tools regarding anti-plagiarism implementation.
To collect and analyse data on student satisfaction after their return from abroad and motivate students to participate in outgoing mobility.
To improve the transparency and clarity of the QA system and management within UL by publishing the Quality Management Handbook or major parts of it on UL's website since it is an integral part of the daily operations of UL.
To develop a procedure for reporting the implementation of student feedback to the students.
To develop automatisation and integrate user-friendly improvements of UL's IT system to avoid manual extracting and processing of the data from feedback surveys.
To provide applicants and students with important information regarding study content and organisation, such as - the described procedure of entry examination, format of studies (in-person/hybrid), overall class planning (weekdays/weekends/evenings), study content per semester.
To establish a flat managerial structure in terms of collaboration of the branches with the Faculty regarding demand and content issues of SPs.

Long-term recommendations

To improve the system of payment for scientific activities (for scientific publications and writing the project applications).
To define a strategy for supporting diverse aspects of internationalization activities such as student and teaching staff mobility.
To consider providing students, employees and others with a possibility to submit anonymous feedback to increase honesty and data collection, in contrary to the current system which is highly bureaucratic.
To consider developing a mechanism to collect feedback from the graduates more than once after graduation with a greater time distance than one year.
To establish a professional development programme which ensures regular practice of teaching staff in educational institutions according to the specificities of the courses led by them (pre-school, primary school, secondary school).
To ensure a common approach to the development of pedagogical didactic in the UL, including for STEM, thereby ensuring that the future teachers of all stages of education acquire study content based on common scientifically justified didactic techniques and constitute a successive opportunity for the organisation of pedagogical work.

II - "Preschool Teacher" ASSESSMENT

II - "Preschool Teacher" ASSESSMENT

2.1. Indicators Describing the Study Programme

Analysis

2.1.1.
According to the SAR chapter 3.1.2 the short-cycle (first level) professional higher education Study Programme Preschool Teacher (SC PrSchT) corresponds to the study field and has been included into the list of study programmes related to teacher education since the definition of the study field. Analyzing the SP's (SAR, chapter 3.1) compliance with the study field experts concluded that it corresponds to current affairs in pedagogy and education, for example, how to develop students' professional competence in preschool in the planning, implementation, evaluation of the pedagogical process, focusing on the child's most important areas of study in learning the content and to develop interactive skills. Experts concluded that the SP implements an interdisciplinary approach for future preschool teachers for the development of professional activity (SAR, chapter 3.1).

2.1.2.
The study programme complies to Latvian regulatory documents about the study programme title, code and professional qualification of the study programme.
Experts concluded that the SP title "Preschool Teacher" and the professional qualification corresponds to the standard title and qualification requirements of the teaching profession (SAR, section 3.1). The SP code (41141) of the study programme corresponds with the Cabinet regulation No. 322 "Regulations on Latvian education classification", which corresponds to the fifth qualification of the Latvian education qualification structure for the group of teacher education programmes (SAR, p. 323). The target audience of the study programme is graduates of general and vocational educational institutions who have obtained secondary education. Therefore, the admission requirements are secondary education.

According to SAR, section 3.1 the professional qualification "Teacher" corresponds to SP scope, realisation time and content and corresponds to the Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No. 305."Regulations on the State Professional Higher Education Standard" (of 13.06.2023). The professional qualifications, the conformity of the parameters of the study programme to achieving specified programme outcomes are corresponds to the Cabinet of Ministers (Cabinet) Regulation No. 305 on state standards of the first level professional higher education, regulation of the Cabinet of Ministers No. 322 (of 13.06.2017) on the classification of education in Latvia, and the standard of the teaching profession (agreed on in the tripartite cooperation sub council for professional education and employment on 12.06.2020).

According to the SAR, p. 324 the SP Preschool Teacher the aim to provide competitive high-quality studies based on the theory and practice of educational sciences that lead to professional qualifications, and to educate competent pre-school teachers oriented towards professional development and lifelong learning, objectives, learning outcomes and admission requirements are interrelated and correspond to Latvian regulatory documents Cabinet regulation No. 305; No. 716; the European Qualifications Framework and the standard of the teaching profession defined in the Latvian education classification. For example, preschool teachers will be able to to critically evaluate society's needs, global and local processes in preschool education and to implement their pedagogical activities accordingly and to develop professional competences in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of the preschool pedagogical process, focusing on the essential learning content for children, in order to develop competences (transversal skills) as a result of a

child's learning.

In the report analyzing the study content and achieving learning outcomes, implementation time and language, compliance was concluded and it corresponds to the educational needs of Latvia. (SAR, p. 320-322) The study programme is implemented in Riga and branches (Bauska, Cēsis, Jēkabpils, Madona, Kuldīga, Tukums), which provides extensive opportunities for cooperation with Latvian 324 municipalities, education administration, municipal and private pre-schools and corresponds to the educational needs of Latvia.

2.1.4.
According to the SAR, 320 students graduated from study programme during the reporting period 2022-2023. (SAR, p. 328, Fig. 1) The study programme administrative staff have analyzed the data from Latvia's the Ministry of Economy and also emphasized this during the visit of Experts that one of the problems of Latvia's education system is a large number of teachers at pre-retirement age in educational institutions and there is a small proportion of young preschool teachers in Latvia. (SAR, p. 326, Table 1) Education reform is still underway in Latvia, which is based on competence education and it further emphasizes a prepared pedagogue for the implementation of such an approach in an educational institution. As the graduates emphasized during the interviews these principles justify the necessity of the study programme, as students have to acquire the knowledge and skills necessary for a practising teacher to be able to implement the learning process where competence is the result of the students' learning. Also in the interviews employers emphasized that one important benefit is the digital knowledge and skills of new teachers and they successfully share it while working, so even more experienced colleagues learn about different new approaches.

Another important aspect in the dynamics of the number of students is dropout from studies. The study programme administrative staff have analyzed and conducted an analysis of the dynamics of the number of students and dropout statistics (SAR, p. 327-329, Table 2;3;4) and number of dropouts fluctuated from 81 students in 2021 till 159 in 2022 and 112 students in 2023 year.
Also the study programme administrative staff have identified three main reasons from that and as experts received evidence in the visit time, two of the mentioned reasons are very important because they are manifested as the failure to fulfill financial obligations in time and manifested in the failure to meet the study programme requirements. During the interviews, it was found out that the study programme administrative staff and teachers as well try their best to support students and continue their studies if possible. It is important and could reduce the reasons for the termination of studies in advance. Experts noticed the third reason is related to personal circumstances for example, change of workplace, change of place of residence, moving to live in another country, family growth, health problems and this reason would be difficult to predict from the university's side.

As experts received evidence in the visit time 92% graduates are working as teachers in the primary schools and in the context of lifelong learning graduates have the opportunity to continue their education in the Bachelor study programme "Teacher of Primary Education" (SAR, p. 329). Graduates also expressed their willingness to cooperate with the lecturers even after graduation because questions arise during work and jointly organized discussions for students (currently studying and alumni) and lecturers would be very useful.

2.1.5. N/A

Conclusions on this set of criteria, by specifying strengths and weaknesses

After analyzing all the criteria Experts concluded that the interrelation of the all elements - the title, code, professional qualification of the study programme, aims, objectives, learning outcomes and admission requirements - are strong, which is the result of the awareness of their importance (content-wise, legal-wise, marketing-wise) to the HEI, SP, LOs management.

Strengths:
1) SC PrSchT the aims, objectives (goal, tasks) are strongly linked with the SF EDU strategy priorities.
2) SC PrSchT the learning outcomes are formulated in the student-centred approach according to the conventional best practices and are integrated in the various teaching and assessment methods of the study courses and are mapped against the study courses results.
3) SC PrSchT the results of the number of graduated students have been achieved as planned.
4) The impact from the economic and social aspects to dynamics of the number of students respected.
5) The employment indicators of the graduates of the study programme are high (92%).

Weaknesses:
1) Analysis of the dynamics of the number of students and number of dropouts students calls to search for additional student support mechanisms in regards to scholarships or study fee discounts.

2.2. The Content of Studies and Implementation Thereof

Analysis

2.2.1.
The SC PrSchT consists of general education courses, courses that ensure the acquisition of professional competences (compulsory courses, elective courses, profession-specific courses), practise and qualification work. It corresponds to the scope of 80 CP (120 ECTS) for the study courses and at least 8 CP (12 ECTS) for the qualification thesis (SAR Annex 29_3_PLPSP_plans_Plan_1). The title of the study programme and the content of the study courses correspond to the standard title and qualification requirements of the teaching profession. The implementation of the study programme is based on a student-centered approach and is ensured in accordance with the standard of the teaching profession and the results of the NCE project "Competence Approach in the Curriculum" in relation to teacher education (SAR, p. 332). The content of the SP includes all the required areas of learning (language, social and civic behaviour, cultural understanding and self-expression in arts, technology, science, mathematics, health and physical activities and other area-specific courses that correspond to the standard requirements of the teaching profession) specified in the Cabinet Regulation No. 716 (SAR, p. 330). According to the information provided by the students and graduates of the study programme during the on-site visit the UL awards CP credits according to the actual workload of the students. Graduates have the opportunity to continue their education in the professional Bachelor's (first cycle) study programme "Teacher of Primary Education".

The SAR report and its annexes contain detailed information on the study programme’s compliance with national educational standards and on the topicality and relevance of the course content to societal needs and the labour market. The range of courses is diverse and broad enough to ensure the acquisition of professional competencies and learning outcomes (they include contents in the field of pedagogy, psychology, language, science, art, technology, health and physical activities, education management). The content of the courses is relevant, well connected, corresponds to the objectives and tasks of the study programme and is in line with the academic education standard

(SAR, Annex 25_3) as well as with the specific legislation of the respective sector (SAR, Annex Conformity of the study programme with the specific regulatory enactments of the relevant sector). The content is also in line with the European Qualifications Framework (EQF), level 5 of the Latvian Qualifications Framework (LQF) and the professional standard "Teacher" (2020) as well as the standard of the teaching profession and the results of the NCE project "Competence approach in the curriculum" in relation to teacher education (SAR, p. 332). Course contents and tasks are well described, as well as the work plan and organisation for each course (SAR Annex - ENG_Studiju_kursa_apraksti_ENG_laboti). The relevance of the qualification acquired in the "Preschool Teacher" study programme to the professional standards of teachers is presented in Annex 26_3 of SAR (planning and implementation of the teaching/learning process, assessment of the learner's academic performance, development of the professional competence, development of the education institution and the field) and it is in line with the requirements for the performance of basic tasks of professional activity. Although the study programme meets the professional standard from the experts' point of view, there is a growing trend in education, particularly in European education, towards inclusion and the personalization of learning. Therefore, the study programme needs to strengthen this component. Additionally, introducing a new study programme for special education would enhance all educational study programmes at UL regarding inclusion and meeting special needs for learning.

The aims of the courses are clearly defined and in line with the aims of the study programme and planned learning outcomes, which justifies their implementation in SP. The learning outcomes (LOs) are mostly well described and divided into three parts (knowledge, skills, competence) (SAR, Annex 22.PIELIKUMS. Descriptions of study courses). In the description of some courses, the allocation of learning outcomes to the study courses should be reconsidered (e.g. in the course Izgl4037 almost all LOs are ticked in all three/four assessment types, but all learning outcomes could be realised in each assessment type). In addition, learning outcomes in some courses should be improved by finding the right verbs that correspond to Bloom's taxonomy in terms of better observability and measurability (ambiguous verbs such as "know", "understand" should be avoided - it is not clear what level of understanding is meant). It is also recommended that courses have an appropriate number of LOs (the recommended number is up to seven; some courses have a large number of LOs: SDSK1171 – 20; Izgl1023 – 14, Izgl4030 – 11, SDSK1195 – 14, Izgl1030 – 12, Izgl1032 – 12, Izgl1047 - 12). The assessment and evaluation of student progress and learning outcomes in the study courses are well described. Evaluation criteria for learning outcomes include, for example, evidence of knowledge and understanding of child development theories and principles, the ability to design and implement developmentally appropriate curricula and activities for young children, the ability to create a supportive and nurturing learning environment, communication and collaboration skills with colleagues, practical skills in observing, assessing and documenting children's learning and development, etc.
The bibliography for each course includes relevant books, publications, journals and other sources, including recent academic publications (SAR, Annex 22.PIELIKUMS. Descriptions of study courses). However, it seems that some courses have a compulsory reading list of 8 or more sources, which might be problematic for students (e.g. IzglP000 – 8, Izgl1023 – 9, Izgl4030 -9, SDSK1195 – 10, Izgl1038 – 10). On the other hand, almost all courses also offer a generous list of additional literature for those who wish to study the content in greater depth.

The curriculum covers all the necessary competencies and skills required for preschool teachers, and the study programme can demonstrate its effectiveness in preparing students for the labor market, as evidenced by interviews with students who are already working in the field and are generally satisfied with the competencies they have acquired. In terms of updating course content, students and graduates expressed a desire for more content related to inclusive and special

education, as they are confronted daily with ever new challenges in working with children with special needs, of which there are more and more.

2.2.2. N/A

2.2.3.
In the courses of the study programme, various methods are used to acquire and deepen knowledge, such as 'introductory lectures, interactive lectures, summary lectures, problem-oriented lectures' (SAR, p. 332). Digital tools are used to create methodological materials, to test knowledge and to provide feedback. Taking into account the statements made during on-site visit interviews with students and graduates of the SC PrSchT, student-centred learning and teaching principles are taken into account and manifest themselves in the organisation and implementation of practical tasks, seminars, individual, pair and group work, discussions. These statements are consistent with the description of the methods used in the SC PrSchT: „... the study process is dominated by methods in which student activity is important. In the study process, methods that promote student communication in performing study tasks, solving real industry problems, modelling situations are used.“ (SAR, p. 333). Teaching in relatively small groups contributes to the personalization of the learning process (especially in the UL branches). The description of students' independent work in the study courses is generally good in terms of organisation, tasks, integration into the e-learning environment and evaluation parameters. The organisation of independent work in the study courses is well described and includes different types of student engagement (theoretical and practical), in accordance with the corresponding CP (ECTS). The integration of theory and practise in the teaching content is well balanced, as the practical tasks in study courses are linked to the theoretical knowledge thought (SAR, Annex ENG_Studiju_kursa_apraksti_ENG _laboti). From discussions with students, it can be concluded that students have a good understanding of the content, learning outcomes and assessment and feel competent enough for their professional activities. They are also satisfied with the flexible schedule, which includes online courses and days off. One of the greatest benefits of this SP is the collegial relationship with the lecturers, which requires mutual respect, support and feedback. UL branch students were particularly satisfied and stated that they can use all available resources, just like FEPA students in Riga (teaching and learning facilities, study room equipment, possibility to use university library resources, e-learning support). They were also very grateful for the opportunity to study and work in the city where they live.

2.2.4.

The internship is one of the strongest aspects and an integral part of the professional study programme. The compulsory course content includes a module for the development of professional competence in the field of entrepreneurship amounting to at least nine credits. The content of the internship is determined in accordance with the professional standard corresponding to the professional qualification to be acquired (SAR, Annex 25 Compliance of the study programme “Preschool Teacher” with the academic education standard). The internships are provided in the amount of 16 CP/ 24 ECTS, which corresponds to the regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers No. 305. They are linked to study courses, which are arranged in a typical plan in full-time and part-time intramural studies (SAR, p. 335) The outcomes of the teaching practice are aligned with the professional knowledge, skills, attitudes and competences in the Teacher Professional Standard. The consistency and alignment of the practice content with the study programme can be seen in Table 6 (SAR, p. 337).

FEPA has established good cooperation with regional education administrations and pre-school educational institutions; students are supported in their search for a placement. The students' tasks

consist of carrying out practical work independently under the supervision of mentors and solving a real problem in a preschool institution, documenting the work placement and preparing a report. In general, these tasks correspond to the learning outcomes of the internships listed in the descriptions of the study courses (SAR, ENG_Studiju_kursa_apraksti_ENG laboti). The assessment components and criteria are also clear (taken by the practice mentor in the host educational institution and the practice supervisor) (SAR, Annex 31_PLPS_PS_Description of the organisation of students_practice).
In the opinion of the management of FEPA and the UL branches, but also in the opinion of the students, the implementation of internships works very well. However, there does not seem to be a common systematic procedure for the practical activities; some students do internships in the same school classes where they are already working, which needs to be reconsidered. There is also a problem with overload of students who study and work at the same time, and overlapping of the internship with employment, as some students mentioned during the on-site visit. Some students would also like to see more discussion about the content observed in practice. After discussions with students and employers, the experts concluded that there are quite extensive or at least sufficient opportunities for internships.

2.2.5. N/A

2.2.6.
Thesis topics are selected according to the content of preschool education and the current problems and needs in education, especially in the UL branches where some topics are proposed based on the particular interests of stakeholders/municipalities. Based on discussions with students and teachers during on-site visit, the experts concluded that students can discuss the topic ideas with teachers and select them based on their own suggestions and interests. The topic of the final paper can be changed during the process if there is a valid reason to do so. Final papers are formalized in a standardized way (through thesis proposals/applications). Examples of successfully defended qualification paper topics (e.g. "Facilitating motivation for preschool children in outdoor lessons", "Formation of emotional response to animated films for 4-5 year old children","Promoting self-directed learning in the youngest preschool stage in activities with toys", "Science learning areas in the nature of play as a means for 3-4-year-old children to get to know nature" - SAR, p. 339) can be used to determine that they are appropriate to the study programme, have a strong connection to practice, and follow current research trends in the field of preschool education .

Conclusions on this set of criteria, by specifying strengths and weaknesses

The content of the short-cycle (first level) professional higher education study programme “Preschool Teacher” (41141) meets the basic requirements. Based on the information provided in the self-assessment report and the annexes, the study programme is relevant. Based on the descriptions of the study programmes in Annex 31, they are complementary to each other and meet the professional competency development requirements. The aim, objectives and planned outcomes of the study programme are achievable and interrelated. The study programme's structure is clear and in line with the standard requirements of a professional study programme. The UL allocates CP credits according to the actual workload of the students. The horizontal and vertical alignment of the learning outcomes is given, although some improvements are needed in the definition and number of learning outcomes.

Strengths:
1) Very good cooperation and collegial relationship between students, teaching staff and management in general.
2) The study programme is flexible and can adapt to the needs of students, especially part-time

students who usually work and study at the same time.
3) Sufficient opportunities for and good organization of internships.
4) Well-rated relevance to the educational needs of the local community.
5) Students in this study programme have no problems finding employment in the labour market.

Weaknesses:
2) Inadequacies in the definition and number of learning outcomes in some courses.
3) The literature list should be revised as there are a large number of books in some courses.
4) Feeling of overload of some students who study and work at the same time because of teaching workload, which can affect their quality of studying and their motivation.

Assessment of the requirement [5] (applicable only to master's or doctoral study programmes)

1 R5 - The study programme for obtaining a master's or doctoral degree is based on the achievements and findings of the respective field of science or field of artistic creation.

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

2.3. Resources and Provision of the Study Programme

Analysis

2.3.1.
FEPA infrastructure and RB are used to ensure the study process, which is appropriate for the course of the study process (SAR, p. 340). Financial resources are provided in general by state budget allocation and tuition fees, annual renewal of technologies is provided in FEPA ICT infrastructure and scientific resource accessibility. Material technical support ensures access to the necessary electronic resources. Particularly high student interviews evaluate the logistical system developed by the Faculty, which allows electronic ordering and receipt of study literature required by RB (student interviews, May 16, 17, 2024). STEM learning resources (robotic kits) are used in the study process, e.g. in study course Math methodology (based on interview on 17th of May, 2024). While observing the study process during the tour of the branch of Bauska (on May 17), experts observed that not all resources are used in connection with the age group of pre-school education therefore there should be revised materials used in study process (student interview, May 15, 2024). It has been noticed that students reflect that learning resources at schools are not equal to those used in the study process, which might develop an inadequate picture of the learning resources available for the study process in educational institutions (student interview, May 15, 2024).

2.3.2. N/A

2.3.3.
The necessary financial income (2 256 913 eur for year 2022/2023) have been identified based on the methodology developed by the UL for the course of the study process. Annual income provides implementation of the study process according to study plan (general evaluation in this report, section 1.3.). The request of the SC PrSchT study programme is stable and the implemented approach ensures continuity of the study process both in Riga and in RB. The study group is opened in RB if the minimum of 12 students are enrolled. RB leaders confirmed increasing demand from local governments for further study years (interviews with RD managers, 16th and 17th of May, 2024). Students covering tuition fee state that tuition fee is proportionate (student interviews, May 16, 17, 2024), as well as the involvement of local governments in co-financing of tuition fee for RB

students has contributed to motivation of students in choosing this SP of the study programme. Local governments set individual agreements with RB and provide either covering of tuition fee directly to RB (annual or twice a year payment) or individual compensation of tuition fee for students once in a month. Both - Riga and RB - ensures sustainability of SP providing study programme only with minimum number of students and clear financial source distribution. At the same time, certain aspects of financing, in particular regarding the conduct of the study process in the RB, should be improved as interviews with the teaching staff (15 May, 2024) confirmed that the costs related to the mobility of the teaching staff during their working hours in RB are not currently covered.

Conclusions on this set of criteria, by specifying strengths and weaknesses

The study programme is ensured with the necessary resources. Experts invite to evaluate the conformity of the resources (especially ICT and robotics tools) used with the content of the preschool curriculum, develop availability of such tools that correspond to this special age group learners and are available in preschool education institutions. Regardless of the place of study, equal access to resources and opportunities for all students is ensured.

Strengths:
1) UL ensures the introduction and sustainability of SP, which is highly valued by employers and students, guaranteeing the possibility to acquire qualification not only in Riga, but also in regions, thus contributing to access to education and the possibility of preparing a socially important workforce in Latvia.
2) The study programme has high demand in regions that provide stable and predictable RB performance. It is expected that demand will increase by introducing new study fee support solutions from state budget resources to other study programmes, enabling access to municipality co-funding to preschool teachers.

Weaknesses:
1) Some of the learning resources used in the study process do not correspond to the learners' age period of students, closer cooperation with preschool educational institutions, consultations on the resources to be used would ensure better preparedness of students for working conditions at preschools.
2) Existing payment system for teaching staff does not cover the time of travel to RB. That impacts their working conditions, right for fair payment and motivation.

Assessment of the requirement [6]

1 R6 - Compliance of the study provision, science provision (if applicable), informative provision (including library), material and technical provision and financial provision with the conditions for the implementation of the study programme and ensuring the achievement of learning outcomes

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Experts during observation and student interviews noticed that equipment used in study process partially is related to preschool age. Regardless of this shortcomings, the resources provided by UL are sufficient for the implementation of SP.

2.4. Teaching Staff

Analysis

2.4.1.
According to the SAR, chapter 3.4.2., the professionalism of the teaching staff working in the study programme complies with the Law on Higher Education Institutions and Regulation No. 305 of the Cabinet of Ministers. Experts found that the qualification of the teaching staff involved in the realisation of the study field is appropriate to the specifics of the study programme and conditions of implementation.
The number of teaching staff is 33, including 4 professors, 4 assistant professors, 11 lecturers, 3 instructors, 1 visiting professors, and the number of external staff is 6. As most of the teachers are elected, their qualification has been proven already, according to the SAR (p. 347-348). The criteria for the selection of the teaching staff, are:
- qualifications in accordance with the requirements set by the regulations;
- the direction/research interests correspond to the content of the study programme/course;
- appropriate knowledge of the national language and foreign languages.

According to the teacher´s CV-s (SAR, Annex 11 Teaching Staff's Curriculum Vitae), those criteria are fulfilled. Also, according to CV-s, most teachers have practical pedagogical experience over 10 years.

As is written in the SAR (p. 347), part of the teaching staff have been involved in the ESF project Competence approach in teaching content - in the development of the content and teaching materials of the preschool programme. At the UL, work is focused on raising the qualifications of the teaching staff - for example, the developmental possibilities are offered by many projects.
The improvement of the qualifications of the teaching staff of the UL is carried out systematically. During the last 6 years, the teaching staff has been involved in 14 scientific projects.
In the SAR, page 352, it is written that the study programme has 514 students and 33 members of the teaching staff. The student-faculty ratio was calculated using the FTE (number of students per full-time faculty member). In Riga, the average FTE for full-time and part-time attendance is 15.6.
When the Experts met students during the on-site visit, they got the impression of good relations between teachers and students: a warm feeling dominates in the context of the study atmosphere. When the Experts met alumni and employers, they got the information that learning outcomes are fulfilled: graduates cope well in the labour market, they are highly valued and wanted specialists.

2.4.2.
As work-based studies justify the need not only for knowledgeable teaching staff, who keep up with the latest developments in the field in theoretical literature, but also for practitioners who know current issues, there have been some changes in the teaching staff, during the reporting period: for example, one member of the teaching staff has terminated the employment relationship, two teaching staff are currently on a long-term absence; and a visiting professor from the University of Chicago joined the teaching staff of the programme.

According to the SAR (chapter 3.4.2.), changing and increasing the composition of the teaching staff has a positive effect on the quality of studies, because the recruited teaching staff is in close contact with educational institutions/practitioners. This strengthens the connection of theory and practice and students are pleased with the quality of teaching, which is most important. For example, Experts noticed the highest gratitude of students, especially in branches, where they stressed the importance of getting education near the home, which is practical enough to enter the labour market, and has the same quality as in UL in Riga.

From the 33 lecturers, involved in this study programme, the 9 combine their activity with preschool or school, where they work as teachers, deputy leaders for educational matters, methodologists,

thereby ensuring a close unity of pedagogic theory and practice, as well as demonstrating examples of good practice, and organising situation analysis. For example, one teacher works as lecturer of UL and also as the deputy manager of the Riga at . Preschool educational institution “Austrina”. Another teacher of UL is a head of department of the International Secondary School “Ekziperī”. Students value teaching, where theory is mixed with practical tips - as was told to the Experts during the on-site visit.

According to the analysis of the SAR Annex 11 (CV-s of teachers), Experts found that lecturers have significant experiences in the field, both before and during employment in UL. But, according to the SAR Annex 18 (Statistics on the outgoing and incoming mobility), there has been no incoming or outgoing mobility in this study programme. This aspect needs additional attention, as internationalisation is highly valued in the UL.

When Experts met alumni and employers during the on-site visit, both in Riga and branches, the need for special education and social pedagogy emerged: schools need specialists, who can cope with children with special needs (incl. with gifted pupils). Also the social competences are important - for example, how to consult parents. Here a suggestion can be formulated: the expertise of special education and social pedagogy could be developed in the future. According to the information Experts got from meetings in UL, this topic is added to different lessons, but it does not enable a systematic approach: a special course and/or curriculum is needed.

2.4.3. N/A

2.4.4.
According to the teachers CV-s (SAR, Annex 11), members of the teaching staff are active in the context of publishing. Most of the publications are in international scientific conference proceedings indexed in the Web of Science or Scopus databases. In terms of content, the publications cover educational sciences, as well as relate to the profile of the study process. Several lecturers/professors have published teaching materials and books for preschool teachers, which are used outside the UL, too. Some examples:
- Kaļķe, B., Baranova, S., & Āboltiņa, L. (2022). Self-Assessment of the Professional Competence of Preschool Teaching Student/ Acta Paedagogica Vilnensia, 2022, Vilnius University Press.vol. 48, pp. 116–128 ISSN 1392-5016 eISSN 1648-665X https://doi.org/10.15388/ActPaed.2022.48.7.
- Baranova, S., Nīmante, D., Kalnina, D., Olesika, A. (2021). Students’ Perspective on Remote On-Line Teaching and Learning at the University of Latvia in the First and Second COVID-19 Period. Special Issue Digital Technologies for Sustainable Education. Daniela, L. Visvizi, A., Rubene, Z. (Eds.), Sustainability Vol. 13 (21), 11890. URL https://www.mdpi.com/2071-1050/13/21/11890 , DOI https://doi.org/10.3390/su132111890

Also chapters in the National Encyclopedia of Latvia are important, as they shape the educational field of the whole country. For example:
- Baranova, S. (2018). Augstskolas pedagoģija. Nacionālā enciklopēdija (elektroniskais izdevums). Rīga: Latvijas Nacionālā bibliotēka, 2018, URL: https://enciklopedija.lv/skirklis/1208

The professionalism of the teaching staff, the ability to connect scientific activity with the study process is evidenced by research and publications, carried out during the reporting period. In terms of content, the publications cover educational sciences, as well as relate to the profile of the study process, according to SAR Annex 15 (List of publications). In this study programme, there are about 10 publications per person, during 6 years. The writing activity varies, of course: mostly from 5 till 9. The remarkable exception is one professor, who wrote/participated in 61 scientific articles.

As most staff members teach in more than one curriculum, also scientific publications are often written by many authors. As one example (from the SAR Annex 15) the article, where besides the international cooperation also the co-work of the staff of the UL is demonstrated:
- Shopland, N., Brown, D. J., Daniela, L., Rūdolfa, Ar., Rūdolfa, As., Rahman, M.A., Burton, A., Mahmud, M. & van Isacker, K. (2022). Improving Accessibility and Personalisation for HE Students with Disabilities in Two Countries in the Indian Subcontinent - Initial Findings. In: Antona, M., Stephanidis, C. (eds) Universal Access in Human-Computer Interaction. User and Context Diversity. HCII 2022. Lecture Notes in Computer Science, vol 13309. Springer, Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-05039-8_8.

2.4.5.
According to the SAR (chapter 3.4.5.), and information from meetings during the on-site visit, the UL organises activities aimed at the use of modern cooperation and communication models by the teaching staff (online cooperation networks, digital partnership, etc.). The teaching staff involved in the study programme meet both in person and remotely to address issues related to the study process. The joint-activities are:
- As the study programme offers courses with a large number of CPs (4-6), teaching them involves several teaching staff. Every semester lecturers meet to agree on study course requirements, topics, independent work, exam requirements, etc.;
- The UL experience shows successful teamwork of 3-5 lecturers in the development of study courses: the didactic modules of the subject areas of the study programme are created in cooperation with several lecturers and other faculties;
- The study programme is implemented in all branches: one study course can be taught by several teaching staff, which needs intensive cooperation;
- Each member of the teaching staff can initiate a meeting to address some current issues, to get support in the development of a new study course and/or its updating.

Employers are involved in the implementation and development of study courses - invited to conduct separate seminar classes. Often classes are organised as experience exchange visits to workplaces, etc. When meeting with the staff members, the Experts got the impression that in this field of study, especially in branches, there is a warm and eager learning atmosphere - lecturers like the study-readiness of students in small towns. The problem is distance: travelling takes a lot of time.

Conclusions on this set of criteria, by indicating strengths and weaknesses

As a majority of the staff is elected, the quality of teaching has been proved officially. According to the CV-s, lectures´ scientific activity is high. There is a strong cooperation between teachers, and a well developed communication style. Graduates from this curriculum are highly valued and needed in educational institutions, which is a sign of good teaching quality. The study programme is implemented in all branches: one study course can be taught by several members of the teaching staff.

Strengths:
1) A majority of the staff is elected.
2) Most articles are written by many authors, which is a sign of good collaboration.
3) The atmosphere of teaching is students-friendly.
4) As most teachers teach in several curriculums, the cooperation inside the field is significant.

Weaknesses:

1) The expertise of special education and social pedagogy is needed: through a course/curriculum, for example.
2) There are many branches in the UL, and travelling takes a lot of time, which is not compensated by the university.
3) No incoming or outgoing mobility.

Assessment of the requirement [7]

1 R7 - Compliance of the qualification of the academic staff and visiting professors, visiting associate professors, visiting docents, visiting lecturers and visiting assistants with the conditions for the implementation of the study programme and the requirements set out in the respective regulatory enactments.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

According to the analysis of this chapter, the requirements are fully compliant as the qualifications of the academic staff correspond to the needs of the study programme.

2.5. Assessment of the Compliance

Requirements

1 1 - The study programme complies with the State Academic Education Standard or the Professional Higher Education Standard

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The study programme complies with the Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No. 305 "Regulations on the State Professional Higher Education Standard" (of 13.06.2023), regulation of the Cabinet of Ministers No. 322 (of 13.06.2017) on the classification of education in Latvia, as evident by the SAR, Annex 25_3.

2 2 - The study programme complies with a valid professional standard or the requirements for the professional qualification (if there is no professional standard required for the relevant occupation) provided if the completion of the study programme leads to a professional qualification (if applicable)

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The study programme complies with the professional standard of the Teacher (agreed on in the tripartite cooperation sub-council for professional education and employment on 12.06.2020) as evident by the SAR, Annex 26_3.

3 3 - The descriptions of the study courses and the study materials have been prepared in all languages in which the study programme is implemented, and they comply with the requirements set forth in Section 561 , Paragraph two and Section 562 , Paragraph two of the Law on Higher Education Institutions.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The requirements are fully met, as evident by the SAR, Annex 25_3 and the study course descriptions.

4 4 - The sample of the diploma to be issued for the acquisition of the study programme complies with the procedure according to which state recognised documents of higher education are issued.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The sample of the diploma includes elements associated with the state-recognised documents of higher education (Cabinet Regulations No 202) as evident from the SAR, Annex 22_3.

5 5 - The academic staff of the academic study programme complies with the requirements set forth in Section 55, Paragraph one, Clause 3 of the Law on Higher Education Institutions.

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

6 6 - Academic study programmes provided for less than 250 full-time students may be implemented and less than five professors and associated professors of the higher education institution may be involved in the implementation of the mandatory and limited elective part of these study programmes provided that the relevant opinion of the Council for Higher Education has been received in accordance with Section 55, Paragraph two of the Law on Higher Education Institutions.

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

7 7 - At least five teaching staff members with a doctoral degree are among the academic staff of an academic 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 teaching staff members with a doctoral degree are among the academic staff of a professional doctoral study programme in arts (if applicable).

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

8 8 - The teaching staff members involved in the implementation of the study programme are proficient in the official 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.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The requirement is fully met as evident by the SAR, Annex 10 and by the Head Of Study Field Declaration, SAR, Annex “30-37_85_Head of study field declaration_knowledge of the official language_EN.edoc”.

9 9 - The teaching staff members to be involved in the implementation of the study programme have at least B2-level knowledge of a related foreign language, if the study programme or any part thereof is to be implemented in a foreign language (if applicable).

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

10 10 - The sample of the study agreement complies with the mandatory provisions to be included in the study agreement.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The sample of the study agreement complies with the mandatory provisions (Cabinet Regulations No 70) to be included in the study agreement as evident from the SAR, Annex 8.

11 11 - The higher education institution / college has provided confirmation that students will be provided with opportunities to continue their education in another study programme or another higher education institution or college (agreement with another accredited higher education institution or college) if the implementation of the study programme is terminated.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Based on the cooperation between the University of Latvia and Daugavpils University (DU) in the

field of studies and scientific research, in case of discontinuation of the study programme Preschool Teacher (41141), the DU undertakes to provide students with study opportunities in the corresponding study programmes at the DU as evident by the SAR, Annex 6.

12 12 - The higher education institution / college has provided confirmation that students are guaranteed compensation for losses if the study programme is not accredited or the study programme's license is revoked due to the actions (actions or omissions) of the higher education institution or college and the student does not wish to continue studies in another study programme.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The requirement is fully met as evident by the SAR Annex "25.03.2024 - 71-61_4 - Rektora apliecinājums par SV "Izglītība un.edoc".

13 13 - The joint study programmes comply with the requirements prescribed in Section 55.(1), Paragraphs one, two, and seven of the Law on Higher Education Institutions (if applicable)

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

14 14 - Compliance with the requirements specified in other regulatory enactments that apply to the study programme being assessed (if applicable)

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The compliance with the Cabinet Regulation No. 569 Regulations regarding Education and Professional Qualification necessary for teachers and procedures for improvement of Professional competence of teachers is evident in the SAR Annex "Jauns_Conformity of the study programme with the specific regulatory enactments of the relevant sector.docx".

Assessment of the requirement [8]

1 R8 - Compliance of the study programme with the requirements set forth in the Law on Higher Education Institutions and other regulatory enactments.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The complianceof the study programme with the requirements set forth in the Law on Higher Education Institutions and other regulatory enactments are evident through analysis of the requirements and documents attached to the SAR, including statements signed by the Study Field Director, the Rector, approved by the UL Senate, etc.

General conclusions about the study programme, indicating the most important strengths and weaknesses of the study programme

In general, the study programme fulfils the requirements corresponding to the study field, state regulations and UL's strategy. The study programme is well implemented in full-time and part-time forms. The significant shortcoming of the study programme is the lack of sufficient educational content in the field of inclusive and special pedagogy that could be eliminated considering a long term recommendation.

The most important strengths are the following:
1. The employment indicators of the graduates of the study programme are high (92%).
2. UL ensures the introduction and sustainability of SP, which is highly valued by employers and students SP, guaranteeing the possibility to acquire it not only in Riga, but also in regions, thus

contributing to access to education and the possibility of preparing a socially important workforce in Latvia.
3. Very good cooperation and collegial relationship between students, teaching staff and management in general.
4. The study programme is flexible and can adapt to the needs of students, especially part-time students who usually work and study at the same time.
5. Well-rated relevance to the educational needs of the local community.
6. The study programme has high demand in regions that provide stable and predictable RB performance. It is expected that demand will increase by introducing new study fee support solutions from state budget resources to other study programmes, enabling access to municipality co-funding to preschool teachers.

The most important weaknesses are the following:
1. The expertise of special education and social pedagogy is needed.
2. Analysis of the dynamics of the number of students and number of dropouts students calls to search for additional student support mechanisms in regards to scholarships or study fee discounts.
3. Overload of some students who study and work at the same time because of teaching workload can affect their quality of studying and their motivation.
4. Some of the learning resources used in the study process do not correspond to the learners' age period of students, closer cooperation with preschool educational institutions, consultations on the resources to be used would ensure better preparedness of students for working conditions at preschools.
5. Inadequacies in the definition and number of learning outcomes in some courses.
6. Existing payment system for teaching staff does not cover the time of travel to RB. That impacts their working conditions, right for fair payment and motivation.

Evaluation of the study programme "Preschool Teacher"

Evaluation of the study programme:

Good

2.6. Recommendations for the Study Programme "Preschool Teacher"

Short-term recommendations

To consider the compensation for teachers of the time spent travelling to the many branches of UL.
To revise the study course descriptions regarding definition and number of learning outcomes and compulsory reading list in some study courses.
To prevent or minimize students' feeling of overload or overlapping of the internship with their employment, a more systematic procedure for the practical activities/internship is needed.
To increase the learning content, i.e. the number of CP for inclusive and special needs education. In the future creating a separate course of special and/or social pedagogy could be considered.

Long-term recommendations

To considered establishing a Bachelor study programme for Preschool Teachers, as some students have expressed a desire to continue their professional development in this direction.

To increase incoming and outgoing student and teacher mobility activities, for example, through Erasmus.
To develop a plan for increasing the number of students in branches: e.g. a new study programme for special education can help not only to address individual learning needs of pupils, but also create a new demand and consequently increase the number of students if the country considers inclusion as a high priority in education.
To considered additional student support mechanisms in regards to scholarships or study fee discounts.

II - "Teacher" ASSESSMENT

II - "Teacher" ASSESSMENT

2.1. Indicators Describing the Study Programme

Analysis

2.1.1.
According to the SAR p.357 the study programme was licensed on 12.08.2020. The study programme was accredited for inclusion in the study field "Education and Pedagogy" on 3.08.2022. The correspondence of the professional Bachelor's study programme “Teacher” (ProfB Teacher) to the study field determines whether it has been included in the list of programmes related to teacher education since the definition of the study field. SAR documents confirm the need to provide locally and internationally competitive professional Bachelor’s studies in teacher education, promoting the development of teacher general and professional competence in accordance with the Profession Standard “Teacher” in the student’s chosen fields of study (SAR, Annex 27. Compliance with regulations).
According to the SAR p. 354-355 teachers will be able to understand significant concepts, regularities and specifics of the field of education sciences in the contexts of teacher’s professional activity at different levels and types of education and will be ready to choose a pedagogical approach, methodology, teaching and learning aids and resources appropriate to the implementation of the aims and the achievement of learning outcomes.

2.1.2.
The title “Teacher” of the study programme, professional qualification, the conformity of the parameters of the study programme to the expected outcomes corresponds all external regulations, i.e., Cabinet of Ministers regulations No. 305 "Regulations on the State Professional Higher Education Standard”; No. 322 on the classification of education in Latvia and the standard of the teaching profession (agreed on in the tripartite cooperation sub-council for professional education and employment on 12.06.2020).

Experts concluded that the title of the study programme and the professional qualification correspond to the teaching profession's standard title and qualification requirements. The code of the study programme is in accordance with the Cabinet regulation No. 322 "Regulations on Latvian education classification”, which corresponds to the sixth-level qualification of the Latvian education qualification structure for the group of teacher education programmes. The title “Teacher”of the study programme and the professional qualification correspond to the title and qualification requirements of the Teacher professional standards, for example, to develop the teacher professional competence at the local and international level for the performance of competitive

pedagogical activities in the chosen fields of study and for the implementation of educational programmes in accordance with the requirements of the labour market (SAR, p. 354 and Annex 25_5 Compliance of the professional Bachelor's study programme "Teacher" with the academic education standard).

Also, experts concluded that the volume and duration of the study programme, its parts and their scope, mandatory content, professional qualifications, basic principles and procedures of evaluation and the scope of internship, principles of implementation complies with the Cabinet Regulation No. 305 "Regulations on the Standard of State Professional Higher Education". Experts concluded that the study programme, aims, objectives, learning outcomes and admission requirements are interrelated and corresponds to Latvian regulatory documents Cabinet regulation No. 305; the European Qualifications Framework and the standard of the teaching profession defined in the Latvian education classification (SAR, p. 358). Experts concluded that Student admission takes place in accordance with a previously approved procedure and criteria, which are published on the university's website. (https://www.lu.lv/en/admission/admission-procedure/). According to SAR (p. 357-361) and university's website the admission conditions for the study programme correspond to the aim and objectives of this study programme. After analysis, experts can agree and come to the same conclusion.

According to the Cabinet of Ministers Regulations No. 305 the content of the study programme consists of study courses in the amount of 160 CP (240 ECTS); general education study courses, field theoretical study courses, teaching practice and state examinations are the common parts of the programme of 72 CP (108 ECTS), 82 CP (123 ECTS) are restrictive elective courses, and 6 KP (9 ECTS) are elective courses. The implementation language is Latvian and that is reasonable and justified because it corresponds to the local situation in Latvia, in general these specialists will work in Latvian schools (SAR, p. 358). The place of implementation of the study programme for full time and for part time studies is only in Riga not in the branches because the decision not to implement the study programme in the regional branches is related to the insufficient number of applicants, with at least 15 students needed to open a sub-programme in a regional branch.

2.1.3.
According to the SAR (p. 358-360) significant changes have been made with the implementation of study modules in branches due to insufficient number of students. For example, the decision not to accredit the implementation of the study programme in regional branches and the development of a new sub-programme "Social Studies Teacher" in the amount of 32 CP based on the existing licensed 82 CP sub-programme "Social Studies and History Teacher". Because the students currently enrolled in the study programme, and especially in part-time studies voiced the need for this sub-programme and by acquiring the content and methodology of this sub-programme, the students will be competent to teach social studies and history in basic school.

A decision was made not to implement the study programme in the regional branches. Although the local municipalities successfully attracted applicants for full-time or part-time studies in Riga, the groups were not large enough (with at least 15 students needed to open a sub-programme in a regional branch) to make it cost-effective for a group in a regional branch. Other changes made in the study programme since the licensing of the study programme are related to the study courses that have been changed in four sub-programmes of the PBSP "Teacher". The necessary changes were made based on the students' opinions and recommendations (expressed both in a focus group discussion and in a questionnaire), as well as the analysis of the piloting experience conducted by all teachers involved in the implementation of the programme. For example, 2 CP study courses have been added to the sub-programme "Computing Teacher", to avoid the study course duplication

resulting from a certain choice of sub-programmes. The sub-programme “Social Studies and History Teacher” has undergone changes for 14 CP; the sub-programme “Natural Science Teacher (Biology or Chemistry or Geography or Physics)” has undergone changes in the amount of 21 CP, and the sub-programme “Latvian Language and Literature Teacher” – of 16 CP. In the sub-programme “Social Studies and History Teacher” the descriptions of two study courses have been improved, including the developed content, independent works keyed to the requirements for obtaining credit points, updated list of compulsory literature but the learning outcomes have not been changed (SAR, Annex Course descriptions_EN.docx).

2.1.4.
In the SAR a significant economic and social situation analysis has been performed from different resources and reports, for example, the Citadele Index (2018); the Association of Latvian Universities (2012); the Teacher Survey of the International Teaching and Learning Study (TALIS, 2018); the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD, 2018) and key findings include that the proportion of young people (up to 34 years old) in the labour market will be relatively small. Which attests that the change of the generation of teachers will not happen rapidly, but it will be very necessary to prepare specialists to work in the future (SAR, p. 363). According to existing demographic forecasts, it is expected that the population in the age group of 15-64 years will decrease by 132.1 thousand or about 10% and employers indicate a lack of employees, which poses a threat to the operation of companies. It can be predicted that this is why there will be a need for specialists who can fulfil the duties of several positions at the same time.

The next challenge is the reform in education for teachers, because it is necessary to change the paradigm of thinking. The study programme is designed based on the competence approach and its principles to provide educational institutions with competitive and professional teachers who are ready for change. The SAR also identifies a number of challenges and risks, for example, starting work at school too early, workload of students in educational institutions, teacher’s salary.

According to the data 187 students out of the 387 students currently studying at the study programme “Teacher” are combining studies and work at school, which is almost half of the students – in proportion to the number of students and the number of students combining studies and work at school is growing every year (SAR, p.363, Table 3.1.3.1.).
The second problem, which is particularly alarming and will again lead to a shortage of teachers in schools, is the excessive workload at school. There are several reasons, for example, young specialists are already burned out and they are neither able nor willing to continue working at school. The third issue is the salary, which might be an additional bonus during studies, but no longer enough when working full time. The combination of all these aspects can lead to the fact that only 36.2 % of young specialists continue to work in the education system (SAR, p. 363, Fig. 3.1.3.1). It is also affected due to low prestige and status of the teaching profession, the inadequate remuneration as well as the lack of professional support in educational institutions.

In the SAR the dynamics of the number of students are analyzed and the analysis and assessment of the impact factors of the number of changes has been carried out (SAR, p. 364-368). SP administrative staff analysed and concluded about the trends of dropping out of studies, some examples: there is a lack of motivation to continue studies, because already in the first semester of studies, subjects of two fields have to be learned, but the applicants are usually focused on only one subject and do not yet understand what is required in the working environment. The next reason is a large number of students work, both related to and not related to the work of a teacher (SAR, p. 363. Fig. 3.1.3.1.), and this is more hours than should be optimally allowed for a student – 12 hours a week.

At least eleven support measures have been established to reduce student dropout (SAR, p.367-368). According to the information the Experts got from the meetings and SAR p. 367 some examples there: the heads of modules organise meetings with the students from different study years of module once in two months; also, the programme director meets online with 1st year group buddies once a month, once in two months – with the 2nd and 3rd year group buddies and once a semester with 4th year group buddies; the programme director meets with the heads of the modules three times per semester; the group buddies, heads of the modules, student support administrators, and the programme director meet once a semester for a focus group discussion; in case of problematic situations, immediate meetings of the programme director, head of the module, lecturer and students are organised. So far there have been five such situations: in the module of Natural Sciences, in the Latvian Language and Literature module, the English language module and in the Design and Technology one (SAR, p. 367).

According to the information the Experts got from the meetings the tendency not to start working at school after graduating from the study programme can be changed only by the development of a well-considered state support programme such as a year of induction with the support of a mentor and state bonuses for new specialists.

2.1.5. N/A

Conclusions on this set of criteria, by specifying strengths and weaknesses

After analyzing all the criteria experts conclude that the interrelation of the all elements - the title, code and professional qualification of the study programme, aims, objectives, learning outcomes and admission requirements - are strong, which is the result of the awareness of their importance (content-wise, legal-wise, marketing-wise) to the HEI, SP, LOs management.

Strengths:
1) ProfB Teacher the aims, objectives (goal, tasks) are strongly linked with the UL SF EDU strategy priorities.
2) Significant changes have been made with the implementation of study modules in branches due to insufficient number of students.
3) The necessary changes in the study courses were made based on the students' opinions and recommendations (expressed both in a focus group discussion and in a questionnaire), as well as the analysis of the piloting experience conducted by all teachers involved in the implementation of the programme.
4) The implementation language is Latvian and that is reasonable and justified because it corresponds to the local situation in Latvia, in general these specialists will work in Latvian schools.
5) Learning outcomes are formulated in the student-centered approach according to the conventional best practices and are integrated in the various teaching and assessment methods of the study courses and are mapped against the study courses results.
6) The results of the number of graduated students achieved according to plan.
7) The impact from the economic and social aspects to dynamics of the number of students taken into account.
8) At least eleven support measures have been established to reduce student dropout.
9) A successful support for students in the year of induction, including support of a mentor and state bonuses for new specialists.

Weaknesses:
1) The employment indicators of the graduates of the study programme are low (36,2%).

2) Case studies in the study course are needed. Such an approach would help students to better prepare for daily work in an educational institution.

2.2. The Content of Studies and Implementation Thereof

Analysis

2.2.1.
The Professional Bachelor's Study Programme "Teacher" (ProfB Teacher) comprises of 27 modules in five fields of study: Natural Sciences, Mathematics, Social Science and Civic Engagement, Technology, Languages. In terms of content. The study programme consists of study courses amounting to 160 CP (240 ECTS): general education study courses, field theoretical courses, teaching practise and state examination are the common parts of the study programme (72 CP (108 ECTS)), 82 CP (123 ECTS) are restrictive elective courses, and 6 CP (9 ECTS) are elective courses (SAR, Annex 29_4_PBSP_SS_plans_Plan). The disadvantage of the Annex is that it only lists Latvian credit points instead of CP and ECTS (as e.g. in SAR Annex 29_3_PLPSP_plans_Plan_1, SCPrSchT). According to SAR, after completing a module, graduates are qualified to teach the content of the module at general, optimal and higher levels according to the State General Secondary Education Standard (SAR, p. 369). They can continue their studies in master's study programmes, acquire additional module study courses for the higher level or sub-programme content in another field of study. The title of the study programme and the content of the study courses correspond to the standard title and qualification requirements of the teaching profession.

The content of the ProfB Teacher corresponds to the state professional higher education standard (SAR, Annex 25_4). The aims and planned learning outcomes of the courses are clearly defined and in line with the aims of the study programme: to provide locally and internationally competitive professional Bachelor's studies in teacher education, promoting the development of teacher general and professional competence in accordance with the Profession Standard "Teacher" in the student's chosen fields of study (SAR, p. 354), which justifies their implementation in SP. The detailed elaboration of LOs of study courses can be found in the SAR Annex 30 Study Course description. According to the students and graduates of the study programme, FEPA awards CP according to the actual workload of the students. Graduates can continue their studies in Master's study programmes.

The range of courses offered is diverse and broad enough to ensure the acquisition of professional competences and learning outcomes. The content of the courses is relevant, well connected, meets the objectives and tasks of the programme and is in line with the academic education standard (SAR, Annex 25_4). The relevance of the qualification acquired in the study programme to the professional standard is outlined in Annex 26_4. Course content and tasks are well described, as are the work plan and organisation for each course (SAR, Annex 7 Study course descriptions). Although the study programme meets the professional standard from the experts' point of view, there is a growing trend in education, particularly in European education, towards inclusion and the personalization of learning. Therefore, the study programme needs to strengthen this component. Additionally, introducing a new study programme for special education would enhance all educational study programmes at UL regarding inclusion and meeting special needs for learning.

As the structure of the study programme is based on the approach of a specialisation module system, students have the opportunity to compose their own study programme according to their future career choice. The study programme's courses are designed in such a way that there is no overlap in content and the courses are delivered sequentially, ensuring continuity of study and increasing the level of complexity. (SAR, p. 373). However, students and graduates have expressed

a desire for an expanded content/programme in the field of special education, as they are confronted daily with ever new challenges in working with children with special needs, of which there are more and more. With this in mind, the possibility of expanding the existing content of the compulsory modules should be considered. Some of them also mentioned the need for more content in the areas of psychology and working with gifted children. Students also noted that the STEM area is more neglected than other areas; science content focuses more on education and less on the application of science in schools.

The goal and learning outcomes of each module are related to the goal and expected learning outcomes of the study programme. The learning outcomes (LOs) are well described and divided into three parts (knowledge, skills, competence). The study courses ensure the achievement of the LO of the SP and the learning outcomes of the study courses cover the learning outcomes of the study programme. In the description of some courses, crosscheck mapping of the study course LOs should be reconsidered (e.g. in courses SDSK1229, Izgl1004, Izgl4061) almost all or all LO-s are ticked in all three/four assessment types – could all learning outcomes be realized in each assessment type?). In addition, learning outcomes in some courses should be improved by finding the right verbs that correspond to Bloom`s taxonomy, in terms of better observability and measurability (ambiguous verbs such as “know”, “understand” should be avoided - it is not clear what level of understanding is meant). It is also recommended that courses have an appropriate number of LOs (the recommended number is up to seven – most have more than this; some courses have a large number of LOs: Izgl4032 - 16, Izgl4026 – 15, Izgl4024 – 18). The assessment components and their weighting are presented. There are some examples that show a very good and detailed elaboration of criteria for the assessment of learning outcomes in accordance with the type of assessment, such as Izgl1043, Izgl4039, Izgl1042, SDSK1167. The assessment and evaluation of student progress and learning outcomes in the study courses are well described. Evaluation criteria for learning outcomes have been developed for the evaluation of all competences to be acquired i.e. include evaluation of knowledge, social and practical skills, compliance with legal and ethical standards in primary and secondary education etc. The content of study courses and modules is updated in accordance with the development trends of the industry, labour market and science.SP includes courses on teaching methods, psychology, curriculum and material development, teaching practice (SAR, Annex 30 Study Course description).

The bibliography for each course includes relevant books, publications, journals, and other sources, including recent academic publications. However, some courses have a very extensive list of required reading, which can be burdensome for students (e.g. Izgl4056 – 23 sources). On the other hand, many courses provide a generous list of additional reading for those who wish to study the content in more depth.

2.2.2. N/A

2.2.3.
The most common methods used by teachers are lectures and seminars, but practical work/sessions, case studies, introductory lectures, problem-based lectures, collaborative projects, internships and portfolios are also used depending on the type of content. The e-learning environment is well organised and digital tools are used to create methodological materials, test knowledge and provide feedback. Taking into account the statements made in interviews with ProfB Teacher students and graduates, the principles of student-centred learning and teaching are taken into account, especially through the organisation and implementation of practical tasks, seminars, individual, pair and group work, discussions. SAR (p. 374) states that study courses of the compulsory part of the programme can also be delivered in English if required (Erasmus+ exchange

students), but more specific information is not provided. Practitioners, professionals from different institutions are also invited to give lectures and sometimes classes are organised as experience exchange visits to workplaces. Students are involved in projects, international workshops, international weeks and participate in the annual international scientific conference of the University of Latvia.

According to students and teachers, the methods used encourage active student participation through real-life problem solving, discussions, modelling learning situations, etc. Teaching in relatively small groups helps to personalise the learning process (especially in the UL branches). The description of students' independent work in the study courses is generally good in terms of organisation, tasks, integration into the e-learning environment and evaluation parameters. The organisation of independent work in the study courses is well described and includes different types of student engagement (theoretical and practical), in accordance with the corresponding CP, and also aims to promote students' transversal skills. In discussions with students, teaching staff and management, the experts were able to ascertain that there is a close connection and cooperation between all those involved in the study programme. From the discussions with students, it can be concluded that students have a good understanding of the content, learning outcomes and assessments received and feel competent enough for their professional activities. One of the biggest advantages of this study programme is the collegial relationship with the lecturers, which requires mutual respect, support and feedback.

2.2.4.
Teaching practice is an important part of the SP. The 20 CP (30 ECTS) of practice is divided into 5 parts, each part focusing on the performance of basic tasks and responsibilities of professional activity as defined in the State General Secondary Education and at the level of basic education according to the State Standard for Basic Education (SAR, p. 380).

SAR Annex 31 contains a detailed description of the organization of student practice, which is at a satisfactory level in the opinion of the FEPA, but also in the opinion of the students. The teaching practice tasks are aligned with the professional knowledge, skills, attitudes and competences of the study programme. FEPA has established good cooperation with regional education administrations and educational institutions. Students can apply for a work placement, but are also strongly supported by the management of FEPA and UL branches.

The students' tasks consist of carrying out practical work independently under the supervision of school mentors and FEPA supervisors. In general, these tasks correspond to the learning outcomes of the internships listed in the descriptions of study courses, since they are directed towards implementing the acquired theoretical knowledge in real pedagogical practise, planning, organising, conducting and assessing the teaching/learning process (SAR, Annex_30 Study courses EN). A detailed description of the internship process and objectives is elaborated in the SAR (p. 380-384). The assessment components and assessment criteria are also clear. After discussions with students and employers, the experts came to the conclusion that there are quite extensive or at least sufficient opportunities for internships.

2.2.5. N/A

2.2.6.
According to SAR, the topics of the Bachelor's theses are relevant to the industry, contribute to the work environment, promote the well-being of students in the learning process, integrate the content of educational sciences and fields of study into practice and bring the ideas of School 2030 to life in

educational institutions (SAR, p. 384), as can be also seen from the topics of the theses listed on SAR pages 384 and 385 (e.g. Development of Didactic Games to Promote Motivation for Learning the Optimal Level of Mathematics; Using Classflow for Self-Assessment in Primary School; Computer Science Subject Integrated Learning in Forms 1 – 3; Possibilities of Developing Students' Linguistic and Cultural Competence in Form 10 Latvian Language Lessons). The assessment criteria are well described. Students can choose the type of Bachelor's thesis: Bachelor's thesis – research or Bachelor's thesis – teacher portfolio, which is also a good example of differentiation practice in education. Students choose the topics for their thesis in collaboration with their supervisor. Students are encouraged to choose relevant topics; there is a particular need for research in the area of inclusive education, differentiation and individualization, and classroom management that ensures discipline and promotes collaboration with parents, which is consistent with students' statements about lack of experience in these areas. Based on examples of successfully defended thesis topics, it can be stated that these correspond to the study programme, have a strong practical relevance and follow current research trends in the field of education.

Conclusions on this set of criteria, by specifying strengths and weaknesses

Based on the information contained in the SAR and the annexes, the study programme is relevant and up-to-date. Based on the descriptions of the study programme in SAR Annex 7, they are complementary to each other and meet the requirements for the development of professional competence. The UL allocates CP according to the actual workload of the students. The objective, goals and planned outcomes of the study programme are achievable and interrelated. The structure of the study programme is clear and meets the standard requirements for a professional study programme. The horizontal and vertical alignment of the learning outcomes is given, even if the definition and number of learning outcomes need to be improved.

Strengths:
1) Very good cooperation and collegial relationship between students, teaching staff and management in general.
2) Sufficient opportunities for and good organization of internships.
3) Well-rated relevance to the educational needs of the labour market.
4) Good established principles of student-centered education.
5) Possibility to flexibly combine the content and teaching methods of two or more subjects when choosing a module combination.

Weaknesses:
1) Inadequacies in the definition and number of learning outcomes in some courses.
2) Lack of sufficient educational content in the field of inclusive and special pedagogy.

Assessment of the requirement [5] (applicable only to master's or doctoral study programmes)

1 R5 - The study programme for obtaining a master's or doctoral degree is based on the achievements and findings of the respective field of science or field of artistic creation.

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

2.3. Resources and Provision of the Study Programme

Analysis

2.3.1.

Implementation of the study programme takes place in the premises of the faculty, which are adapted for the needs of the study process, providing the study rooms with the necessary equipment (SAR, p. 304). Rooms are available according to the needs of the study process. Experts were introduced to faculty infrastructure this year on May 14 and in interviews with students on the 15th of May, they heard positive feedback about the faculty's material-technical facilities during the study process. At the same time, the experts, introduced to shared responsibility for Nature science didactics with other UL faculties (interviews with teaching staff, 15th of May, 2024), did not find assurance that this strategy leads to most effective governance of available resources and development of united knowledge and didactics excellend in SF. Material technical support ensures access to the necessary electronic resources. Particularly high students evaluate the logistical system developed by the FEPA, which allows electronic ordering of library resources. Financial resources are provided by state budget allocation, annual renewal of technologies is provided in FEPA ICT infrastructure and scientific resource accessibility.

Thus, in assessing didactic succession and a common approach to the development of the learning process, as well as students' widespread interest in continuing to develop in the field of education, emphasising their level of work, experts consider it necessary to have an integrated approach to access to natural science infrastructure in all study programmes. Experts noticed conflicting information on responsibilities between UL faculty in the field of maintenance and development of subject didactics. While faculty teaching staff say in an interview that they are responsible for maintaining maths as a learning field didactic in all SP, interviews with students and alumni conclude that they are learning the necessary content competency and didactics in other faculties. But if, in fact, pedagogical didactics are developed by other faculty, it's unclear what the Math didactic for which FEPA is responsible.

2.3.2. N/A

2.3.3.
The implementation of the SP takes place according to the available resources, the information confirms that both operational costs and investments are covered, as well as administrative deductions are made. The minimum number of students (61) is calculated and monitored in the establishment of the SP, the number of applications and enrolments is higher than the minimum. Study costs have been calculated and monitored according to how they are implemented. State subsidy for academic year 2022/2023 was set at 2500 eur for full-time intramural SP, total annual income - 155 000 eur. Particularly whole income has been used for SP expenditures (153 996 eur) providing yet profitability of study programme. The costs of implementation of study programmes have been calculated in detail, the study process organisation is sustainable and viable (SAR, p. 306).

Conclusions on this set of criteria, by specifying strengths and weaknesses

The course of the study process is organised with appropriate resources, resource availability, maintenance and renewal is planned. FEPA ensures the implementation of study programmes in accordance with its possibilities to guarantee a continuous study process.

Strengths:
1) The UL ensures the implementation of the study programme in accordance with the request, guaranteeing both the availability of the necessary resources and the sustainability of the study process.

Weaknesses:
1) Existing shared governance of resources related to the STEM education field poses higher implementation risks with regard to the content of these studies, affecting both student mobility requirements with regard to access to resources and creating different, possibly also substantive, approaches to didactic education within the framework of awareness UL.

Assessment of the requirement [6]

1 R6 - Compliance of the study provision, science provision (if applicable), informative provision (including library), material and technical provision and financial provision with the conditions for the implementation of the study programme and ensuring the achievement of learning outcomes

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

Shared infrastructure with other faculties indicates divided approach of didactics and to its related study infrastructure. During interviews with students experts noticed the necessity of integrated approach to related infrastructure and clear share of competence for subject didactics, especially due to the fact that teachers of this study programme can specialise in several STEM subjects.
Existing shared responsibility with other faculties is more relevant for this study programme due to necessity of provision subject oriented knowledge in education level for elementary and secondary education levels.

2.4. Teaching Staff

Analysis

2.4.1.
According to the SAR (chapter 3.4.1.), 129 lecturers are involved in this curriculum, providing 264 study courses in total. The adequacy of the qualifications of teaching staff is determined by their obtained degree, qualification, work experience and employment status at the UL. Most of the staff members are elected and work on a regular basis. 102 of the 129 staff members hold a doctoral degree and 27 have a master's degree. 26 are professors and 24 are associate professors; 37 assistant professors and 22 lecturers provide field methodology and practice study courses in cooperation with 3 assistants and 17 hourly paid staff members who are experienced industry professionals and school teachers. The 19 teaching staff members of the study programme have improved their professional competence. Most lecturers improved their English skills in courses, offered by the UL.
The 23 academic staff members, who have been participating in the ESF project “Competence Approach to Curriculum”, have been involved in development and implementation of the programme, and 13 academic staff members (1 – 3 academic staff members in each module), simultaneously work at general educational school. Also the conference-activity is high: for example, 89 academic staff members of the programme attended the 79th International Conference of the UL.

According to the SAR, professional teaching staff uses various innovative teaching methods: active learning, discussions, group work, simulations, practice sessions, seminars, role-plays, study tours, gamification, problem-solving teaching methods, project-based methods, technology integration, virtual reality or simulation programmes, online platforms and other tools to promote engagement and understanding, adaptive learning that provides a personalised approach to learning and promotes better results. Also practitioners, professionals from various institutions are invited to

teach individual classes in study courses, in order to promote the unity of theory and practice.

It is important to mention that there has been both incoming and outgoing mobility. All of this, outlined here, enables the achievement of the aims and learning outcomes of the study programme and the relevant study courses.

2.4.2.
According to the SAR (chapter 3.4.1.), during the reporting period, UL has significantly updated the composition of lecturers, both due to the change of generations and also by attracting new lecturers, who were not employed by UL until now. The number of assistant professors has increased mainly at the expense of the number of lecturers, as well as new lecturers joining the study programme. According to the SAR (p. 393), the same trend can be observed in the changes in the number of associate professors. The changes in the teaching staff improved the quality of studies, which can be seen in student surveys. Students told the Experts during the on-site visit, that they are pleased with the quality of teaching/knowledge they get from this study programme.

According to the SAR Annex 11 (Teaching Staff's Curriculum Vitae), the competencies that teachers provide to the study programme are excellent - there are experts of all fields of general education. From the SAR (p. 396), one can notice that it has been possible to strengthen the team of highly qualified lecturers by attracting experts from cooperation partners in the work environment, as well as promoting the growth of existing lecturers. According to Annex 11, most teachers have practical pedagogical experience over 10 years.

As was told, there are altogether 129 staff members. But, according to Table 2.1.4.1. from the SAR (p. 29), the number of current students is 95. It seems to be expensive to use so many teachers for less than 100 students.

2.4.3. N/A

2.4.4.
According to the SAR (chapter 3.4.), during the last 6 years the academic staff have added 1315 publications on their CVs. The total number of publications is much larger, according to the SAR, but due to the limitation of the formal requirements of the CV, it was not possible to indicate all the publications in them. Some articles are authored by several academic staff members, involved in the study programme, which is a sign of good cooperation. Most of the publications are in proceedings of international scientific conferences, indexed in the Web of Science or Scopus databases. According to the headlines, the themes/subjects of research papers/articles are connected to the curriculum, which is a sign of commitment. Some examples to confirm this:
- Avotina A., Margevica-Grinberga I., The importance of cultural capital in the 21st-century teacher education in Latvia. ENO Yearbook 1. Crossing Borders: Arts and Cultural Education in a World of Diversity. Springer, 2019; 210 P. ISBN 978-3-030-06006-0 (P.173-188).
- E.Bufasi, I.Cakane, I.Dudareva, D.Namsone., A Preliminary Study on Spatial Ability for Primary School Teachers` Professional Development. EDULEARN Proceedings, 2022.

Some teachers are also authors of study books and monographs:
- Daniela, L. (2020) Why do we need new ways to teach? Virtual Reality perspective, in New Perspectives on Virtual and Augmented Reality: Finding New Ways to Teach in a Transformed Learning Environment, ed. L.Daniela, Taylor & Francis, ISBN 9780367432119.

The publications are available in the libraries - students are pleased with the plurality of materials in

this field. According to the CV-s, lecturers of this study programme are highly qualified, active in research, conferences and publishing. For example, the average number of publications is about 10 per person, during 6 years. The publishing activity is different, of course - starting from 3-4 until 40, and even 61.

2.4.5.
According to the SAR (chapter 3.4.2.), the cooperation of teachers for the improvement of curriculum takes place at many levels: personal contacts; cooperation within the department – department meetings; cooperation between departments at UL FEPA level; cooperation between UL faculties – lectures, scientific research, conferences, projects; cooperation with employers – involving guest lecturers, agreeing on the content of study courses, the content and course of teaching practice, as well as solving topical issues of educational sciences and conducting research; cooperation of inter-universities (UL, Daugavpils University, Liepaja University and Rezekne Academy of Technology) study programme directors to find solutions in case of insufficient number of students for the mobility of study programme implementation between the participating universities; cooperation with foreign universities – in international projects, conferences and international weeks.

The cooperation takes place also in the content of joint-work on students´ final papers; also when updating the course contents interdisciplinary. Many teachers work in several study programmes - it means the intensive cooperation between lecturers and curriculums. Projects and most research papers are written by many people - the collaboration is intensive. According to Annex 11, there are many evidences of good cooperation:
- Rubene, Z., Daniela, L., Sarva, E., Rūdolfa, A. (2021) Digital Transformation of Education: Envisioning Post-Covid Education in Latvia / References: p.194-196 // Human, Technologies and Quality of Education, 2021 : Proceedings of Scientific Papers.
- Daniela, L., Rūdolfa, A., Rūdolfa, A., Brown, D., & Van Isacker, K. (2022). Inclusive education in India and Bangladesh–preliminary results. Human, technologies and quality of education, 951.

Also alumni and employers are engaged in the improvement of the study programme, as was told to the Experts during the on-site visit: they share suggestions from the practical side of the field - how to optimise the curricula.

Conclusions on this set of criteria, by indicating strengths and weaknesses

The curriculum has a strong basis in the context of qualitative teaching staff. The cooperation of teachers takes place at many levels: personal contacts; cooperation within the department and between departments at UL FEPA level; cooperation between UL faculties; and cooperation of inter-universities.

Strengths:
1) Students are pleased with the quality of knowledge they get from this curriculum.
2) Teachers publish actively, and use this material in lectures. Most articles are written by several authors.
3) Many teachers teach in several curriculums, which makes the cooperation stronger.
4) Teachers are involved in many research and/or developmental projects.
5) The teaching staff use various innovative teaching methods.
6) The cooperation is strong on four levels - inside the department, between departments (inside the LU), between universities in Latvia and also with foreign universities.

Weaknesses:
1) The courses of special education and social pedagogy are needed.
2) The number of students is small, compared to the staff.

Assessment of the requirement [7]

1 R7 - Compliance of the qualification of the academic staff and visiting professors, visiting associate professors, visiting docents, visiting lecturers and visiting assistants with the conditions for the implementation of the study programme and the requirements set out in the respective regulatory enactments.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

According to the analysis of the material for this chapter, the requirements are fulfilled as the qualifications of the academic staff correspond to the needs of the study programme.

2.5. Assessment of the Compliance

Requirements

1 1 - The study programme complies with the State Academic Education Standard or the Professional Higher Education Standard

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The study programme complies with the Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No. 305 "Regulations on the State Professional Higher Education Standard", as evident by the SAR Annex 25_5.

2 2 - The study programme complies with a valid professional standard or the requirements for the professional qualification (if there is no professional standard required for the relevant occupation) provided if the completion of the study programme leads to a professional qualification (if applicable)

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The study programme complies with the professional standard of the Teacher (agreed on in the tripartite cooperation sub-council for professional education and employment on 12.06.2020) as evident by the SAR Annex 26_5.

3 3 - The descriptions of the study courses and the study materials have been prepared in all languages in which the study programme is implemented, and they comply with the requirements set forth in Section 561 , Paragraph two and Section 562 , Paragraph two of the Law on Higher Education Institutions.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The requirements are fully met, as evident by the study course descriptions in SAR Annex 30 and Annex 30A.

4 4 - The sample of the diploma to be issued for the acquisition of the study programme complies with the procedure according to which state recognised documents of higher education are issued.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The sample of the diploma includes elements associated with the state-recognised documents of higher education (Cabinet Regulations No 202) as evident from the SAR Annex 22_5.

5 5 - The academic staff of the academic study programme complies with the requirements set forth in Section 55, Paragraph one, Clause 3 of the Law on Higher Education Institutions.

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

6 6 - Academic study programmes provided for less than 250 full-time students may be implemented and less than five professors and associated professors of the higher education institution may be involved in the implementation of the mandatory and limited elective part of these study programmes provided that the relevant opinion of the Council for Higher Education has been received in accordance with Section 55, Paragraph two of the Law on Higher Education Institutions.

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

7 7 - At least five teaching staff members with a doctoral degree are among the academic staff of an academic 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 teaching staff members with a doctoral degree are among the academic staff of a professional doctoral study programme in arts (if applicable).

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

8 8 - The teaching staff members involved in the implementation of the study programme are proficient in the official 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.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The requirement is fully met as evident by the SAR Annex 10 and and by the Head Of Study Field Declaration, SAR Annex “30-37_85_Head of study field declaration_knowledge of the official language_EN.edoc”.

9 9 - The teaching staff members to be involved in the implementation of the study programme have at least B2-level knowledge of a related foreign language, if the study programme or any part thereof is to be implemented in a foreign language (if applicable).

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

10 10 - The sample of the study agreement complies with the mandatory provisions to be included in the study agreement.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The sample of the study agreement complies with the mandatory provisions (Cabinet Regulations No 70) to be included in the study agreement as evident from the SAR Annex 8.

11 11 - The higher education institution / college has provided confirmation that students will be provided with opportunities to continue their education in another study programme or another higher education institution or college (agreement with another accredited higher education institution or college) if the implementation of the study programme is terminated.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Based on the cooperation between the University of Latvia and Daugavpils University (DU) in the field of studies and scientific research, in case of discontinuation of the study programme Teacher (42141), the DU undertakes to provide students with study opportunities in the corresponding study programmes at the DU as evident by the SAR Annex 6.

12 12 - The higher education institution / college has provided confirmation that students are guaranteed compensation for losses if the study programme is not accredited or the study programme's license is revoked due to the actions (actions or omissions) of the higher education institution or college and the student does not wish to continue studies in another study programme.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The requirement is fully met as evident by the SAR Annex "25.03.2024 - 71-61_4 - Rektora apliecinājums par SV "Izglītība un.edoc".

13 13 - The joint study programmes comply with the requirements prescribed in Section 55.(1), Paragraphs one, two, and seven of the Law on Higher Education Institutions (if applicable)

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

14 14 - Compliance with the requirements specified in other regulatory enactments that apply to the study programme being assessed (if applicable)

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Compliance with the Regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers No. 569 "Regulations on Education and Professional Qualifications Necessary for Pedagogues and Procedures for Improving the Professional Competence of Pedagogues" is fully met as evident by the SAR Annex 27.

Assessment of the requirement [8]

1 R8 - Compliance of the study programme with the requirements set forth in the Law on Higher Education Institutions and other regulatory enactments.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The compliance of the study programme with the requirements set forth in the Law on Higher Education Institutions and other regulatory enactments are evident through analysis of the requirements and documents attached to the SAR, including statements signed by the Study Field Director, the Rector, approved by the UL Senate, etc.

General conclusions about the study programme, indicating the most important strengths and weaknesses of the study programme

In general, the study programme fulfils the requirements corresponding to the study field, state regulations and UL's strategy. The study programme is well implemented in full-time and part-time forms. It could also be implemented in the branches, if UL decided to open study groups there. The only significant shortcoming of the study programme is the lack of sufficient educational content in the field of inclusive and special pedagogy that could be eliminated considering a long term recommendation.

The most important strengths identified in the study programme:
1) The necessary changes in the study courses were made based on the students' opinions and recommendations (expressed both in a focus group discussion and in a questionnaire), as well as the analysis of the piloting experience conducted by all teachers involved in the implementation of the programme.
2) Learning outcomes are formulated in the student-centered approach according to the conventional best practices and are integrated in the various teaching and assessment methods of the study courses and are mapped against the study courses results.

3) Very good cooperation and collegial relationship between students, teaching staff and management in general.
4) Sufficient opportunities for and good organization of internships.
5) Well-rated relevance to the educational needs of the labour market.
6) Most of the teaching staff members have doctoral degrees. Almost all are elected.
7) Teachers are involved in many research and/or developmental projects, they publish actively, and use this material in lectures.

The most important weaknesses identified in the study programme:
1) The employment indicators of the graduates of the study programme are low (36,2%).
2) Lack of sufficient educational content in the field of inclusive and special pedagogy.
3) Case studies in the study course are needed. Such an approach would help students to better prepare for daily work in an educational institution.
4) Existing shared governance of resources related to the STEM education field poses higher implementation risks with regard to the content of these studies, affecting both student mobility requirements with regard to access to resources and creating different, possibly also substantive, approaches to didactic education within the framework of awareness UL.

Evaluation of the study programme "Teacher"

Evaluation of the study programme:

Good

2.6. Recommendations for the Study Programme "Teacher"

Short-term recommendations

To technically revise the study course descriptions regarding definition and number of learning outcomes and compulsory reading lists in some study courses.
To include a detailed information of the implementation of some courses of the study programme in English on the UL home page.

Long-term recommendations

To open a new module/course or curriculum of special education and/or social pedagogy.
To decrease the number of dropout students, maintain an induction year with mentor and financial support.
To include case studies in the study courses. Such approach will help students to better prepare for daily work in an educational institution.
To provide regular feedback on submitted works and those examples would be a model for teachers to provide quality feedback in daily work.

II - "Teacher of Primary Education" ASSESSMENT

II - "Teacher of Primary Education" ASSESSMENT

2.1. Indicators Describing the Study Programme

Analysis

2.1.1.

According to the SAR chapter 3.1.1. and 3.1.2. the correspondence of the bachelor's study programme "Teacher of Primary School Education" (ProfB TPrimE) to the study field Education and Pedagogy has been determined and has been included into the list of study programmes related to teacher education since the definition of the study field. The inclusion of this SP in the SF confirms by acquiring necessary professional competences determined by the Standard of the Teacher Profession for work at the first stage of basic education. Experts got evidence from SAR and meetings with the SP administrative staff, lecturers, students, graduates and employers that such teachers education in Latvia is necessary to prepare children for school and teachers will be ready to comprehend the unity of theoretical knowledge and the realisation of practical activities in pedagogy, psychology, and methodologies of various fields of study. As employers emphasised that to foster openness to the new and innovative approaches in the field of education, using communication technology and resources, as well as understanding global and local, socio-political, economic, and cultural processes are crucial aspects in the teachers education (SAR, Annex_26_4_Primary_Teacher_relevance of the qualification to the professional standard.docx).

2.1.2.

Experts concluded that the title of the study programme, professional qualification, the conformity of the parameters of the study programme to the expected outcomes corresponds all external regulations, i.e., Cabinet of Ministers regulations No. 305 "Regulations on the State Professional Higher Education Standard"; No. 322 on the classification of education in Latvia and the standard of the teaching profession (agreed on in the tripartite cooperation sub-council for professional education and employment on 12.06.2020). The target audience of the study programme is graduates of general and vocational educational institutions who have obtained secondary education; therefore, the admission requirements are secondary education and an admission examination. The admission examination is in the form of a combined examination (written part and oral part) - analysis of educational cases and situations. The analysis of an educational case is used to evaluate the applicant's critical thinking. Candidates express and justify their opinion on the educational case in writing, followed by an oral discussion. An additional test - discussion (oral test) is offered for applicants whose average grade is lower than 7. The test is passed if at least 7 points are received. During the discussions, the applicant's experience and communication skills are evaluated. The candidate answers the Commission's questions about work, education and social activity experience, current events in education and readiness for studies (SAR p. 103).

Also, it has been concluded that the title of the study programme and the professional qualification correspond to the standard title and qualification requirements of the teaching profession. The code of the study programme is in accordance with the Cabinet regulation No. 322 "Regulations on Latvian education classification", which corresponds to the sixth-level qualification of the Latvian education qualification structure for the group of teacher education study programmes (SAR, Annex 25_4_Compliance of the professional Bachelor's study programme "Teacher of Primary Education" with the academic education standard).

According to the SAR the volume and duration of the study programme, its parts and their scope, mandatory content, professional qualifications, basic principles and procedures of evaluation and the scope of internship, principles of implementation is in accordance with the Cabinet Regulation No. 305 "Regulations on the Standard of State Professional Higher Education" (SAR, p.103 and Annex 27_5 Compliance of the study programme with the specific regulatory framework).

Looking at the admission rules, it is concluded that admission takes place in accordance with a previously approved procedure and criteria published on the UL website and developed in addition to the oral test - if the applicant has an average grade lower than 7 points. (SAR p.104).

In general, Experts concluded that the implementation mechanism of the study programme ensures achieving learning outcomes, and all current principles in the SF Education and Pedagogy are taken into account. Learning outcomes follow from the aim and tasks of the SP and are coordinated with each other. As some examples from SAR prove it, the SP assesses students' learning and growth dynamics in the educational process, considers students' individual development potential, learning and personal growth needs; independently structures and directs own learning, analyses own activity and purposefully plans professional development; independently, responsibly and creatively plans and implements pedagogical activity in primary school, flexibly applies it to the student's needs, the sociocultural situation, current trends in the field of pedagogy and psychology; including the principles of student-centred learning (SAR, p. 101 and Annex 26_4 Primary Teacher relevance of the qualification to the professional standard).

Study types are determined: full-time intramural - 4 years and part-time intramural - 4.5 years. Part-time intramural studies are organized both in Riga and in the regional branches - Bauska, Cēsis, Jēkabpils, Kuldīga, Tukums and Madona. All branches have the same requirements for the implementation of the Study Programme (SAR, Annex 1 Implementation of the study field in the regional branches). As clarified during the Experts' visit, the implementation of the study programme in part-time face-to-face studies in branches is of fundamental importance, because that way it is possible to reduce the number of missing teachers in Riga and the regions, as most students combine studies with work in school or preschool.

The content of the study programme comprises courses of 160 CP (240 ECTS) and it corresponds to Cabinet regulations No. 305. The implementation language is Latvian and that is reasonable and justified because it corresponds to the local situation in Latvia, in general these specialists will work in Latvian primary schools.

2.1.3.
The corrections made after analysis in the admission requirements of the professional bachelor's study programme "Teacher of Primary Education" and they are justified (The decision of the Study Quality Commission of June 29, 2022). One additional admission criterion in the study programme created an admission test is set to evaluate applicants’ professional suitability for the teaching profession, motivation for studies in the teacher education study programme, as well as previous skills and experience that might be necessary in the work of a teacher. Also, the expected outcomes of the study programme have been specified, combining the most important expected outcomes that characterize the students' knowledge, skills, and competence (SAR, Annex 28_4 PBSP Primary School Teacher mapping). According to the course descriptions of the study, those parameters are fulfilled (SAR, Annex 27_5 and Annex 28_4).

2.1.4.
The dynamics of the number of students during the reporting period are analyzed and reflected (SAR, p. 108. Fig. 3.1.4.1). Six hundred and ninety (690) full-time and part-time students started their studies in the study programme in the reporting period of the 2023/2024 academic year. Large groups of students study part-time in Riga, Cēsis and in the 4th year - in Kuldīga, Bauska, Tukums. For part-time studies in the 1st year, the largest groups have formed in Riga and Cēsis; however, small groups in other branches are also supported. The number of students in these groups will also increase, as it is anticipated that many graduates of the short-cycle (first level) professional higher

education study programme "Preschool Teacher" will want to continue their studies in the 3rd year. For example, in 2023, 19 graduates of the "Preschool Teacher" study programme continue their studies at the Kuldīga branch. This shows that the study programme is in demand and popular among future teachers.

The study of the labor market situation was analyzed and one of the problems of Latvia's education system was defined. There are a large number of teachers at pre-retirement age in educational institutions and the number of teachers in the age group from 25 to 29 decreased significantly (SAR, p. 106. Table 3.1.3.1.). Experts obtained evidence during the visit through interviews with employers and local municipalities and branches administrative staff that education reform is still underway in Latvia, which is based on competence education and it further emphasizes a prepared pedagogue for the implementation of such an approach in an educational institution.

Graduates of the study programme are in high demand on the labor market in Latvia. In interviews with graduates, it was revealed that they have a wide choice of job opportunities, for example, they are working in pre school educational institutions, general education schools at the primary school stage, in non formal education. Students of this study programme could work also as methodologists of schools and preschool educational institutions, both in Riga and in all regions of Latvia. From 25 graduates (2023 year), 17 students already started working at a school or preschool during their studies (SAR, p. 109) and as experts noticed in the interviews and alumni in daily work learns to deal with various challenges in pedagogical work. They also emphasized that more should be case analysis in the study courses and that would be helpful now. Graduates also expressed their willingness to cooperate with the lecturers even after graduation because questions arise during work and jointly organized discussions for students (currently studying and alumni) and lecturers would be very useful.
The study programme administrative staff have analyzed dropout statistics (SAR, p. 109). According to the SAR named data starting from 2020, there are 85 students to be deducted both in Riga and in the branches, of which 41 - at their own will, which is related to the deterioration of health, with other personal reasons (13 of them have already returned to studies), 13 students for non-fulfillment of contractual obligations, which is manifested in the timely non-fulfillment of financial obligations, and 32 students were deducted for non-fulfillment of the obligations of the study contract, which is manifested in the timely non-fulfillment of the requirements of the study programme. As experts concluded the main reasons from drop off studies mainly it related to the deterioration of health, with other personal reasons.

2.1.5. N/A

Conclusions on this set of criteria, by specifying strengths and weaknesses

After analyzing all the criteria Experts conclude that the interrelation of the all elements - the title, code, degree to be obtained, professional qualification or degree and professional qualification of the study programme, aims, objectives, learning outcomes and admission requirements - are strong, which is the result of the awareness of their importance (content-wise, legal-wise, marketing-wise) to the HEI, SP, LOs management. Graduates also expressed their willingness to cooperate with the lecturers even after graduation because questions arise during work and jointly organized discussions for students (currently studying and alumni) and lecturers would be very useful. Graduates and current students would like to connect theoretical knowledge with the real situation in the educational institution more. Case studies in the study course content would be very useful.

Strengths:

1) ProfB TPrimE (42141) the aims, objectives (goal, tasks) are strongly linked with the SF EDU strategy priorities.
2) ProfB TPrimE (42141) the learning outcomes are formulated in the student-centered approach according to the conventional best practices and are integrated in the various teaching and assessment 3) methods of the study courses and are mapped against the study courses results.
3) ProfB TPrimE (42141) the results of the number of graduated students shows that the study programme is in demand and popular among future teachers.
4) The impact from the economic and social aspects to dynamics of the number of students are taken into account.
5) The employment indicators of the graduates of the study programme are good (68% in 2023 year).

Weaknesses:
1) Incomplete cooperation with graduates.
2) Lack of case studies used in study courses.

2.2. The Content of Studies and Implementation Thereof

Analysis

2.2.1.
The study programme ProfB TPrimE consists of general education study courses, courses that ensure the acquisition of professional competencies (compulsory courses, restricted elective courses, elective courses), practical training, and final thesis. The study programme is offered as a four-year full-time programme and as a four-year and five-month part-time programme. It corresponds to the scope of 160 CP (240 ECTS) (SAR, Annex 29_4_PBSP_SS_plans_Plan). The disadvantage of the Annex is that it only lists Latvian credit points instead of CP and ECTS (as e.g. in SAR Annex 29_3_PLPSP_plans_Plan_1, SCPrSchT). The development and implementation of the SP is consistent with the regulations governing the state standards of higher professional education, the standards of the teaching profession, and the results of the National Centre for Educational Content"s "Competency Approach to Curriculum" project Centre for Teacher Preparation (SAR, p. 109). The content of the study courses includes all the required areas of learning: language, social and civic, cultural awareness and self-expression in the arts, technology, science, mathematics, health and physical activity and their intended outcomes and other area-specific courses that correspond to the standard requirements of the teaching profession. Opportunities for further studies are offered: The Professional Bachelor's degree entitles students to further study at Master's level. Graduates can also continue their education in the integrated Bachelor's degree study programme "Teacher" and study the chosen subjects for the teaching profession at primary and secondary schools (SAR, Annex 25_4 Compliance of the professional Bachelor’s study programme “Teacher of Primary Education” with the academic education standard).

The SAR and the associated annexes contain detailed information on the compliance of the study programme with national education standards and on the topicality and relevance of the course content for social needs and the labour market (a teacher's professional competence is related to the standard requirements of basic education, but also to the age-specific development of learners). The range of courses offered is diverse and broad enough to ensure the acquisition of professional competencies and learning outcomes. The content of the courses is relevant, well connected, corresponds to the objectives and tasks of the programme and is in line with the academic education standard (SAR, Annex 25_4). The goal, objectives and expected outcomes of each module are well developed. The relevance of the qualification acquired in the study programme to the

professional standard is outlined in SAR, Annex 26_4 Primary_Teacher_relevance of the qualification to the professional standard. Course content and tasks are well described, as are the work plan and organisation for each course (SAR, Annex 7 Study course descriptions).

As the structure of the study programme is based on a specialisation module system approach, students have the opportunity to put together their own study programme according to their future career choice. The SAR states that in this way the goal of the study programme is guaranteed, the implementation of the LOs of the study programme is ensured and the students receive a competitive qualification (SAR, p. 110). Although there is an optional module „Diversity Competence in Inclusive Education“ as part of the study programme, students and graduates have expressed the wish for an extended content/programme in this area, as they are confronted every day with ever new challenges in working with children with special needs, of which there are more and more. Some of them also mentioned a need for more content in the areas of psychology, working with gifted children and classroom management. With this in mind, the possibility of expanding the existing content of the compulsory modules should be considered.

The content of each module is related to the goal of the study programme. Compulsory modules "Primary teacher (Grades 1-3)" and "Primary teacher (Grades 4-6)" are created by including the subjects/fields defined in the mandatory curriculum of the basic education standard (Annex 25_4): language, social and civic, cultural awareness and self-expression in the arts, technology, science, mathematics, health and physical activity and their intended outcomes. Optional module courses offer gaining additional knowledge and skills in the field of preschool curriculum, preschool methodological work, inclusive education, learning approaches in preschool (SAR, pp. 110-115). in this way, the conditions for fulfilling the main goal of the study programme to ensure the acquisition of competitive and high quality, internationally comparable professional higher education and teacher qualification, by acquiring necessary professional competences determined by the Standard of the Teacher Profession for work at the first stage of basic education (SAR, p. 100) are met. Although the study programme meets the professional standard from the experts' point of view, there is a growing trend in education, particularly in European education, towards inclusion and the personalization of learning. Therefore, the study programme needs to strengthen this component. Additionally, introducing a new study programme for special education would enhance all educational programs at UL regarding inclusion and meeting special needs for learning.

The LOs of the study courses are mostly well described and divided into three parts (knowledge, skills, competences). In the description of some courses, the allocation of learning outcomes to the study programmes should be reconsidered (e.g. in the courses SDSK1229, Izgl1004, Izgl4061, Izgl4021) as almost all or all learning outcomes are ticked in all three/four assessment types – can all learning outcomes be realised in each assessment type?) In addition, learning outcomes in some courses should be improved by finding the right verbs that correspond to Bloom`s taxonomy in terms of better observability and measurability (ambiguous verbs such as “know”, “understand” should be avoided - it is not clear what level of understanding is meant). It is also recommended that courses have an appropriate number of LOs (the recommended number is up to seven – most have more than this; some courses have a large number of LOs: Izgl4032 - 16, Izgl4026 – 15, Izgl4024 – 18 etc.). The assessment components and their weighting are presented. There are some examples that show a very good and detailed elaboration of criteria for the assessment of learning outcomes in accordance with the type of assessment, such as Izgl1043, Izgl4039, Izgl1042, SDSK1167. The assessment and evaluation of student progress and learning outcomes in the study courses are mostly well described. Evaluation criteria for learning outcomes have been developed for the evaluation of all competences to be acquired i.e. include evaluation of knowledge, social and practical skills, compliance with legal and ethical standards in primary education etc.

The bibliography for each course includes relevant books, publications, journals and other sources, including recent academic publications. However, some courses have a very extensive required reading list, which may be burdensome for students (e.g. Izgl4018 – 25 sources). On the other hand, many courses provide a generous list of additional reading for those who wish to study the content in more depth.

The aim of the SP is to effectively prepare students for the demands of the labour market, with a focus on a competency-based approach. According to graduates and students who already work in the field, SP is successful in this way because colleagues from schools with more experience often ask for advice from newly graduated colleagues, which proves that the content of the SP meets the needs of the labour market.

2.2.2. N/A

2.2.3.
The SAR states that „various methods of gaining and consolidating knowledge are used in studies, such as introductory lectures, interactive lectures, summary lectures, problem-oriented lectures" (SAR, p. 117). The e-learning environment is well organised and digital tools are used to create methodical materials, test knowledge and provide feedback. Taking into account the statements made in interviews with ProfB TPrimE students and graduates, student-centred learning and teaching principles are taken into account and manifest themselves in the organisation and implementation of practical tasks, seminars, individual, pair and group work, discussions. According to students and teachers, the methods used encourage active student participation through solving real-life problems, discussions, modelling learning situations, etc. Teaching in relatively small groups helps to personalise the learning process (especially in UL branches). According to students and graduates of the SP, the UL awards CP according to the actual workload of the students. The description of students' independent work in the study courses is generally good in terms of organisation, tasks, integration into the e-learning environment and evaluation parameters (SAR, Annex 7 Study course descriptions). The organisation of independent work in the study courses is well described and includes different types of student engagement (theoretical and practical), in accordance with the corresponding CP. The integration of theory and practise in the course content is balanced, although some students expressed a desire for „less writing and more practise" and more real-life cases related to primary education. However, from discussions with students it can be concluded that students have a good understanding of the content, learning outcomes and assessment and feel competent enough for their professional work. In discussions with students, teaching staff and management, the experts were able to establish that there is a close connection, collegial relationship and collaboration between all those involved in the study programme. The LU branch students stated that they can use all available resources, just like the FEPA students in Riga (teaching and learning facilities, study room equipment, possibility to use the university library, e-learning support). They were also very grateful for the opportunity to study and work in the place where they live.

2.2.4.
The internship is an integral part of the professional study programme. The study programme provides for 4 pedagogical practices during the study period of 20 CP (30 ECTS) in accordance with Cabinet Regulation No. 305 (SAR, p. 119). SAR Annex 31 contains a detailed description of the organization of the student practice, which works very well according to the management of FEPA and the UL branches, but also according to the students. The teaching practice tasks are aligned with the professional knowledge, skills and competences of the study programme (tasks are based on theoretical knowledge of pedagogy, didactics, psychology and teaching methodology and include

performance of study tasks, organisation of research, modelling of lessons, evaluation of pedagogical activity, reflection on the lessons observed by the practice supervisor). FEPA has established good cooperation with regional education administrations and educational institutions. Students are allowed to choose an internship, but are also strongly supported by the management of FEPA and UL branches.

The students' tasks consist of carrying out practical work independently under the supervision of mentor teachers and FEPA supervisors. In general, these tasks correspond to the learning outcomes of the internships listed in the descriptions of study courses (SAR, Annex 7 Study course descriptions). The assessment components and assessment criteria are also clear. However, after interviews during the on-site visit experts, it seems that a better common systematic process for the practice activities is needed; some students undertake internships in the same classes they are already working in, which needs to be reconsidered. Some students who study and work at the same time feel overloaded because of time teaching workload, which can affect their quality of studying and their motivation. After discussions with students and employers, the experts concluded that there are quite extensive or at least sufficient opportunities for internships. One of the main reasons for this is the general shortage of teachers in Latvian elementary school, which is why interns are more than welcome.

2.2.5. N/A

2.2.6.
According to SAR, the topics of the bachelor's theses developed by the students identify „the needs of the education sector by conducting a survey of primary school teachers, students, mentors and school administration in the context of educational practise“ (SAR, p. 122). Students select the topics for their final thesis in collaboration with their supervisor. There is a particular need for research in the areas of inclusive teaching, differentiation and individualization, and classroom management that ensures discipline and promotes collaboration with parents. Students are encouraged to choose relevant topics – some of the results can be seen in the thesis topics listed in SAR (p. 122): "Participation of parents in facilitating students' learning achievements"; "Inclusion of re-migrant children in the field of mathematics in the 1st grade"; "Mobbing and its impact in preschool and primary school"; "Conditions of the work organisation of the extended day group for the development of pupils' self-discipline", which is evidence of FEPA's efforts to meet current needs in the field of teacher education. Final papers are formalized in a standardized way (through thesis proposals/applications). Based on examples of successfully defended thesis topics, it can be stated that these are in line with the study programme, have a strong practical relevance and follow current research trends in the field of primary education.

Conclusions on this set of criteria, by specifying strengths and weaknesses

Based on the descriptions of the study programmes in SAR Annex 7, they are complementary to each other and meet the requirements for the development of professional competence. The UL allocates CP according to the actual workload of the students. The objective, goals and planned outcomes of the study programme are achievable and interrelated. The structure of the study programme is clear and meets the standard requirements for a professional study programme. The horizontal and vertical alignment of the learning outcomes is given, even if the definition and number of learning outcomes need to be improved.

Strengths:
1) Very good cooperation and collegial relationship between students, teaching staff and

management in general.
2) Sufficient opportunities for and good organization of internships.
3) Well-rated relevance to the educational needs of the local community.
4) Students with a Bachelor's degree from this study programme have no problems finding employment in the labour market.

Weaknesses:
1) Inadequacies in the definition and number of learning outcomes in some study courses.
2) The literature list should be revised as there are a large number of books in some courses.
3) Feeling of overload of some students who study and work at the same time because of teaching workload, which can affect their quality of studying and their motivation.

Assessment of the requirement [5] (applicable only to master's or doctoral study programmes)

1 R5 - The study programme for obtaining a master's or doctoral degree is based on the achievements and findings of the respective field of science or field of artistic creation.

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

2.3. Resources and Provision of the Study Programme

Analysis

2.3.1.
Implementation of the study programme takes place in the premises of the faculty, which is adapted for the needs of the study process, providing the study rooms with the necessary equipment (SAR, p. 122). Rooms are available according to the needs of the study process. Experts were introduced to faculty infrastructure this year on May 14 and in interviews with students on the 15th of May, they heard positive feedback about the faculty's material-technical facilities during the study process. Financial resources are provided in general by state budget allocation and tuition fees, annual renewal of technologies is provided in FEPA ICT infrastructure and scientific resource accessibility. Material technical support ensures access to the necessary electronic resources. Particularly high student interviews evaluate the logistical system developed by the Faculty, which allows electronic ordering and receipt of study literature required by RB (student interviews, May 16, 17, 2024). During all RB visits experts were introduced to RB infrastructure and available equipment. There is a need to reevaluate aspects of accessibility of premises in RB (especially Tukums RB). Interviews with RB managers confirmed a need for development of premises and ICT equipment are increasing and there should be revised sound support of RB maintenance and development of resources. At the same time, the experts, introduced to shared responsibility for science didactics with other UL faculties, did not find assurance that primary education study programme teachers had access to the infrastructure necessary for the field of natural sciences to the same extent as students in the “Teacher” study programme (interviews with students on May 15, 16, 17 2024).

Thus, in assessing didactic succession and a common approach to the development of the learning process, as well as students' widespread interest in continuing to develop in the field of education, emphasising their level of work, experts consider it necessary to have an integrated approach to access to natural science infrastructure in all study programmes, including ensuring access to the use of such infrastructure also for students in the RB.

2.3.2. N/A

2.3.3.
The necessary financial income (947 862 eur for year 2022/2023) have been identified based on the methodology developed by the UL for the course of the study process. Annual income provides implementation of the study process according to the study plan (general evaluation in this report, section 1.3.)., the course of the continued study process shall be ensured (SAR, p. 127) - existing funding model covers not only costs of FEPA and RB, but also provides centralised annual income to UL. Experts found in interviews with students (May 16, 17, 2024) that tuition fees had increased compared to the amount of tuition fees specified by SAR in the 2022/2020 school year, while still being recognised as adequate and affordable for students. The additional received state funding for part-time studies, as well as RB alternative local governments co-financing for students who work or plan to work in educational institutions of these local governments, constitute significant advantages in demand of ProfB TPrimE SP the 2023/2024 school year. Local governments set individual agreements with RB and provide either covering of tuition fee directly to RB (annual or twice a year payment) or individual compensation of tuition fee for students once in a month. The study group is opened in RB if the minimum of 12 students are enrolled. Both - Riga and RB - ensures sustainability of SP providing only studies with minimum number of students and clear financial source distribution. At the same time, certain aspects of financing, in particular regarding the conduct of the study process in the RB, should be improved as interviews with the teaching staff (15 May, 2024) confirmed that the costs related to the mobility of the teaching staff during their working hours are not currently covered.

Analysing the information included in the SAR (p. 127), it can be concluded that significantly higher indirect costs arise in the RB, thus it is necessary to review the financing approach, strengthening RC/RB capacity and possibilities to finance actual costs related to the study process outside Riga.

Conclusions on this set of criteria, by specifying strengths and weaknesses

The course of the study process is organised with appropriate resources, resource availability, maintenance and renewal is planned. Regardless of the location of the study, students have access to equivalent resources. FEPA ensures the implementation of study programmes in accordance with its possibilities to guarantee a continuous study process.

Strengths:
1) The SP is highly valued by employers and students SP, guaranteeing the possibility to acquire it not only in Riga, but also in regions, thus contributing to access to education and the possibility of preparing a socially important workforce in Latvia.
2) The study programme has high demand in regions that provide stable and predictable RB performance. It is expected that demand will increase by introducing new study fee support solutions from state budget resources.

Weaknesses:
1) Within the framework of primary education programmes in the implementation process, experts observe fragmented implementation of STEM-related didactic in other faculties. It is necessary to ensure the integrity of STEM, in particular by promoting the united application of didactics at all stages of education and, consequently, the availability of equivalent resources in the acquisition of these approaches.
2) Existing payment system for teaching staff does not cover the time of travel to RB. That impacts their working conditions, right for fair payment and motivation.
3) Tukums RB has limited implemented accessibility aspects.
4) Increased budget funding will attract more students and existing admission procedures increase

risks associated with study choices for those reflectants who do not link their professional activities to the field of education in the long term.

Assessment of the requirement [6]

1 R6 - Compliance of the study provision, science provision (if applicable), informative provision (including library), material and technical provision and financial provision with the conditions for the implementation of the study programme and ensuring the achievement of learning outcomes

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

All requirements are fulfilled.
Funding and resource planning is appropriate for sustainable study process management.
Annual income covers costs, collaboration with the local government provide extra motivation for student enrollment and successful study process.

2.4. Teaching Staff

Analysis

2.4.1.
According to the SAR, chapter 3.4.1., the qualification of the teaching staff involved in the implementation of the study programme is appropriate for its specifics and the conditions of its implementation, as well as the requirements of regulatory enactments in the field of education.

Mandatory criteria for the selection of teaching staff are: qualifications in accordance with the requirements set by the regulations; scientific research direction/interests correspond to the content of the study programme/course; appropriate knowledge of the national language and foreign languages. The teaching staff involved in the study programme are not only highly qualified specialists in education sciences, but also practitioners, who have until now been working in the field of teacher education.

From 57 teaching staff members, working for this curriculum, 36 have doctoral degrees. Among them, there are 7 professors + one visiting professor, and 7 associated professors. According to the students´ opinion, lecturers are highly professionals. Experts find that it enables the achievement of the aims and learning outcomes of the study programme. During the reporting period, seven members of the teaching staff of the study programme have improved their professional competence during internships at schools (4 people), non-formal education centres (2 people) and preschool (1 teacher).

Work-based studies justify the need for not only knowledgeable teaching staff who keep up with the latest developments in the field in theoretical literature, but also for practitioners who are aware of the current issues at the school, district, and national level. Thus, 12 professionals with practical work experience in the relevant field have been involved in the implementation of the study programme. These mainly include courses related to the content and methodologies of the study areas, practices, specific industry courses. Eight lecturers of the study programme combine their pedagogical activity with primary education or preschool, where they work as deputy heads, methodologists, teachers, thus ensuring the unity of pedagogic theory and practice.

Teaching staff of the study programme continue to work actively in various research and international projects. They also write and submit new project proposals directly related to teacher education. According to the SAR, chapter 3.4., during the last 6 years, the members of the teaching

staff wrote 18 projects, directly related to teacher education. In 2020/2021, six teaching staff members in the UL FEPA, participated in the project "Development of innovative study materials ... " and created innovative study materials, which have been placed in the Moodle environment for students. The projects are about blended learning, robotics, flipped learning practices, innovation, and different Erasmus possibilities.

The improvement of the qualifications of the teaching staff of the UL has been carried out systematically. For example, in the academic year 2020/2021, 23 teaching staff members improved their English language skills in the continuing education programme. Teachers participated in several courses, offered by UL. All together, 73 courses were taken by the teachers from this curriculum, during the last 6 years. According to the headlines of additional courses, they are practical and useful for everyday teaching. The lecturers use the acquired knowledge and skills in their study courses. The result is that students are pleased with the quality of teaching and teachers - as they said to the Experts during the on-site visit. Students especially value practical information, which can be used in everyday work outside the university.

2.4.2.
According to the SAR, chapter 3.4.2., during the reporting period, two members of the teaching staff have terminated their employment; one is currently on a long-term absence. During the reporting period, a visiting professor from the University of Chicago joined the teaching staff of the study programme; one professor has obtained the status of emeritus professor and no longer works in the programme. Twelve professionals with practical work experience in the relevant field have been involved in the study programme: to the courses related to methodologies, practices and specific courses. Eight lecturers combine their pedagogical activity with primary education or preschool, where they work as deputy heads, methodologists, teachers, thus ensuring the unity of pedagogic theory and practice.

Three new lecturers defended the doctoral thesis or continued studies at the Doctoral level. They also encourage students to use the information in foreign languages. Visiting professors broaden students' horizons. According to the SAR, this is evidenced by evaluations in student surveys.

According to SAR Annex 18 (statistics on the outgoing and incoming mobility), there has been significant incoming mobility, and some outgoing mobility, which supports the compliance of the study programme with the requirements, specified in regulatory enactments.

Describing the student-faculty ratio within the study programme, there are 539 students and 57 teaching staff. In Riga, the average ratio for full-time and part-time studies is 30,11; in the Cesis branch 35.21. On average, the student-teacher ratio of the study programme is 25.12.
When Experts met alumni and employers, the need for special education and social pedagogy emerged: schools need specialists, who can cope with children with special needs (incl. with gifted students). Also the social competences are important - for example, how to consult parents.

2.4.3. N/A

2.4.4.
According to the Annexes of the SAR, most of the publications are in proceedings of international scientific conferences, indexed in the Web of Science or Scopus databases. According to the headlines, the themes/subjects of research papers/articles are connected to the curriculum, which is a sign of good commitment. According to the CV-s (SAR, Annex 11), for example, some teachers have been the authors of textbooks and methodological tools in cooperation with the publishing

house "RaKa", "Madris", "Zvaigzne ABC", VISC, LU Academic publishing.

There are articles, written by many authors, which is a sign of good cooperation between the staff. As example:
Kaulēns, O., Lūsēna-Ezera, I., Siliņa-Jasjukeviča, G., & Briška, I. (2023) School as a learning organisation implementation: Latvian educators experience. Proceedings of ATEE Spring Conference “Innovations, Technologies and Research in Education, 2022” (Ed. Linda Daniela).

During the last 6 years, the academic staff published about 9 scientific articles per person. The activity has been different, of course - starting from 4-5, till 61. The publications of teachers are available in the libraries - students are pleased with the plurality of materials in this field.

In 2020/2021, six teaching staff in the UL FEPA participated in the development project "Development of innovative study materials for the new education, pedagogy and sports study programs", to create innovative study materials, which have been placed on the Moodle environment, and are available to all students of the programme.

2.4.5.
According to the SAR, chapter 3.4.5., as the study programme provides courses with many CPs (6, for example), the teaching involves several lecturers. Every semester, during the registration week, lecturers meet to agree on course requirements. The didactic modules of the subject areas of the study programme are created in cooperation with several lecturers and other faculties. As a result, both the pedagogical aspects and the content of the subjects are integrated.

The study programme also includes optional modules. To ensure the interrelationship of study courses and modules, a meeting is organised between the teaching staff, involved in the module to address the issues to course content and evaluation - to prevent overlap. Departmental meetings are organised every month, where all issues, related to the studies, are discussed.

It is common to all study programmes of the study field, that from the very beginning of their studies, students are encouraged by assignments in each study course to search for a research topic of interest to them, so they have the opportunity to discuss these topics with the academic staff and other students, gradually improving their research skills and developing their own research papers. Supervising the research interests needs cooperation from the teachers, too.

The study programme is also implemented in regional branches, it means that one course can be taught by several members of the teaching staff. At least once a semester, the teaching staff meets to update the course content, specify the independent work, evaluate materials on the e-learning platform, and share experiences. When meeting with teachers, the Experts got the impression that in branches there is a warm and eager atmosphere - lecturers like the study-readiness of students in small towns. The only problem is distants: travelling takes a lot of time.

Conclusions on this set of criteria, by indicating strengths and weaknesses

As a majority of the staff is elected, the quality of teaching has been proved officially. According to the CV-s, lecturers´ professionalism and scientific activity is high.

Strengths:
1) Teaching staff consists of well prepared experts of the field, as most of them worked or still work

also in general education.
2) The improvement of the qualifications of the teaching staff of the UL has been carried out systematically.
3) As one subject can be taught by several staff members, the cooperation between teachers is well developed.
4) Students are happy with the content and style of teaching.

Weaknesses:
1) The expertise of special education and social pedagogy is needed.
2) As there are many branches in the UL, and travelling takes a lot of time, some members of the teaching staff complained about the aspect that this time has not been compensated at all.

Assessment of the requirement [7]

1 R7 - Compliance of the qualification of the academic staff and visiting professors, visiting associate professors, visiting docents, visiting lecturers and visiting assistants with the conditions for the implementation of the study programme and the requirements set out in the respective regulatory enactments.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

According to the evidence/ analysis of this chapter, the requirements are fulfilled as the qualifications of the academic staff correspond to the needs of the study programme.

2.5. Assessment of the Compliance

Requirements

1 1 - The study programme complies with the State Academic Education Standard or the Professional Higher Education Standard

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The study programme complies with the Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No. 305 "Regulations on the State Professional Higher Education Standard", as evident by the SAR Annex 25_4.

2 2 - The study programme complies with a valid professional standard or the requirements for the professional qualification (if there is no professional standard required for the relevant occupation) provided if the completion of the study programme leads to a professional qualification (if applicable)

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The study programme complies with the professional standard of the Teacher (agreed on in the tripartite cooperation sub-council for professional education and employment on 12.06.2020) as evident by the SAR Annex 26_4.

3 3 - The descriptions of the study courses and the study materials have been prepared in all languages in which the study programme is implemented, and they comply with the requirements set forth in Section 561 , Paragraph two and Section 562 , Paragraph two of the Law on Higher Education Institutions.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The requirements are fully met and are in line with the academic education standard as evident by the SAR Annex 25_4 and study course descriptions.

4 4 - The sample of the diploma to be issued for the acquisition of the study programme complies with the procedure according to which state recognised documents of higher education are issued.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The sample of the diploma includes elements associated with the state-recognised documents of higher education (Cabinet Regulations No 202) as evident from the SAR Annex 22_4.

5 5 - The academic staff of the academic study programme complies with the requirements set forth in Section 55, Paragraph one, Clause 3 of the Law on Higher Education Institutions.

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

6 6 - Academic study programmes provided for less than 250 full-time students may be implemented and less than five professors and associated professors of the higher education institution may be involved in the implementation of the mandatory and limited elective part of these study programmes provided that the relevant opinion of the Council for Higher Education has been received in accordance with Section 55, Paragraph two of the Law on Higher Education Institutions.

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

7 7 - At least five teaching staff members with a doctoral degree are among the academic staff of an academic 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 teaching staff members with a doctoral degree are among the academic staff of a professional doctoral study programme in arts (if applicable).

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

8 8 - The teaching staff members involved in the implementation of the study programme are proficient in the official 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.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The requirement is fully met as evident by the SAR Annex 10 and and by the Head Of Study Field Declaration, Annex “30-37_85_Head of study field declaration_knowledge of the official language_EN.edoc”.

9 9 - The teaching staff members to be involved in the implementation of the study programme have at least B2-level knowledge of a related foreign language, if the study programme or any part thereof is to be implemented in a foreign language (if applicable).

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

10 10 - The sample of the study agreement complies with the mandatory provisions to be included in the study agreement.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The sample of the study agreement complies with the mandatory provisions (Cabinet Regulations No 70) to be included in the study agreement as evident from the SAR Annex 8.

11 11 - The higher education institution / college has provided confirmation that students will be provided with opportunities to continue their education in another study programme or another higher education institution or college (agreement with another accredited higher education institution or college) if the implementation of the study programme is terminated.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Based on the cooperation between the University of Latvia and Daugavpils University (DU) in the field of studies and scientific research, in case of discontinuation of the study programme Teacher of Primary Education (42141), the DU undertakes to provide students with study opportunities in the corresponding study programmes at the DU as evident by the SAR Annex 6.

12 12 - The higher education institution / college has provided confirmation that students are guaranteed compensation for losses if the study programme is not accredited or the study programme’s license is revoked due to the actions (actions or omissions) of the higher education institution or college and the student does not wish to continue studies in another study programme.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The requirement is fully met as evident by the SAR Annex “25.03.2024 - 71-61_4 - Rektora apliecinājums par SV “Izglītība un.edoc”.

13 13 - The joint study programmes comply with the requirements prescribed in Section 55.(1), Paragraphs one, two, and seven of the Law on Higher Education Institutions (if applicable)

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

14 14 - Compliance with the requirements specified in other regulatory enactments that apply to the study programme being assessed (if applicable)

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Compliance with Cabinet Regulation No. 569 Regulations regarding Education and Professional Qualification necessary for teachers and procedures for improvement of Professional competence of teachers is evident by the SAR Annex 27.

Assessment of the requirement [8]

1 R8 - Compliance of the study programme with the requirements set forth in the Law on Higher Education Institutions and other regulatory enactments.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The compliance of the study programme with the requirements set forth in the Law on Higher Education Institutions and other regulatory enactments are evident through analysis of the requirements and documents attached to the SAR, including statements signed by the Study Field Director, the Rector, approved by the UL Senate, etc.

General conclusions about the study programme, indicating the most important strengths and weaknesses of the study programme

In general, the study programme fulfils the requirements corresponding to the study field, state regulations and UL's strategy. The study programme can be well implemented in full-time and part-time form. The significant shortcoming of the study programme is the lack of sufficient educational

content in the field of inclusive and special pedagogy that could be eliminated considering a long term recommendation.

The most important strengths identified in the study programme are the following:
1) The employment indicators of the graduates of the study programme are good (68% in 2023 year);
2) Sufficient opportunities for and good organization of internships.
3) Graduates with a Bachelor's degree from this study programme have no problems finding employment in the labour market.
4) As one subject can be taught by several teachers, the cooperation between teachers is well developed.

The most important weaknesses identified in the study programme are the following:
1) Graduates and current students would like to connect theoretical knowledge with the real context of the educational institutions.
2) The expertise of special education and social pedagogy is needed.
3) Within the framework of primary education programmes in the implementation process, experts observe fragmentarism related to the implementation of STEM-related didactic in other faculties. It is necessary to ensure the integrity of STEM, in particular by promoting the united application of didactics at all stages of education and, consequently, the availability of equivalent resources in the acquisition of these approaches.
4) Graduates also expressed their willingness to cooperate with the lecturers even after graduation because questions arise during work and jointly organized discussions for students (currently studying and alumni) and lecturers would be very useful.
5) Graduates and current students would like to connect theoretical knowledge with the real situation in the educational institution more. Case studies in the study course content would be very useful.

Evaluation of the study programme "Teacher of Primary Education"

Evaluation of the study programme:

Good

2.6. Recommendations for the Study Programme "Teacher of Primary Education"

Short-term recommendations

To consider the compensation for teachers of the time spent travelling to the many branches of UL.
To revise the study course descriptions regarding definition and number of learning outcomes and compulsory reading list in some study courses.
To prevent or minimize students' feeling of overload or overlapping of the internship with their employment, a more systematic procedure for the practical activities/internship is needed.
To reevaluate accessibility aspects of Tukums RB and make necessary improvements.

Long-term recommendations

To open a new module/course or curriculum of special education and/or social pedagogy.

To include case studies in the study courses. Such approach will help students to better prepare for daily work in an educational institution.
To jointly organise discussions for students (currently studying and alumni) with lecturers. This would be very useful to mutually find solutions to various pedagogical situations in daily work.
To establish the integrity of STEM, in particular by promoting the united application of didactics at all stages of education and, consequently, the availability of equivalent resources in the acquisition of these approaches.

II - "Educational Sciences" ASSESSMENT

II - "Educational Sciences" ASSESSMENT

2.1. Indicators Describing the Study Programme

Analysis

2.1.1.
Academic Master (Second-cycle) Study Programme “Educational Sciences” (2ndC EduSc) corresponds to the field of study and it is determined by the specificity of education science as a field and its relation to the aims of the study field - excellence, internationalization and interdisciplinarity, oriented towards high-level studies and research. Experts concluded that graduates will be able to explain and discuss, based on arguments, complex or systemic aspects of educational sciences and the professional activities of teachers and educational leaders, the results of international and local research with specialists, non-specialists and the general public, and present research findings to a variety of audiences; also, graduates will be able to lead or coordinate interdisciplinary teams, mentor in practice, carry out educational work according to the needs of different target groups in an inclusive educational environment, taking responsibility for their initiative and for the results of their staff and teamwork and to reflect on their learning process and the results achieved, and guide further development of their knowledge, skills and competence (SAR, p. 138).
The academic Master's study programme is designed to enable master's students to acquire internationally recognised academic higher education based on scientific research, carrying out fundamental and applied research in the field (SAR, p.137-143).

2.1.2.
Experts concluded that the title of the study programme, degree to be awarded, the conformity of the parameters of the study programme to the expected outcomes corresponds all external regulations, Cabinet of Ministers (CM) regulations No. 240 on the State Standard of Academic Education; No. 322 on the classification of education in Latvia and the standard of the teaching profession.

The title of the 2ndC EduSc and degree to be awarded fully comply with the specified requirements. The study programme code of the 2ndC EduSc is in accordance with the CM Regulation No 322 Regulations on Latvian Classification of Education. The excellence of the studies is based on the targeted adherence to the principles of student selection when admitting students to the study programme.

According to the SAR (p. 137) the study programme 2ndC EduSc aim and tasks of the study programme are coherent and successive, based on a competence approach, for example, to

promote the development of students' pedagogical competence, their readiness to plan, implement, evaluate and develop educational activities according to the learning needs, different abilities and backgrounds of the target groups, the internal and external conditions of the development of educational institutions and the educational system.

According to the SAR (p. 137-138) SP objectives, learning outcomes and admission requirements are interrelated and based on the priorities set by the European Commission, in particular, the lifelong learning. The study content comprises a set of knowledge, skills and competence corresponding to the knowledge, skills and competence of the seventh level of the European Qualifications Framework as defined in the Latvian Classification of Education.

Experts concluded that the scope of the study programme, the duration of the study programme, the parts of the study programme and their scope; the compulsory content; basic principles and procedures of evaluation and principles of implementation are regulated by Cabinet Regulations 240 Regulations on the State Standard of Academic Education and in accordance with current policy documents and the strategy of the University of Latvia for 2021-2027 (SAR, Annex 25_7 MSP_Compliance with the State Education Standard).

According to the SAR study programme is based on the priorities set by the European Commission and according to the State Education Standard, in particular, the lifelong learning, the Master's study programme provides students with the opportunity to study at higher level study programme, fulfil their lifelong learning potential, develop professionally and academically, specialise in a field of education, acquire an academic education and obtain a Master's degree in Educational Sciences (SAR, Annex 25_7_MSP_IZ_atbilstiba valsts standartam. angl.docx). According to the SAR (p. 146) the relevance of the SP to the SF of study is determined by the specificity of education science as a field and its relation to the aims of the study field - excellence, internationalisation and interdisciplinarity, oriented towards high-level studies and research.

Each year, the formula for calculating the competitive assessment and the admission procedure are defined in the UL admission rules for the current academic year, and published on the UL portal https://www.lu.lv/en/admission/admission-procedure/. Defined assessment criteria for each test type, for example, the following conditions have been set for the entrance examinations of the Master's study programme "Education Sciences" in 2022: written free essay on current issues and problems in education (including in the chosen module of the programme), a substantive application for the topic of the Master's thesis and the assessment criteria consist of four parts: content of the essay; layout (logical, coherent, fit for purpose, directed towards conclusions); language and scientific style (clear, consistent, correct vocabulary) and discussion of the applicant's previous experience (pedagogical, leadership and scientific), possible research problem, relevance and justification in theory and practice, motivation and foreign language skills (SAR, p. 146-147).

The implementation language is Latvian and English that is reasonable and justified because students’ work purposefully is organized in different interdisciplinary groups.
According to the SAR (p. 148-149) 2ndC EduSc is implemented in several variations: short and long form, as well as full time and part time studies. The short form provides the opportunity to acquire knowledge, improve skills and develop competences in a field relevant to the contemporary educational environment at Master’s level in four modules. The main target group of the short form is teachers, but the Master's study programme also offers the opportunity for professionals from other fields (heads of educational institutions, representatives of educational institutions, museum staff, staff of counselling institutions, education experts etc.) to study and acquire advanced education.

While the long form module "Pedagogy" offers the opportunity to acquire purposefully pedagogical and pedagogical leadership competences and to develop research competencies for those students who have not previously had a pedagogical education or who have not had a complete and appropriate short-form (SAR, p. 148-149).

The learning outcomes have been defined for each of the four modules (SAR, p. 154-156). The content of this form consists of appropriate credit points in accordance with Cabinet Regulation No 240. The learning outcomes are defined according to the SP aim and tasks and are coherent, successive, realizable, measurable, for example, plan, implement, evaluate and improve pedagogical activities according to the needs of different target groups in different contexts, creating a safe and supportive, optimal learning environment.

2.1.3.
During the reporting period, changes have been made in the parameter of the admission requirements based on the recommendations received from the previous experts (SAR, p. 144-145, Table 3.1.1.1). University specified the admission requirements by separating the admission requirements from the admission rules .

2.1.4.
Academic staff analysed the economic and social aspects (SAR, chapter 3.1.3) and the study programme is in line with the trends of the Bologna process, corresponds to the sectoral trends reflected in the current objectives set out in the Latvian policy planning documents for 2021-2027 and Education Development Guidelines 2021-2027 (Latvian National Development Plan 151 2021-2027; Education Development Guidelines 2021-2027 "Future Skills for Future Society"; Guidelines for Science, Technology Development and Innovation 2021-2027) which is the formation of a single European higher education area, ensuring that higher education in all three study cycles in education sciences will continue to be possible in Latvia. At the same time the study programme is delivered by highly qualified, competent and excellence-oriented academic staff; it is designed to be modern, high quality and oriented towards the development of highly valued skills in the labor market; the study programme is targeted to support the development of each student.

One aspect is especially relevant in Latvia due to the lack of teachers, professionals with a background in another field to choose a Master's degree in education, in order to acquire pedagogical competence. This trend is particularly characteristic of Latvian-speaking groups, including students of regional branches, who take advantage of the opportunity to study at Master’s level close to their place of residence and to retrain. Thus, the study programme partly addresses this economic function - the need for new staff in the educational environment.

According to the information Experts obtained from the meetings, the study programme director also partly fulfills a social function by supporting students in regional branches, providing education closer to their place of residence. The study programme evaluated by several employers and in the common meetings of students, the programme director and the teaching staff with professional organizations of employers some trends are highlighted, for example, the sector's acute need for new employees, after graduation students rate highly their ability to perform work well, their competence in interdisciplinary research that helps them to make informed decisions in the work environment, and their broad interdisciplinary and critical evaluation of educational processes.

The dynamics of the number of students and employment indicators of the graduates of the study programme is analyzed from 2020./2021 till 2022/2023 academic year. (SAR, p. 152-153 and Annex Statistics on students in the Master's degree programme "EducationSciences"). The first admission

of students to the MSP "Education Sciences" took place in the academic year 2020/2021, and since then there has been a constant interest in the study programme every year and a constant demand from students both in Riga, at the FEPA and the branches of the University. The highest number of students enrolled was in the summer of 2020, at the start of the study programme, when 115 students were enrolled. SP administrative staff concluded that was probably due to an extended publicity campaign for the study programme when it was under development. In 2021, although there was considerable interest, with 147 students expressing their wish to study and applying, 77 students signed an agreement and started their studies. 86 students started their studies in 2022 and signed the agreement. Proportionally few students (7) were enrolled in the English cohort.

Also the study programme administrative staff have identified the main reasons why students drop out the studies. According to the SAR (chapter 3.1.4) in the first year, the drop-out rate was 9% of all students. Analysing the dynamics of student numbers in the following years, as well as in this academic year, the number of drop-outs has stabilised at 2% of the total number of students (SAR, Annex 24_7 MSP Educational Sciences Statistics on students enrolled in the reporting period). The study programme director contacted each of the potential withdrawers and individual discussions were held. The reasons were analyzed, for example, mainly students have personal reasons such as finances, health, time management to combine studies with work and sometimes also with family life.
During the Experts visits, it was found out that the study programme administrative staff and teachers as well try their best to support students and continue their studies if possible. It is important and could reduce the reasons for the termination of studies in advance.

2.1.5. N/A

Conclusions on this set of criteria, by specifying strengths and weaknesses

After analyzing all the criteria, experts conclude that the interrelation of all elements - the title, code, degree to be obtained, degree of the study programme, aims, objectives, learning outcomes, and admission requirements - is strong. This is the result of the awareness of their importance (content-wise, legal-wise, marketing-wise) to the HEI, UL, SP, SF EDU and LOs management. The study programme is designed as a second cycle higher education study programme with learning outcomes and study content formulated in accordance with the European Qualifications Framework in order to provide students with in-depth and broad knowledge, understanding, skills and competence in educational sciences, complementing what they have learned in the first cycle of studies, and to promote competitiveness in education. It can therefore be concluded that there is a continuous interest from potential applicants to study in the study programme. If more budget places were available, the number of students would be correspondingly higher and each year the number of students who can finance their own studies decreases.

Strengths:
1) The SP aim, tasks, the learning outcomes and study content are coherent and formulated in accordance with the European Qualifications Framework.
2) The study programme is delivered by highly qualified, competent and excellence-oriented academic staff;
3) The study programme content is designed to be modern, high quality and oriented towards the development of highly valued skills in the labor market; the study programme is targeted to support the development of each student.

Weaknesses:

1) There is a general tendency of decreasing number of students in Master's level study programmes across the whole University of Latvia and has not reached the target of 250 students in the study programme.

2.2. The Content of Studies and Implementation Thereof

Analysis

2.2.1.
The academic Master's study programme "Educational Sciences" (2ndC EduSc) is offered as a short form (50 CP), full-time (duration 1.3 years), as a long form (80 CP), full-time (duration 2 years), as a short form (50 CP), part-time programme (duration 1.8 years) with modules: "Education Management", "Teacher Mentor", "Diversity and Inclusion in Education", "Human Behaviour and Education", as Long form (80 CP) "Pedagogy" part-time study (duration 2.5 years), and as Short form (50 CP), full-time study (duration 1.3 years) (in English) with modules: "Education Management", "Teacher Mentor", "Diversity and Inclusion in Education", "Human Behaviour and Education" (Annex 29 MSP plan; SAR, p. 158). All forms consist of Part A (compulsory part), Part B (compulsory electives) and Part C (free electives). In order to meet the requirements of the Law on Environmental Protection and the Law on Civil Defence and Disaster Management, the study programme also offers Additionals (Civil Protection and Environment Protection), if these were not studied in the previous level of studies.

The aims for the implementation of the SP and the intended learning outcomes are to promote the development of students' professional pedagogical, management and research competence for competitiveness in education, to motivate further academic growth. The title of the study programme and the content of the study courses correspond to the standard designations and qualification requirements of the teaching profession as well as the objectives of the SP. The SP is also conducted in English. The plan of the 2ndC EduSc for all study programmes can be found in SAR Annex 29. The disadvantage of this Annex is that it lists only Latvian credit points instead of CP and ECTS (as e.g. in SAR Annex 29_3_PLPSP_plans_Plan_1, SCPrSchT). The content of the 2ndC EduTech corresponds to the state education standard (SAR, Annex 25_7 MSP Compliance with the State Education Standard). According to the students and graduates of the SP, FEPA awards CP according to the actual workload of the students. The mapping of the courses included in the study programme (SAR, Annex 28_7 MSP mapping) proves that the courses ensure the achievement of the learning outcomes of the SP and that the LOs of the courses cover the study programme. In other words, the learning outcomes of the SP and the learning outcomes of the courses are linked (the detailed mapping of learning outcomes can be seen in the Annex 28_7 MSP mapping). According to the 2ndC EduSc students and graduates, theoretical and practical knowledge in all areas of teaching and learning are linked to the educational context as evidenced by the study programme LOs. They found that the SP met their expectations. They also found the research methods very useful, as well as the practical knowledge they acquired during their studies.

The SAR report and its annexes contain extensive information on the compliance of the SP with national educational standards as well as on the topicality and relevance of the study programme content for social needs and the labour market. The range of courses offered is diverse and broad enough to ensure the acquisition of professional competences and LOs. The aim, objectives and expected outcomes of each module are well developed. The course content and tasks are well described, as are the work plan and organisation for each course (SAR - Annex 30 MSP course descriptions). The only exception is the course Izgl5012, which contains only the reading list, which should be improved. The mapping results show that the planned course outcomes lead to the expected outcomes of the study programme (SAR, Appendix 28_7 Mapping). However, some courses

have a (too) large number of LOs (e.g. Izgl5051 - 18; Izgl6002 – 17; Izgl5039 – 14; Izgl5035 – 16; MākZ5A00 – 14; Izgl5043 – 12; SDSK5158 – 11; MākZ5A10 – 11). It is recommended that the courses have an appropriate number of LOs (between 5 and 7 LOs). On the other hand, the course Izgl5028 has too few LOs (4). The description of the course Izgl5012 is missing (it only contains the reading list). The bibliography for each course includes relevant books, publications, journals and other sources, including recent academic publications. However, it seems that some courses have a mandatory reading list with 8 or more sources, which might be problematic for students (Izgl6015 – 10, Izgl6001 – 11, Izgl6003 – 8, Izgl6007 – 9, SDSK5158 – 9). On the other hand, almost all courses also offer a generous list of additional literature for those who wish to study the content in greater depth.

The content of each course is linked to the aim and expected LOs of the study programme, at least for the courses offered in English – namely, the content of some courses is only available in Latvian (Izgl5036 and Izgl5002), which needs to be changed. According to SAR and the students' statements in the expert interviews, students can influence the improvement of the content of individual courses together with the lecturers if this is necessary. The assessment criteria were developed on the basis of the learning outcomes and included in the course descriptions. The LOs of the individual courses are well elaborated, but there is also room for improvement in terms of the number and choice of verbs. There are some examples that show a very good and detailed elaboration of the requirements for awarding credits and the assessment criteria (Izgl6000, Izgl5016).

2.2.2.
The 2ndC EduSc corresponds to the field of study „Education and Pedagogy“. The professional orientation of the teaching staff indicates the interdisciplinary orientation of the SP (experts in the field of pedagogy, psychology, social sciences, technology, mathematics). The staff involved in the SP actively publish in internationally recognised academic journals, conference proceedings, monographs (e.g. 145 publications from 2016 to August 2021, SAR, p. 160), which are cited in Scopus and WoS, and relevant methodological materials are also developed. Academic staff also present their research findings at national and international conferences and conduct research on various types of projects that involve collaboration with domestic and foreign educational institutions and whose topics are relevant and related to the SP. The students of the SP are regularly informed about the latest research results and are actively involved in the research activities, as explained in the SAR (p. 162).

2.2.3.
The methods most frequently used by teachers are lectures and seminars, but pair and group work, independent work, work with texts, brainstorming, discussions, analyses, problem-oriented lectures, work on the preparation of research papers and reflection are also used. Oral, written and combined learning and assessment methods are used in the courses and examinations of the 2nd EduSc. The e-learning environment is well organised (Moodle e-learning, MS Teams platform, various e-tools; using YouTube for instructional videos) and digital tools are used to create methodological materials, test knowledge and provide feedback. Branch students have the opportunity to study remotely, which is particularly important if one does not take into account that almost 99% of all MSP students work simultaneously and in parallel with their studies (SAR, p. 167). Taking into account the statements made in the interviews with 2ndCEduSc students and graduates, the principles of student-centred learning and teaching are taken into account, and students have sufficient study materials available on e-learning platforms for all courses (they are particularly satisfied with the video recordings of lectures). Students are also very satisfied with the interaction with lecturers and with the teaching, which is based on interactivity and practical tasks. Teachers are prepared to adapt learning content and methods to students with different levels of prior knowledge. The

description of students' independent work in the study courses is generally good in terms of organisation, tasks, integration into the e-learning environment and assessment parameters. The organisation of independent work in the study courses is well described and includes different types of student engagement (theoretical and practical), in accordance with the corresponding CP. Students are given instructions on how to organise their independent work in the study courses. Various assessment methods are used in the study process (presentation, essay, test (written detailed answers to questions, tasks), report, research paper, oral exam, written exam, portfolio and various practical tasks (e.g. source analysis, evaluation of a specific text, etc.) and are aimed at promoting students' competences.

According to students and teachers, the methods used encourage active student participation through real-life problem solving, discussions, role-playing, etc. Teaching in relatively small groups helps to personalise the learning process (especially in the UL branches). The integration of theory and practise into the course content is well balanced. In discussions with students, teaching staff and management, the experts were able to ascertain that there is a close connection and cooperation between all those involved in the degree programme. From the discussions with students, it can be concluded that students have a good understanding of the content, learning outcomes and assessments and feel competent enough for their professional activities. Other benefits cited by students were the ability to choose a topic for their dissertation, which they can change if necessary, and the general support from their supervisor during their studies. The LU branch students stated that they can use all available resources, just like the FEPA students in Riga (teaching and learning facilities, study room equipment, possibility to use the university library, e-learning support).

2.2.4.
Two study courses are implemented at the 2ndC EduSc: "Academic Practice in Education Sciences I" (for short and long-form students) and "Academic Practice in Education Sciences II" (for long-form students). The organisation, tasks, aims, assessment and expected learning outcomes of the practical courses are set out in the relevant course descriptions and the 2ndCEduTech internship regulations (SAR, Annex 31 Description of the organisation of students practise). The objectives and tasks of the teaching internship are aligned with the professional knowledge, skills, attitudes and competencies of the study programme and are well described (SAR, p. 167-169). These tasks correspond to the learning outcomes of the internships listed in the study programme descriptions of study courses (SAR, Annex 30 Descriptions of the study courses). The assessment components and criteria are also clear. FEPA has established a good working relationship with the regional education administrations and educational institutions.

The academic internships are carried out in accordance with the internship regulations (SAR, Annex 31) and the organisation of the practice is well described in SAR (p. 168-169). As part of the internship, students have the opportunity to participate in the UL International Scientific Conference as listeners, speakers or contributors in leading or organising sessions. Other opportunities include participation in FEPA scientific and/or academic work, a pilot study on the chosen topic of the Master's thesis and reviewing a qualification or Bachelor's thesis, which are a good way of improving students' academic and research skills. Internship opportunities for foreign students studying in English are not offered to a sufficient extent. SAR states that "good cooperation has been established with all teacher education programmes, including the English language teacher programme, whose work can be evaluated by master's students studying a foreign language" (SAR, p. 169), but more specific information is not provided.

2.2.5. N/A

2.2.6.
At the end of the 2ndC EduSc, students defend a Master's thesis, which accounts for 20 CP (30 ECTS) of the study programme. The topics usually reflect current issues in educational practice and correspond to the study programme, but also to the needs of the market, which is confirmed in the study conducted, e.g. Teachers' digital literacy and its role in implementation of qualitative remote communication; Adolescents' social emotional learning methods in-class lessons, Teacher's use of digital skills in Mathematics lessons in primary School, Supporting teachers for inclusive education of students with autism spectrum disorders (SAR, p. 170). The teaching staff's recommendations for further development in this area relate to better involvement of a wider range of experts in the field to approve the topics, researching the needs of those working in the education sector and the opportunity for employers to suggest current topics for future MSP ES research.

Conclusions on this set of criteria, by specifying strengths and weaknesses

The content of the academic Master's study programme "Educational Sciences" (45142) meets the necessary requirements. Based on the information contained in the self-assessment report and annexes, the courses in the study programme are relevant and up-to-date. Based on the descriptions of the study programmes in SAR Annex 30, they are complementary to each other and meet the professional competency development requirements. FEPA awards CP according to the actual workload of the students. The aim, objectives and planned outcomes of the study programme are achievable and interrelated. The structure of the study programme is clear and meets all the requirements of the academic education standards. The horizontal and vertical alignment of learning outcomes is achieved. The Master's theses are in line with the study programme, have a strong practical orientation and follow current research trends in the field of education.

Strengths:
1) Flexibility of the study programme in terms of possibilities for students to make choices about which courses to plan for the year they join the study programme and the opportunity to study remotely (important for students who work at the same time and in parallel with their studies).
2) Very good cooperation and collegial relationship between students, teaching staff and management in general.
3) Good opportunities for internship and good organization of internships.
4) Well established principles of student-centered education.

Weaknesses:
1) Inadequacies in the definition and number of learning outcomes in some courses.
2) There are a large number of obligatory literature in some courses, which should be reconsidered.
3) More specific information on internships for students studying in English is needed.

Assessment of the requirement [5] (applicable only to master's or doctoral study programmes)

1 R5 - The study programme for obtaining a master's or doctoral degree is based on the achievements and findings of the respective field of science or field of artistic creation.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Evidence in section 5.2 provides a sufficient basis for obtaining a master’s degree in the field of Education Sciences. The SP is in line with current trends in education science since it is aimed at developing competencies such as managing of educational institutions, developing diversity competencies to manage diversity processes, becoming thought leaders in educational

institutions, developing mentoring competence in different educational contexts, assessing and planning behaviour management in the educational environment and counselling. The SP content also corresponds with the requirements of regulatory enactments (Annexes 29, 30, 31).

2.3. Resources and Provision of the Study Programme

Analysis

2.3.1.
Implementation of the study programme takes place in the premises of the faculty, which are adapted for the needs of the study process, providing the study rooms with the necessary IT equipment (SAR, p. 172). Responsibility of management provided by the established Department of Education Sciences and Pedagogical Innovation. Rooms are available according to the needs of the study process. Experts were introduced to faculty infrastructure this year on May 14 and in interviews with students on the 15th of May, they heard positive feedback about the faculty's material-technical facilities during the study process. Material technical support ensures access to the necessary electronic resources. Particularly high students evaluate the logistical system developed by the FEPA, which allows electronic ordering of library resources. Financial resources are provided in general by state budget allocation and tuition fees, annual renewal of technologies is provided in FEPA ICT infrastructure and scientific resource accessibility.

During all RB visits experts were introduced to RB infrastructure and available equipment. There is a need to reevaluate aspects of accessibility of premises in RB (especially Tukums RB). Interviews with RB managers confirmed that needs for development of premises and ICT equipment are increasing and there should be revised sound support of RB maintenance and development of resources.

2.3.2. N/A

2.3.3.
The implementation of the SP takes place according to the available resources (state subsidy and tuition fees), the information confirms that both operational costs and investments are covered, as well as administrative deductions are made. For the 2023 admission, state subsidy for full-time intramural studies was 2300 eur/ EUR 4000 (for non-EU citizens); part-time intramural studies, short-form was 1600 eur (including branches), part-time intramural studies, long-form was EUR 1800 eur. There should be at least 12 students in every branch to open the SP and provide cost-effectiveness. Study costs have been calculated and monitored according to how they are implemented and SP annual income covers expenditure (315998 eur income, 314858 eur expenditure), more evaluation in chapter 1.3. of this report.
The costs of implementation of study programmes have been calculated in detail, the course of the continuation of study process are ensured (SAR, p. 174).

At the same time, certain aspects of financing, in particular regarding the conduct of the study process in the RB, should be improved as interviews with the teaching staff (15 May, 2024) confirmed that the costs related to the mobility of the teaching staff during their working hours are not currently covered.

Conclusions on this set of criteria, by specifying strengths and weaknesses

Taking into account the improvement and development of the study programme, experts have obtained assurance regarding the implementation thereof, especially regarding the improved

content thereof, the necessary resources and accessibility thereof in the study process. The evaluation of the study programme among students confirms its competitiveness for the development of employment of educators and other educational specialists. Implementation of the study programme is equally requested in Riga, as well as in RB and study process ensures equal opportunities for all students.

Strengths:
1) The development and establishment of the study programme in accordance with the current challenges of the sector creates a high demand for the acquisition of the study programme, it provides highly evaluated opportunity for studies also outside the Riga and career development opportunities for employed teachers.

Weaknesses:
1) The accessibility aspects of Tukums RB should be assessed and the necessary improvements should be made if necessary.
2) Existing payment system for teaching staff does not cover the time of travel to RB. That impacts their working conditions, right for fair payment and motivation.

Assessment of the requirement [6]

1 R6 - Compliance of the study provision, science provision (if applicable), informative provision (including library), material and technical provision and financial provision with the conditions for the implementation of the study programme and ensuring the achievement of learning outcomes

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

All requirements are fulfilled.
Funding and resource planning is appropriate for sustainable study process management.
Annual income covers costs. SP implementation provides equal accessibility to resources for students in Riga un RB. UL provide well organised accessibility to library study literature and electronic resources.

2.4. Teaching Staff

Analysis

2.4.1.
According to the SAR (chapter 3.4.1.), in this study programme, there are 44 lecturers from the Department of Education Sciences and Pedagogical Innovation and other departments, 4 lecturers from other faculties of the University, including 11 professors, 9 associate professors, 15 assistant professors, 2 lecturers, and 5 teachers, who meet the requirements. According to the Annex 11 (Teaching Staff’s Curriculum Vitae), most teachers have over 10 years of practical experience in pedagogy. The majority of the teaching staff (39) are scientists with doctoral degrees, which ensures that following the regulatory framework, they can both qualitatively implement the study process and supervise the development of Master's theses. There are about 20 students per one lecturer.

The academic staff are involved in specialised training and projects, such as “Motivated, Modern and Competitive Academic Staff” (60 hours) during the election period. The teaching staff of the study programme have purposefully improved their English language skills: more than 50% of lecturers have received the certificate of C1 level foreign language proficiency. During the reporting period, lecturers (20 people) continued to participate in the professional development courses offered by the UL. More than half of all lecturers in the programme have participated in courses between

autumn 2019 and autumn 2022.

Seven lecturers continue to participate in Erasmus Plus projects, collaborate with foreign colleagues in international research activities, improve competencies, enrich experience and develop communication skills in foreign languages in a multicultural environment. Several lecturers have taken the opportunity to undertake traineeships in educational institutions in line with their professional interests and specific to their field. Eight lecturers have done so, and 2 lecturers have hosted trainees from other higher education institutions in their classes. There is a rule, in UL, which says that educators of higher education and colleges must, by the end of the term of their election, undertake a vocational development programme on innovation in the higher education system, or the higher education didactics, or the management of educational work at 160 academic hours (including at least 60 contact hours). Professional development may include international mobility and participation in conferences and seminars relevant to the purpose of professional development, as evidenced by submitted documents. According to the information, Experts got from the meetings, during the on-site visit, this is an usual practice.

All the aspects, mentioned here, enable the achievement of the aims and learning outcomes of the study programme and the relevant study courses.

2.4.2.
According to the SAR (chapter 3.4.1.), the study programme has recruited new lecturers to ensure the renewal of the teaching staff for the study programme, including lecturers who co-teach courses with colleagues, including courses in English. A mentoring scheme is being developed to support at least one new lecturer per year, as the involvement and proportion of junior academic staff and the proportion of elected academic staff are important. The involvement of young lecturers, young Ph.D.s or Ph.D. candidates contributes to the sustainability of the programme.

Several lecturers have had a positive change in their election status: three have been elected assistant professors, four have been elected associate professors, two have been elected professors, and one has been elected as a professor at the UL (previously at LiepU). One obtained a Ph.D. and was elected as a lecturer. One also obtained a Ph.D. and was elected as an assistant professor. These changes have a positive impact on the quality indicators of teaching.

Changes in the composition of the teaching staff supports the teaching quality: according to the SAR (Tables 3.4.1.1, 3.4.1.2), the high qualification of the teaching staff contributes to the achievement of the study results, which can be verified by the students' evaluations of the courses they have taken - students highly rate (highest possible score - 7) the teaching staff, the content of the courses they teach and the performance of the lecturers themselves.

In general, it can be concluded that during the reporting period, the changes in the qualifications of the teaching staff are positive, the high qualifications of the teaching staff contribute to the achievement of the learning outcomes and the quality of studies at MSP ES, and no non-compliance with the requirements of regulatory enactments was detected.

The staff has recruited new lecturers to ensure the renewal of the teaching staff for the study programme, including lecturers who co-teach courses with colleagues, including courses in English. According to the SAR (chapter 3.4.1), the UL also has developed requirements and selection criteria for attracting foreign academic staff - the aim is to support both internationalisation and interdisciplinarity.

2.4.3.N/A

2.4.4.
According to the Annex 10 of the SAR (information on the academic staff), as most lecturers teach in many curricula, the cooperation is obvious also in publishing: most papers are written by several authors. The average number of publications per person (during 6 years) is 10. The writing activity is different: from 2-4 till 21, 23, and even 40 (during the last 6 years). The fact that many articles were made by several authors, is a sign of good cooperation. Targeted financial support is provided for the scientific activity of lecturers, for example: for publishing in refereed-journals, as was told to the Experts, during the on-site visit.

Most of the publications are in proceedings of international scientific conferences, indexed in the Web of Science or Scopus databases. According to the titles, the themes/subjects of research papers/articles are connected to the curriculum, which is a sign of good commitment:
- Čekse, I., Geske, A., Kiris, K. (2021). The Relationship between Students' Citizenship Activities and Bullying at School. In Human, Technologies and Quality of Education, 2021 = Cilvēks, tehnoloģijas un izglītības kvalitāte, Rīga, University of Latvia, 2021. 1148 :. Ed. L. Daniela. ISBN 978-9934-18-735-3, p. 242-252 https://doi.org/10.22364/htqe.2021.17.
- Anthony, C. J, Elliott, S. N., Yost, M., Lei, P., DiPerna, J. C., Cefai, C., Camilleri, L., Bartolo, P. A., Grazzani, I., Ornaghi, V., Cavioni, V., Conte, E., Tatalovic Vorkapic, S., Poulou, M., Martinsone, B., Simoes, S., Colomeischi, A. (2022). Multi-Informant Validity Evidence for the SSIS SEL Brief Scales across Six European Countries. Frontiers in Psychology, section Quantitative Psychology and Measurement, 13:928189. doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2022.928189.

Some teachers from this curriculum are also authors of study books and monographs:
- Martinsone, B., Stokenberga, I., & Grazzani, I. (2022). Monitoring system of implementation of the Promoting Mental Health at Schools (PROMEHS) program. Front. Psychol. 13:1043001. doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2022.1043001

The publications are available in the libraries - students are pleased with the plurality of materials in this field, as was told to the Experts during the site visit.

2.4.5.
According to the SAR (chapter 3.4.), at the beginning of the academic year in September/October, a seminar is held to update the teaching staff on issues related to the implementation of the programme, e.g. to discuss admission results, discuss necessary changes to the admission rules and criteria, and to analyse the results of the new student surveys. The seminar organised in January usually analyses the results of the first semester, discusses other topical issues, e.g. taking into account students' suggestions, discusses student evaluation procedures and the interconnection between lecturers in courses to implement a common approach.

The cooperation of the teaching staff is active in many ways. For example, the course "Research" is taught by scientists who themselves organise and implement OECD international comparative studies in Latvia. Students have the opportunity to be involved in the data collection and analysis of these studies. And the course "Psychological aspects of human behaviour" is implemented by a lecturer/researcher who, together with the lecturer/researcher of the course "Socio-emotional learning", implements international comparative studies on socio-emotional learning.

As a large part of the courses is taught with the involvement of several lecturers, flexible and effective collaboration is essential. According to the SAR, once some students´ feedback indicated

that collaboration was not yet effective. Accordingly, lecturers discussed this a lot in the meetings and made sure that there was no overlap anymore. Now the high qualification of the teaching staff contributes to the achievement of the study results, which can be verified by the students' evaluations of the courses they have taken - students highly rate (highest possible score - 7) the teaching staff, the content of the courses they teach and the performance of the lecturers themselves. The Experts had the opportunity to discuss the quality with students, during the on-site visit - students were pleased about teaching quality.

For successful and unified implementation of study programmes at the UL, a special study programme for heads of study fields and study programme directors was developed.
Implementation of interdisciplinary cooperation within the specialisation and the whole study programme is significant. The updating of the course content, as well as working on students' Final Papers are taken seriously. For example, in the course "Master's Thesis I", students participate in introductory seminars in which all supervisors are invited to participate, and, accordingly, at the end of the course there is a pre-defence during which several lecturers engage in the discussion on the development of the Master's Thesis, after it has been assessed by the reviewer. Mutual consultation is a typical feature among teaching staff in supervising the Master's thesis at all stages. This kind of everyday-routine supports cooperation between lecturers, too.

Conclusions on this set of criteria, by indicating strengths and weaknesses

The study programme is well developed and organised. Latvian experts in specific fields work in the study programme, too. The lecturer of each course strives for excellence by combining teaching and scientific activities. Such examples can be found in almost every course. For example, the course "Research" is taught by scientists who themselves organise and implement OECD international comparative studies in Latvia. Students have the opportunity to be involved in the data collection and analysis of these studies.

Strengths:
1) Teachers are the experts of the field, highly respected by the students.
2) Students´ wishes are taken into account: for example, once students recommended that the study programme should involve more practitioners, and it happened.
3) Cooperation is strong on many levels: between the staff, and also between teachers-students.
4) A large part of the courses is taught with the involvement of several lecturers, which is a sign of flexibility and good cooperation.
5) Targeted support is provided for the scientific activity of lecturers (for example - financial support for publishing).
6) The study programme has recruited new lecturers to ensure the renewal of the teaching staff.Students highly rate (highest possible score - 7) the teaching staff - all changes in the study programme have had a positive effect on the study quality.

Weaknesses: Not identified

Assessment of the requirement [7]

1 R7 - Compliance of the qualification of the academic staff and visiting professors, visiting associate professors, visiting docents, visiting lecturers and visiting assistants with the conditions for the implementation of the study programme and the requirements set out in the respective regulatory enactments.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

According to the evidence from this chapter, all requirements are fulfilled as the qualifications of the academic staff correspond to the needs of the study programme.

2.5. Assessment of the Compliance

Requirements

1 1 - The study programme complies with the State Academic Education Standard or the Professional Higher Education Standard

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The study programme complies with the Cabinet of Ministers Regulations No. 240 “Regulations on the State Academic Education Standard” as evident by the SAR Annex 25_7.

2 2 - The study programme complies with a valid professional standard or the requirements for the professional qualification (if there is no professional standard required for the relevant occupation) provided if the completion of the study programme leads to a professional qualification (if applicable)

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

3 3 - The descriptions of the study courses and the study materials have been prepared in all languages in which the study programme is implemented, and they comply with the requirements set forth in Section 561 , Paragraph two and Section 562 , Paragraph two of the Law on Higher Education Institutions.

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

The requirements are partially met as evident by the study course descriptions in SAR Annex 30. Two course descriptions are provided only in Latvian, despite the study programme being implemented in English as well.

4 4 - The sample of the diploma to be issued for the acquisition of the study programme complies with the procedure according to which state recognised documents of higher education are issued.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The sample of the diploma includes elements associated with the state-recognised documents of higher education (Cabinet Regulations No 202) as evident from the SAR Annex 22_7.

5 5 - The academic staff of the academic study programme complies with the requirements set forth in Section 55, Paragraph one, Clause 3 of the Law on Higher Education Institutions.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Twenty professors and associate professors altogether, who are elected to academic positions in the institution, take part in the implementation of the compulsory part and the limited elective part of the study programme as evident by the SAR, p. 181, and Annex “27.06.2023 - 30-37_92 - Apliecinājums AL55 Izglītības zinātnes 45142 ENG.edoc”.

6 6 - Academic study programmes provided for less than 250 full-time students may be implemented and less than five professors and associated professors of the higher education institution may be involved in the implementation of the mandatory and limited elective part of these study programmes provided that the relevant opinion of the Council for Higher Education has been received in accordance with Section 55, Paragraph two of the Law on Higher Education Institutions.

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

7 7 - At least five teaching staff members with a doctoral degree are among the academic staff of an academic 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 teaching staff members with a doctoral degree are among the academic staff of a professional doctoral study programme in arts (if applicable).

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

8 8 - The teaching staff members involved in the implementation of the study programme are proficient in the official 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.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The requirement is fully met as evident by the SAR Annex 10 and and by the Head Of Study Field Declaration, Annex “30-37_85_Head of study field declaration_knowledge of the official language_EN.edoc”.

9 9 - The teaching staff members to be involved in the implementation of the study programme have at least B2-level knowledge of a related foreign language, if the study programme or any part thereof is to be implemented in a foreign language (if applicable).

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The requirement is fully met as evident by the SAR Annex 10 and by the Head Of Study Field Declaration, Annex “26.04.2023 - 30-37_84 - Apliecinājums - Angļu valoda B2 - EN.edoc”.

10 10 - The sample of the study agreement complies with the mandatory provisions to be included in the study agreement.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The sample of the study agreement complies with the mandatory provisions (Cabinet Regulations No 70) to be included in the study agreement as evident from the SAR Annex 8.

11 11 - The higher education institution / college has provided confirmation that students will be provided with opportunities to continue their education in another study programme or another higher education institution or college (agreement with another accredited higher education institution or college) if the implementation of the study programme is terminated.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

If the implementation of the Master's study programme Educational Sciences (45142) is discontinued, its students can be enrolled in the UL study programme Technological Innovations and Design for Education (45142). Additionally, Daugavpils University (DU) undertakes to provide students with study opportunities in the corresponding study programmes at the DU in case of discontinuation of the study programme as evident by the SAR Annex 6.

12 12 - The higher education institution / college has provided confirmation that students are guaranteed compensation for losses if the study programme is not accredited or the study programme’s license is revoked due to the actions (actions or omissions) of the higher education institution or college and the student does not wish to continue studies in another study programme.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The requirement is fully met as evident by the SAR Annex “25.03.2024 - 71-61_4 - Rektora apliecinājums par SV “Izglītība un.edoc”.

13 13 - The joint study programmes comply with the requirements prescribed in Section 55.(1), Paragraphs one, two, and seven of the Law on Higher Education Institutions (if applicable)

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

14 14 - Compliance with the requirements specified in other regulatory enactments that apply to the study programme being assessed (if applicable)

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

Assessment of the requirement [8]

1 R8 - Compliance of the study programme with the requirements set forth in the Law on Higher Education Institutions and other regulatory enactments.

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

The compliance of the study programme with the requirements set forth in the Law on Higher Education Institutions and other regulatory enactments are evident through analysis of the requirements and documents attached to the SAR, including statements signed by the Study Field Director, the Rector, approved by the UL Senate, etc. Only minor noncompliance was analysed and it can be fixed promptly (requirement No.3 regarding course descriptions).

General conclusions about the study programme, indicating the most important strengths and weaknesses of the study programme

In general, the study programme fulfils the requirements corresponding to the study field, state regulations and UL's strategy. The study programme can be well implemented in all applied languages (Latvian, English) and implementation options (full-time, part-time, short-option, long-option). It is also implemented in the branches successfully.

The most important strengths identified in the study programme:
1) The study programme content is designed to be modern, high quality and oriented towards the development of highly valued skills in the labor market; the study programme is targeted to support the development of each student.
2) Very good cooperation and collegial relationship between students, teaching staff and management in general.
3) Sufficient opportunities for internship and good organization of internships.
4) Teachers are the experts of the field, highly respected by the students.
5) The study programme has recruited new lecturers to ensure the renewal of the teaching staff.

The most important weaknesses identified in the study programme:
1) More specific information on internships for students studying in English is needed.
2) The accessibility aspects of Tukums RB should be assessed and the necessary improvements should be made if necessary.
3) Existing payment system for teaching staff does not cover the time of travel to RB. That impacts their working conditions, right for fair payment and motivation.
4) Two course descriptions are provided only in Latvian, despite the study programme being implemented in English as well.

Evaluation of the study programme "Educational Sciences"

Evaluation of the study programme:

Excellent

2.6. Recommendations for the Study Programme "Educational Sciences"

Short-term recommendations

To consider the compensation for teachers of the time spent travelling to the many branches of UL.
To revise the study course descriptions regarding definition and number of learning outcomes and compulsory reading list in some study courses.
To ensure all study programme course are available for students both in Latvian and English.
To re-evaluate accessibility aspects of Tukums RB and make necessary improvements.
To provide information on internships for students studying in English.
To reevaluate accessibility aspects of Tukums RB and make necessary improvements.

Long-term recommendations

To create a long-term strategy to reduce or prevent the decline in the number of students in the study programme.

II - "Technological innovations and design for education" ASSESSMENT

II - "Technological innovations and design for education" ASSESSMENT

2.1. Indicators Describing the Study Programme

Analysis

2.1.1.
The relevance of the Academic master study programme “Technological innovations and design for education” (2ndC EduTech) to the field of study is determined and corresponds by the specifics of educational science as a field, which includes study courses with a practical orientation, as well as studies based on research and science. Experts obtained confirmation of this by analysing SAR, for example, to facilitate students' research expertise by integrating the latest results of technological progress, scientific knowledge and innovative ideas in interdisciplinary contexts (SAR, p. 189). According to the SAR students will be able to develop their digital, pedagogical and design competencies, necessary in educational science, by implementing the study courses provided for in the study programme and to develop their ability to develop creative and innovative technological solutions for the educational environment, also, to develop the competence to communicate in a multicultural environment (SAR, p. 189-190).

2.1.2.
Compliance according to Latvian regulatory documents about the study programme title, code and degree of the study programme checked. Experts concluded that 2ndC EduTech the code 45142 complies with the Cabinet Regulation No. 322 of the Cabinet of Ministers, Regulations regarding

Classification of Education of Latvia, which corresponds to the seventh qualification level of the Latvian educational qualification structure.

Also experts concluded that the compliance with the 2ndC EduTech volume and duration, mandatory content, parts of the study programme and their scope, degree to be awarded, basic principles and procedure of assessment, principles of implementation, etc. are regulated by the regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers No. 240 "Regulations on the standard of state academic education. The content of the study programme has been developed based on several documents, such as Article 55 of “The Law on Institutions of Higher Education of the Republic of Latvia. Study programs"; the regulations of the University of Latvia "Regulations of study programmes and continuing education programs of the University of Latvia" and complies with the Cabinet Regulations on the state standard of academic education.

The mapping of learning outcomes of the 2ndC EduTech is confirmed by clearly defined goals, objectives, and outcomes, which are interconnected with the outcomes of individual courses. For example, it is planned that students carry out innovative research in technology-enriched learning, develop innovative learning tools and solutions for organization of the learning process, thus creating a cumulative impact both on the development of innovations in Latvia and its inclusion in the global scientific space. The compliance is ensured (SAR, Annex Mapping of the study courses/ modules for the achievement of the learning outcomes of the study programme).

According to SAR (p.193) from academic year 2022/2023, there are differentiated admission requirements for those applicants who have previous pedagogical education and those without such. Also, additional requirements are set for those who plan to study in English (i.e. English language proficiency at least at B2 level). Experts concluded that the interrelationship, admission requirements and other parameters: goals, objectives, learning outcomes, language of instruction, awarded degree, are interconnected. Experts obtained confirmation of this by analysing SAR, section 3.1.2.
According to the SAR the implementation language is Latvian and English and that is reasonable and justified because it corresponds with the UL 2021-2027 Strategy's direction of internationalization and openness to collaboration.

Experts concluded the 2ndC EduTech fully complies with the following criteria mentioned in the Educational Development Guidelines 2021-2027 and some of them are "Modern" because there current trends in the labor market and society, as well as in research, are taken into account; criteria "qualitative" and there is aimed towards specific goals and outcomes, a comparison with other similar programs has been made and criteria "diverse" there is planned the use of various platforms, diverse virtual reality options, workplace learning during internship (workplace learning) are offered, blended learning is promoted, providing both face-to-face learning in an educational institution and related environments (laboratories, companies, etc.) and remote learning, and online learning. According the SAR other criteria (interdisciplinary, flexible, individualized and differentiated) have been formulated precisely as well (SAR, p. 194. table 3.1.2.1). The above analysis confirms that the study programme corresponds to the current trends and industry needs globally as well as current Latvian policy planning documents for 2021-2027.

2.1.3.
Three important aspects have been analyzed, justified and changed (SAR, p. 144-145). According to the license No. 04047-113 the title of the study programme degree was changed from Master of Social Sciences in Educational Sciences to Master of Educational Sciences. Second, the number of learning outcomes was reduced from 24 to 10, with the systematic re-formulation and wording

clarified in December 2021. And thirdly, admission requirements, different for applicants with prior teaching education and those without such education, were clarified.
Experts concluded that all changes have been made according to the recommendations.

2.1.4.
In Latvia, this is the only Master study programme in education sciences that offers such a wide use of technological innovations both in the study process and in the field of knowledge transfer and research. There are equivalent study programmes in universities in the Baltic States.

The main 2ndC EduTech components are equally balanced - people, technology, and content. According to the SAR the expected functions of a graduate - administrative, technical, pedagogical, scientific research and social mediator function - significantly increase their demand and stable position in the labor market (SAR, p. 193-194).

SAR provides authentication data that the graduates who have obtained such education are in high demand in the labor market in Latvia and Europe. According to the labor market trends analyzed by the State Employment Agency in 2023, the employment level of UL graduates in the field of teacher education and educational sciences is included in the Top 5: for example, in the Social welfare 100%; health 96%; Teacher education and educational sciences 92% (SAR, p. 196. Fig. 3.1.3.1.). These specialists will not only be experts themselves, but will also be able to provide educational and practical support to others, acting as mentors to other colleagues, both coordinating and implementing the introduction of technological and teaching solutions for education.

According to the statistical data on the dynamics of the number of students, an average of 24 candidates applied for studies in the 2ndC EduTech from 2020-2023 and average of five students graduated the the 2ndC EduTech (SAR, p. 198 and Annex Statistics on the students in the reporting period). Changes in the number of students are analyzed and experts concluded that there are several factors: in most cases, they are related to students' health, family and work conditions, and funding opportunities (SAR, p.198). Currently, the group of students studying in English has not been fully completed to a financially justified extent. Several activities from faculty members have been carried out to attract potential students, for example, open doors, study festivals for high school students at L-Universs, previously also at the national-level exhibition “Skola” and other events/activities.

2.1.5. N/A

Conclusions on this set of criteria, by specifying strengths and weaknesses

After analyzing all criteria, experts conclude that the interrelation of all elements - the title, code and degree of the study programme, aims, objectives, learning outcomes, and admission requirements - is strong. This is the result of the awareness of their importance (content-wise, legal-wise, marketing-wise) to the HEI, UL, SP, SF EDU and LOs management.

Strengths:
1) 2ndC EduTech corresponds to the current trends and industry needs globally as well as current Latvian policy planning documents for 2021-2027. 2ndC EduTech corresponds to the global goals and promotes the development of a smart society.
2) In the 2ndC EduTech all changes have been made according to the recommendations.
2ndC EduTech is unique and there are no equivalent study programmes in Latvia.

Weaknesses: Not identified

2.2. The Content of Studies and Implementation Thereof

Analysis

2.2.1.

The academic Master study programme “Technological Innovation and Design for Education” (2ndC EduTech) is a full-time study programme lasting 2 full years and consists of Part A (44 CP/ 66 ECTS) Part B (32 CP/ 48 ECTS) and Part C (4 CP/ 6 ECTS). The aims for the implementation of the SP and the intended learning outcomes are to equip students with the knowledge, skills and competences necessary to promote their academic growth through learning and the creation of new pedagogical and design solutions for a technology-enriched learning process in educational organisations and in the provision of educational services. The title of the study programme and the content of the study courses correspond to the standard title and qualification requirements of the teaching profession, as well as the objectives of the SP. The SP is also conducted in English, but so far no group of students studying in English has graduated. The MSP plan for full-time intramural studies in Latvian and English can be found in SAR Annex 29_8 (MSP TIDI Plan). The disadvantage of this Annex is that it lists only Latvian credit points instead of CP and ECTS (as e.g. in SAR Annex 29_3_PLPSP_plans_Plan_1, SCPrSchT). The content of the 2ndC EduTech corresponds to the academic education standard (SAR, Annex 25_8 Compliance with the State Education Standard). According to students and graduates of the SP,

FEPA awards CP according to the actual workload of the students. The mapping of the courses included in the study programme provides evidence that the courses ensure the achievement of the programme's learning outcomes and that the LOs of the courses cover the study programme's LOs (the detailed mapping of LOs is provided in the Annex 28_8 MSP TIDImapping). The 2ndC EduTech concept envisages that students not only acquire the theoretical and practical knowledge in the organisation of a technology-enriched learning process and the pedagogical, educational and psychological aspects of developing technological solutions (SAR, p. 201). According to the statements of students during on-site visit, they have an opportunity to apply and test the acquired competences in practise (mostly during the teaching practice, but also internship). According to 2ndC EduTech students and graduates, theoretical technology knowledge is linked to the educational context in all segments of teaching and learning, as evidenced by the programme's LOs. They found that the SP met their expectations and they believe that they are able to implement technology-enhanced learning process solutions (using e-platforms; robotics; programming; 3D teaching/learning tool prototyping) in schools. They also found the research methods very useful, as did the practical knowledge they gained during their studies.

The SAR report and its annexes contain extensive information on the study programme’s compliance with national education standards as well as on the topicality and relevance of the study programme content for social needs and the labour market which can be seen in integrating the recent knowledge in technology and educational sciences in interdisciplinary context; students can gain the knowledge and skills in working with virtual and augmented reality, artificial intelligence and using those for sustainable development in the society transformed by technology in courses such as Cyberpsychology and its Cognitive Aspects, Transformations of Pedagogical Communication in the Digital Culture, Sustainable Education and Adaptive Learning. The range of courses offered is diverse and broad enough to ensure the acquisition of professional competences and LOs. The content of the courses is relevant, well linked and in line with the objectives and tasks of the study programme (Annex, 29_8 MSP TIDI study plan). The goal, objectives and expected outcomes of each module and study courses are well developed (e.g. the SP goal to promote students’ academic

growth through learning and creating new pedagogical and design solutions for a technology enriched learning process in educational organizations and providers of educational services is connected with LOs of study courses such as: to understand the specific nature of teaching in a technology-rich environment; be able to apply the principles of SMART pedagogy to planning and organising a technology-rich learning process; to understand a research methodology and methods in education). The course content and assignments are well described, as are the work plan and organisation for each course (SAR, Annex 30 Study course descriptions). In order to integrate students into the international research environment, SAR (p. 201) states that the total of 8 CP (12 ECTS) are taught in English, although it is not specified within which courses.

The content of each course is related to the goal and expected LOs of the study programme. The assessment criteria were developed based on the learning outcomes and included in the course descriptions. As mentioned in the previous chapter 2.2.1., the LOs of each course are well elaborated, but there is also room for improvement in terms of the number and choice of verbs. There are some examples that show a very good and detailed elaboration of the requirements for awarding CP and the assessment criteria (Izgl5013, Valo5600, DatZ5172, Izgl5016).

2.2.2.
The 2ndC EduTech corresponds to the field of study „Education and Pedagogy“. It consists of 16 teaching staff with doctorates, whose professional orientation points to the interdisciplinary (and entrepreneurial) focus of the SP. Their expertise unifies knowledge and skills in educational sciences and other specific fields such as management, psychology, economics, art, philology, chemistry, geography. There is a continuous cooperation of teaching staff within the framework of various international projects with universities in Europe, Asia, USA, and Canada, mostly through Erasmus+ projects (e.g. “Innovative educational ROBOtics strategies for PrImary SChool ExperienceS (RoboPisces)”, “Motivating secondary school students towards STEM careers through robotic artifact making (RoboScientists)”, “eMedia: MEdia literacy and digital citizenship for all”), which testifies to the effort to maintain high educational standards in the relevant field of science.

2.2.3.
The methods most frequently used by teachers are lectures and seminars, but pair work, group work, independent work, discussions, problem-oriented lectures, work on the preparation of research papers and reflection are also used. Oral, written and combined learning and assessment methods are used in 2ndC EduTech courses and examinations. The detailed principles of student-centred education in MSP are listed in the SAR (p. 204). The e-learning environment is well organised (Moodle, MS Teams, various e-tools) and digital tools are used to create methodological materials, test knowledge and provide feedback. Taking into account the statements made in interviews with students and graduates of the 2ndC EduTech, the principles of student-centred learning and teaching are taken into account, and students have sufficient study materials available on e-learning platforms for all courses (they are especially satisfied with video recordings of lectures). Students are also very satisfied with the interaction with teachers. Teachers are also willing to adapt learning content and methods to students with different levels of prior knowledge (certain aspects of the course content are explained to students individually in consultations; tests include tasks of various levels of difficulty). The description of students’ independent work in the study courses is generally good in terms of organisation, tasks, integration into the e-learning environment and evaluation parameters. The organisation of independent work in the study courses is well described and includes different types of student engagement (theoretical and practical), in accordance with the corresponding CP . Students receive instructions on how to organize their independent work in the study courses.

According to students and teachers, the methods used encourage active student participation through solving real-life problems, discussions, modelling learning situations, etc. Teaching in relatively small groups helps to personalise the learning process. In discussions with students, teaching staff and management, the experts were able to ascertain that there is a close connection and cooperation between all those involved in the study programme. From the discussions with students, it can be concluded that students have a good understanding of the content, learning outcomes and assessments received and feel competent enough for their professional activities. Other benefits cited by students were the ability to choose a topic for their dissertation, which they can change if necessary, and the general support from their supervisor during their studies.

2.2.4.
The 2ndC EduTech curriculum provides for two combined practical courses. The first "Practice" course (2CP/3ECTS) is scheduled for the 2nd semester. The second practical course is planned as a "Creative project for prototyping teaching and learning materials" (4CP/6ECTS) in the 3rd semester. The objectives, tasks and expected learning outcomes of the practical courses focus on raising students' awareness of the learning process and the possibilities of using digital learning tools or learning technology tools to organise the learning process; developing the ability to use a digital learning tool or a learning technical tool in the pedagogical process; developing the ability to analyse systematically what is seen in practice and to synthesise the acquired knowledge with the knowledge acquired in other courses of the study programme. They are set to improve the practical work competence of the Master's students by familiarising them with the implementation of a technology-enriched learning process in educational institutions and companies developing digital learning tools. The objectives and tasks of the teaching internship mentioned above are aligned with the professional knowledge, skills, attitudes and competencies of the study programme and are well described (SAR, pp. 213-217). These tasks correspond to the learning outcomes of the internships listed in the descriptions of study courses (e.g. they focus on applying the principles of SMART pedagogy to planning and organising a technology-rich learning process; analysing the opportunities and challenges of the technology-rich learning process and seek solutions to mitigate these challenges; understanding a research methodology and methods in education (SAR, Annex 30_MSP_TIDI_Study_courses_descriptions)). The assessment components and criteria are also clear. FEPA has established a good working relationship with the regional education administrations and educational institutions. Students who choose to study in English are offered work placements in international and Latvian companies. According to the management and students, this practice ensures a good combination and connection between the pedagogical perspective of a technology-enriched learning process and the perspective of developing digital teaching and learning tools, and experts agree with their opinions.

2.2.5. Not applicable.

2.2.6.
At the end of the 2ndC EduTech, students defend a Master's thesis, which accounts for 20 CP (30 ECTS) of the study programme. The SAR states that students are encouraged and guided to choose their research topic in accordance with the development trends of industry, the labour market and science; the choice of the topic of the Master's thesis is related to the students' jobs in the educational institutions as well as to the fields in which the students work or intend to work (SAR, p. 218). This statement is confirmed by the Master's thesis topics listed on SAR pages 218-220, which have relevant content and are aimed at innovation at different levels of the Latvian education system. Some e.g. of thesis topic: Professional development programme for educators mastering game-based learning and game-playing methodology; Using Augmented Reality technologies to achieve learning objectives in interior design in secondary school; Development and testing

methodological materials for educational robotics to implement improved curriculum and approach in basic school; Effects of digital storytelling on children's understanding of STEAM concepts and skills.

Conclusions on this set of criteria, by specifying strengths and weaknesses

The content of the academic Master study programme "Technological Innovation and Design for Education" (45142) meets the necessary requirements. Based on the information contained in the self-assessment report and annexes, the courses in the study programme are relevant and up-to-date. Based on the descriptions of the study programme, they are complementary to each other and meet the professional competency development requirements. FEPA awards CP according to the actual workload of the students. The aim, objectives and planned outcomes of the study programme are achievable and interrelated. The structure of the study programme is clear and meets all the requirements of the academic education standards. The horizontal and vertical alignment of learning outcomes is achieved. The Master's theses are in line with the study programme, have a strong practical orientation and follow current research trends in the field of education.

Strengths:
1) Correspondence of the 2ndC EduTech to the needs of the industry, the labor market and scientific trends.
2) Implementation of innovative solutions and latest trends in educational technology such as using e-platforms, robotics, programming, 3D teaching/learning tool prototyping in the 2ndC EduTech.
3) Very good cooperation and collegial relationship between students, teaching staff and management in general.
4) Good opportunities for and good organization of internships.
5) Good established principles of student-centered education.

Weaknesses: Not identified

Assessment of the requirement [5] (applicable only to master's or doctoral study programmes)

1 R5 - The study programme for obtaining a master's or doctoral degree is based on the achievements and findings of the respective field of science or field of artistic creation.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The SP is based on promoting students’ academic growth through learning and creating new pedagogical and design solutions for a technology enriched learning process in educational organizations and providers of educational services. It also corresponds with the requirements of regulatory enactments (Annexes 25_8, 29_8, 31). In general, evidence in section 2.2 provides a sufficient basis for obtaining a master’s degree in the field of Education Sciences.

2.3. Resources and Provision of the Study Programme

Analysis

2.3.1.
Implementation of the study programme takes place in the premises of the faculty, which is adapted for the needs of the study process, providing the study rooms with the necessary equipment (SAR, p. 221). Responsibility of management is provided by the established Department of Education Sciences and Pedagogical Innovation. Rooms are available according to the needs of the study process. The premises are maintained, it is foreseen that FEPA will move to University Campus and

integrate in common infrastructure also giving opportunity for integrated use of technologies of all UL and higher technological capacities. Experts were introduced to faculty infrastructure this year on May 14 and in interviews with students on the 15th of May, they heard positive feedback about the faculty's material-technical facilities during the study process. FEPA library services are highly evaluated among students - library provides wide scope of electronic resources and opportunity to order necessary study literature.

State-of-the-art technology laboratories are located on faculty premises (virtual reality laboratory and 3D printing laboratory), which are important resources for achieving the objectives of the study programme and offer opportunities to specialise in digital learning materials and technologies in conditions appropriate to employment. Developed digital learning materials have been used in FEPA projects, distributed to the public and there has been cooperation with some of the publishers of digital learning content.

In part, the development of the study programme takes place in line with the involvement of THE FEPA management and the cooperation projects implemented. Given the technological complexity of the study programme, it is necessary to develop in a targeted manner the development of non-direct resources under this study programme with stable and predictable UL funding, reducing its vulnerability from unstable sources of financing.

2.3.2. N/A

2.3.3.
The implementation of the SP takes place according to the available resources (state subsidy and tuition fees), the information confirms that both operational costs and investments are covered, as well as administrative deductions are made. State budget subsidy in 2022/2023 academic year was 2689.7 EUR for full-time studies; tuition fees was 2300 EUR per year (Full-time, in Latvian) and 2500 EUR (Full-time, in English).

The minimum number of students (29 state budget subsidy or 37 tuition fee) is calculated and monitored in the establishment of the SP, the number of reflectants and enrolments is higher than the minimum. Study costs have been calculated and monitored according to how they are implemented, and SP annual income covers expenditure (159 021 eur income, 157 765 eur expenditure), more evaluation in chapter1.3. of this report. The costs of implementation of study programmes have been calculated in detail, the course of the continuation of the study process is ensured (SAR, p. 174).

Conclusions on this set of criteria, by specifying strengths and weaknesses

The study programme created within the framework of SF ensures education technologies specialisation created for modern labour market demand. As well as providing the necessary resources to learn the study programme, FEPA continues its development in line with technological developments.

Strengths:
1) Collaboration with employers and international partners provides updated study content in accordance with technological development and provides specialisation opportunities in the labour market.

Weaknesses:

1) Innovation implementation is widely planned and provided by external funding sources (projects) without guaranteed development budget from UL. UL planned funding for development of infrastructure is critical to provide FEPA capacity in education innovation sustainable development.

Assessment of the requirement [6]

1 R6 - Compliance of the study provision, science provision (if applicable), informative provision (including library), material and technical provision and financial provision with the conditions for the implementation of the study programme and ensuring the achievement of learning outcomes

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

All requirements are fulfilled.
Funding and resource planning is appropriate for sustainable study process management.
Annual income covers costs. UL provides well organised accessibility to library recourses and electronic resources.

2.4. Teaching Staff

Analysis

2.4.1.
According to the SAR (chapter 3.4.1.), the academic staff of MSP meets the requirements, set forth in the third paragraph of Article 55, Part 1 of the Law on Higher education institutions. There are 22 teachers in this study programme: 5 professors, 2 associate professors, 8 assistant professors, 4 lecturers, 2 external lecturers and 1 researcher (Dr.) are involved in the implementation of the study programme, including 16 lecturers with a doctorate degree (6 in pedagogy, 3 in educational sciences, 1 in educational management, 1 in psychology, 1 in art, 1 in economics and business, 1 in philology, 1 in chemistry and 1 in geography).
There are 24.42 students per one teacher.

According to the SAR, three members of the teaching staff improved their professional competence during internships at gymnasiums. Students especially value practical advice, which can be used in educational institutions: so, students are happy about the teaching quality, as was told to the Experts, during the on-site visit.
Also from the SAR this information can be found: analysing professional qualities of the teaching staff in the autumn and spring semester in academic year 2020/2021, students identified the following strengths - competent, professional experts in their field, responsive, nice, knows how to interest, encourages discussion, respects class times, communicates well with the audience, clearly defines the requirements for assessment, high quality and meaningfully organises the distance learning process, provides support, uses an individualised and differentiated approach.

The teaching staff improved their English language skills through the continuous education programme of the Centre for Applied Linguistics of the UL Faculty of Humanities. The level of English language knowledge of all teaching staff involved in the implementation of the curriculum corresponds to at least B2 level and this allows them to teach their courses in English. Also several members of the teaching staff have been on mobility (remote or on-site) in various foreign universities.

The director of the study programme regularly holds discussions with teaching staff, monitors the situation, and recommends improvements. The increase in the scientific capacity of the teaching staff is also related to the way they share their expertise with students, involving students in

research-based activities.

All those aspects enable the achievement of the aims and learning outcomes of the study programme and the relevant study courses.

2.4.2.
According to the SAR (chapter 3.4.2.), two new lecturers with a PhD degree have joined the study programme, three lecturers no longer wanted to teach (but only engage in research) and stopped teaching. Seven courses are taught by new faculty members as second teachers. In the reporting period, one associate professor was elected a professor, one assistant professor - as an associate professor. One teacher (lecturer's position) obtained a PhD degree in the summer of 2020, defending the doctoral thesis and was elected as a researcher; another teacher (associate professor) earned a doctor's degree.

Some teachers have already been elected as lecturers, while some are UL research assistants or lecturers with a Master's degree: 2 in educational sciences, 2 in pedagogy, 1 in art and 1 in law, and some of them are pursuing a doctoral degree. Such a plan is designed purposefully both to ensure scientific quality of the Master's study programme and to attract new lecturers, ensuring the transfer of knowledge and experience. According to the students´ opinion - this process has been successful - as was told, they are pleased with the quality of teaching.

In 2022/2023, the number of the teaching staff decreased by 3, the number of lecturers with a Ph.D. degree has not changed. According to the SAR (chapter 3.4.2.), it was mentioned that professors from abroad are involved in the context of the projects: students had the opportunity to deepen their knowledge of English by communicating with a native English speaker. But as projects are temporary, study in English is not permanent.

Most teachers have pedagogical work-experience over 10 years. According to SAR Annex 18 (statistics on the outgoing and incoming mobility), there has been both incoming and outgoing mobility in this programme.

All those aspects, mentioned here, support the quality of the implementation of the study programme and the compliance of the study programme with the requirements specified in regulatory enactments.

2.4.3. N/A

2.4.4.
According to the SAR (chapter 3.4.1.), in the period from 2019 until 2022, the number of publications by the teaching staff indexed in Web of Science and Scopus increased by 149 (WoS – 73 publications; Scopus – 76 publications). It makes about 7 articles per person, per last 6 years. The activity of publishing is different, of course: some lecturers published 4-5 papers, but some 18; 40, or even 61.

Almost all teachers are teaching in several curricula, and many articles were made by several authors, which is a sign of strong cooperation, and also flexibility. According to the headlines, the themes/subjects of research papers/articles are connected to the curriculum, which is a sign of good commitment. Some examples:

Odina, I., Mikelsone, I., Grigule, L. (2021). Factors Determining the Choice of the Teacher’s Career

Among the Applicants of Pre-service Teacher Education Programmes.// In: Psychology and Education. Scopus Special Issue Papers. ISSN: 0033-3077.
Stavicka, A., Odina, I.(2021). Subjective Well-Being of International Students in the Specific Context of Pandemic (COVID-19).// In: Psychology and Education. Scopus Special Issue Papers. ISSN: 0033-3077.

The publications are available in the libraries - students are pleased with the plurality of materials in this field, as was told to the Experts, during the on-site visit.

2.4.5.
According to the SAR (chapter 3.4.5.), there is good cooperation between the lecturers of different courses. Within the framework of several courses, there is collaboration with invited experts - industry specialists, foreign visiting lecturers. Two lecturers involved in the realisation of nine study courses, cooperate with each other. For example, the "Sustainable education and adaptive learning" and "Information architecture and infographics" courses are team-taught by two lecturers.

There is also cooperation between the lecturers of different courses. For example, students positively evaluate the cooperation between the lecturers of the study courses "Academic English" and "Virtual and augmented reality technologies in education". For e.g.:
- it is nice to see that the lecturers communicate with each other as it is seen in English where assignments are related to virtual reality works;
- there are courses where assignments are combined, for example, in academic English and virtual reality (SAR, p. 230).

Within the framework of the "SMART pedagogy" course, two foreign visiting lecturers from the University of Mannheim and Frederick University worked with students alongside the course lecturer. In the spring semester of academic year 2021/22, a Fulbright scholar from Kenyon College assisted in teaching the "Academic English" course.

Other examples of cooperation include joint work of lecturers in research projects, organisation of international conferences, preparation of joint scientific reports and publications, which give the opportunity to improve the content of study courses, based on the latest research in the field. Seven courses are taught by new faculty members as second teachers, as was told already.

It all ensures the achievement of the aims of the study programme and the interconnection of study courses within the study programme.

Conclusions on this set of criteria, by indicating strengths and weaknesses

The teaching quality is important: the head of the study programme monitors the situation permanently. Also the spirit of cooperation is valued: as almost all teachers are teaching in several curricula, and many articles were made by more than one authors, this is a sign of strong cooperation, and also flexibility.

Strengths:
1) The director of the study programme regularly holds discussions with teaching staff, monitors the situation, and recommends improvements.
2) Seven courses are taught by new faculty members as second teachers.
3) Analysing professional qualities, students identified many strengths.

Weaknesses: Not identified.

Assessment of the requirement [7]

1 R7 - Compliance of the qualification of the academic staff and visiting professors, visiting associate professors, visiting docents, visiting lecturers and visiting assistants with the conditions for the implementation of the study programme and the requirements set out in the respective regulatory enactments.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Evidence from chapter 2.2. supports the conclusion that all requirements are fulfilled as the qualifications of the academic staff correspond to the needs of the study programme.

2.5. Assessment of the Compliance

Requirements

1 1 - The study programme complies with the State Academic Education Standard or the Professional Higher Education Standard

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Compliance of the study programme with the Cabinet of Ministers Regulations of 13 May 2014 No. 240 "Regulations on the State Standard of Academic Education" is evident by the SAR Annex 25_8.

2 2 - The study programme complies with a valid professional standard or the requirements for the professional qualification (if there is no professional standard required for the relevant occupation) provided if the completion of the study programme leads to a professional qualification (if applicable)

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

3 3 - The descriptions of the study courses and the study materials have been prepared in all languages in which the study programme is implemented, and they comply with the requirements set forth in Section 561 , Paragraph two and Section 562 , Paragraph two of the Law on Higher Education Institutions.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The requirements are fully met, as evident by the study course descriptions, SAR Annex 30.

4 4 - The sample of the diploma to be issued for the acquisition of the study programme complies with the procedure according to which state recognised documents of higher education are issued.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The sample of the diploma includes elements associated with the state-recognised documents of higher education (Cabinet Regulations No 202) as evident from the SAR Annex 22_8.

5 5 - The academic staff of the academic study programme complies with the requirements set forth in Section 55, Paragraph one, Clause 3 of the Law on Higher Education Institutions.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Seven professors and associate professors altogether, who are elected to academic positions in the institution, take part in the implementation of the compulsory part and the limited elective

part of the study programme as evident by the SAR, p. 229, Annex “27.06.2023 - 30-37_90 - Apliecinājums AL55 TIDI ENG.edoc”.

6 6 - Academic study programmes provided for less than 250 full-time students may be implemented and less than five professors and associated professors of the higher education institution may be involved in the implementation of the mandatory and limited elective part of these study programmes provided that the relevant opinion of the Council for Higher Education has been received in accordance with Section 55, Paragraph two of the Law on Higher Education Institutions.

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

7 7 - At least five teaching staff members with a doctoral degree are among the academic staff of an academic 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 teaching staff members with a doctoral degree are among the academic staff of a professional doctoral study programme in arts (if applicable).

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

8 8 - The teaching staff members involved in the implementation of the study programme are proficient in the official 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.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The requirement is fully met as evident by the SAR Annex 10 and and by the Head Of Study Field Declaration, Annex “30-37_85_Head of study field declaration_knowledge of the official language_EN.edoc”.

9 9 - The teaching staff members to be involved in the implementation of the study programme have at least B2-level knowledge of a related foreign language, if the study programme or any part thereof is to be implemented in a foreign language (if applicable).

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The requirement is fully met as evident by the SAR Annex 10 and by the Head Of Study Field Declaration, Annex “26.04.2023 - 30-37_84 - Apliecinājums - Angļu valoda B2 - EN.edoc”.

10 10 - The sample of the study agreement complies with the mandatory provisions to be included in the study agreement.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The sample of the study agreement complies with the mandatory provisions (Cabinet Regulations No 70) to be included in the study agreement as evident from the SAR Annex 8.

11 11 - The higher education institution / college has provided confirmation that students will be provided with opportunities to continue their education in another study programme or another higher education institution or college (agreement with another accredited higher education institution or college) if the implementation of the study programme is terminated.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

In case of discontinuation of the study programme Technological Innovations and Design for Education (45142), the UL undertakes to provide students with opportunities to continue studies in the study programme Educational Sciences (45142). Additionally, Daugavpils University (DU) undertakes to provide students with study opportunities in the corresponding study programmes

at the DU in case of discontinuation of the study programme as evident by the SAR Annex 6.

12 12 - The higher education institution / college has provided confirmation that students are guaranteed compensation for losses if the study programme is not accredited or the study programme's license is revoked due to the actions (actions or omissions) of the higher education institution or college and the student does not wish to continue studies in another study programme.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The requirement is fully met as evident by the SAR Annex "25.03.2024 - 71-61_4 - Rektora apliecinājums par SV "Izglītība un.edoc".

13 13 - The joint study programmes comply with the requirements prescribed in Section 55.(1), Paragraphs one, two, and seven of the Law on Higher Education Institutions (if applicable)

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

14 14 - Compliance with the requirements specified in other regulatory enactments that apply to the study programme being assessed (if applicable)

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

Assessment of the requirement [8]

1 R8 - Compliance of the study programme with the requirements set forth in the Law on Higher Education Institutions and other regulatory enactments.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The compliance of the study programme with the requirements set forth in the Law on Higher Education Institutions and other regulatory enactments are evident through analysis of the requirements and documents attached to the SAR, including statements signed by the Study Field Director, the Rector, approved by the UL Senate, etc.

General conclusions about the study programme, indicating the most important strengths and weaknesses of the study programme

In general, the study programme fulfils the requirements corresponding to the study field, state regulations and UL's strategy. The study programme can be well implemented in all applied languages (Latvian, English) and implementation options (currently, only full-time). It could also be implemented in the branches, if UL decided to open study groups there.

The most important strengths identified in the study programme:
1) 2ndC EduTech corresponds to the current trends and industry needs globally as well as current Latvian policy planning documents for 2021-2027 and there are equivalent study programs in universities in the Baltic States. The programme promotes the development of a smart society.
2) Very good cooperation and collegial relationship between students, teaching staff and management in general.
3) Collaboration with employers and international partners provides updated study content in accordance with technological development and provides specialisation opportunities in the labour market.
4) The quality-control is strong: during the first two years of study, students had monthly reports on the work of teaching staff. The director of the study programme regularly holds discussions with teaching staff, monitors the situation, and recommends improvements.
5) There are about 7 scientific publications in highly recognized journals per person, during the last 6

years.

The most important weakness identified in the study programme:
1) Innovation implementation is widely planned and provided by external funding sources (projects) without guaranteed development budget from UL. UL planned funding for development of infrastructure is critical to provide FEPA capacity in education innovation sustainable development.

Evaluation of the study programme "Technological innovations and design for education"

Evaluation of the study programme:

Excellent

2.6. Recommendations for the Study Programme "Technological innovations and design for education"

Short-term recommendations

To invite more teachers from abroad - for example, through the Erasmus programme.

Long-term recommendations

To develop and implement an investment programme for technology and infrastructure modernisation for SP needs with allocated annual funding and decreasing dependance of SP on external project funding.
To increase networking with other universities for technological innovations and design, as for it is essential to have an international background.

II - "Teacher" ASSESSMENT

II - "Teacher" ASSESSMENT

2.1. Indicators Describing the Study Programme

Analysis

2.1.1.
The aim of the first cycle professional higher education study programme SP "Teacher" (1stCprof Teacher) is to provide students (with a Bachelor's or Master's degree in a field of science (or equivalent field in higher education) other than pedagogy, which is relevant to the field of study being studied) to develop the competences necessary for pedagogical work and acquire a teaching qualification in accordance with the professional standard “Teacher” (SAR, p. 281).

The aim of the SF "Education and Pedagogy" focuses on providing excellence and internationalisation-oriented, interdisciplinary studies and research, emphasising research quality, student-centred education, societal contribution, talent development, sustainable governance, and a respectful organisational culture. It targets enhancing research visibility, fostering professional and transversal competencies, and ensuring an innovative and inclusive academic environment. In contrast, the SP aim is more specific, targeting individuals with degrees in non-pedagogical fields, providing them with the competencies required for teaching and obtaining a teacher qualification according to the professional standard. This aim is focused on preparing graduates for professional pedagogical activities across various educational levels and disciplines. While the study field aim

encompasses broad strategic goals for advancing education and pedagogy, the study programme aim is narrowly focused on teacher qualification and practical teaching competencies.

2.1.2.
The title of the SP, the professional qualification, as well as the compliance of the study programme parameters with the achievement of the outcomes of the specified study programme are regulated by external regulations, i.e. Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No. 305 of June 13 2023, "Regulations on the State Standard of Professional Higher Education", CM Regulations No. 322 (13.06.2017) on Latvian Classification of Education and the Teacher Professional Standard (agreed in the Tripartite Sub-Council for Vocational Education and Employment 12.06.2020). The title of the SP and the professional qualification correspond to the title and qualification requirements of the Teacher's Standard (SAR, p.282). The study programme's code corresponds with the Latvian Classification of Education (CM Regulations No. 322), fitting within the sixth qualification level of the Latvian education qualification structure for teacher education study programmes.

The SP is structured according to CM Regulations No. 305 (June 13, 2023), which detail the requirements for professional higher education. This regulation governs the scope, duration, and content of the study programme, ensuring that all elements, including professional qualifications, evaluation principles, and practice implementation, are systematically regulated.

SP entry requirements demand evaluation of educational suitability, including knowledge and motivation as well as role-play tasks. SP is highly appreciated by students especially due to the work-based learning approach and combination of practice. SP duration provides effective gain of qualification in one year with induction year as opportunity expanding potential of teachers labour market and providing immediate response for crucial needs of education institutions.

2.1.3. N/A

2.1.4.
The study programme ensures the entry of highly qualified specialists into the education system, which contributes to the implementation of the competence approach to learning, as employers receive employees - teachers who have acquired the skills and knowledge necessary for their professional activity through work-based studies. Based on interviews with students, most of them have previous education and at least 10 years experience in other industries that provide added value as experts of the subject area (translators, entrepreneurs, engineers). Although all the students are highly-motivated for the study process, they reflect on the overloaded study and work process in this SP that sometimes lead to professional burnout already in the first year of studies. Work-based studies have been welcomed by employers in recent years (since 2016) and are supported and promoted at national policy level, facilitating also the involvement of interested businesses (SAR, p. 284).

The study programme provides at least 75 - 100 specialists for teachers vacancies annually (SAR, p. 286). Teachers are involved in all subjects as well as in extracurricular activities. All students are employed in schools during study period (mandatory requirement). The average number of graduates varies around 120 persons per year.

2.1.5. N/A

Conclusions on this set of criteria, by specifying strengths and weaknesses

The implementation of the study programme is highly appreciated among students (interviews with students on 15 May 2024), providing a tether of high-skilled specialists in the education department, basing pedagogical learning on work-based learning approach.

Strengths:
1) Content-intensive development of SP, in line with labour market needs, by providing a new approach to tackling employment problems and entering sectoral knowledge into education, including by attracting specialists.

Weaknesses:
1) The mode of implementation of the SP maximises the student's ability to connect full-time work with extensive studies, thus creating an overload in the study process that affects students' readiness and willingness to continue their studies.

2.2. The Content of Studies and Implementation Thereof

Analysis

2.2.1.
The SAR (chapter 3.2.1) and corresponding Annex 28 (SP mapping) describe relation of the content to the study courses in a way of mapping LOs and objectives of the study courses and the objectives and LOs of the SP 1stCprof Teacher.

Descriptions provide information that all study courses ensure that students acquire: a) knowledge: understand the key concepts and regularities of the field of educational sciences in the contexts of a teacher's professional activity; theoretically justify the principles of planning, implementation and evaluation of the teaching/learning process; understand the content and teaching methodology of the education field relevant to their qualification; b) develop skills: to plan an inclusive teaching/learning process in accordance with the learners' developmental needs and learning outcomes; to implement a teaching/learning process that is appropriate to the learning outcomes, the individual developmental needs of the learner and relevant to life situations; to assess the learning performance and growth of the learner; c) acquire competence: using various sources of information, to obtain, select and critically analyse information about the pedagogical process, own professional activity and learners' performance and growth, as well as to make decisions, to find creative solutions in changing or uncertain situations and to assess reasonably, to plan and develop one's own professional competence and cooperation with other teachers, observing professional ethical requirements, in order to improve purposefully pedagogical practice in the educational institution.
The closest link to the learning outcomes of the course was with the learning outcome of the programme relating to students' competences, "Plans an inclusive teaching/learning process according to learners' developmental needs and learning outcomes". The second closest link is to the LO of the programme "Theoretically justifies the principles of planning, implementation and evaluation of the learning process". The third closest link is "Implements a teaching/learning process that is relevant to the learning outcomes, the learner's individual development needs and life situations", which directly relates to the students' knowledge and skills that form the basis of the teacher's professional field of activity. In contrast, the LO of the SP "Reasonably assesses, plans and develops own professional competence and cooperation with other teachers, in accordance with professional ethics, in order to improve teaching practice in an educational institution in a purposeful way" (competence) is not as closely linked to the learning outcomes of the courses. It is because this competence develops over time in the course of working in an educational institution.

The SAR (Annex Course descriptions_EN.docx) and the meeting with the Director of the SP indicated that each year, the content of study courses is updated in line with the sector and labour market requirements, as well as scientific developments. The following links with demands of the sector as well as labour market with the courses are reflected in specific LOs: “Plans an inclusive teaching/learning process according to learners' developmental needs and learning outcomes”; "Justifies the principles of planning, implementation and evaluation of the learning process"; "Implements a teaching/learning process that is relevant to the learning outcomes, the learner's individual development needs and life situations”, which directly relates to the students' knowledge and skills that form the basis of the teacher's professional field of activity. However, the LO “Reasonably assesses, plans and develops own professional competence and cooperation with other teachers, in accordance with professional ethics, in order to improve teaching practice in an educational institution in a purposeful way” (competence) represents to life long learning approach as this competence is developed permanently while practising in an educational institution.
The SAR (chapter 3.2.1), course descriptions (Annex Course descriptions_EN.docx) and the meetings with the Director of the SP, students and graduates confirmed that all modules are developed in line with the Skola2030 curriculum and competences that are directly reflected in this professionally focused study programme. Also recent developments are taken into account when the Technology module emphasises the design thinking approach, planning the learning process and assessing pupils' learning performance. The general section of the methodology also covers topics such as information design, computer graphics and multimedia teaching methodology, 3D printing, CNC milling and other computer-controlled workbenches, engineering teaching methodology, specifics of the development of methodological support in the field of technology, presentations, and their teaching methodology. Development of robotic solutions, teaching methodology, learning needs and pedagogical support for gifted and learning disabled learners in the technology domain. The science module focuses on the study of 21st century science by acquiring a solid grounding in the subject, learning the practical skills needed to engage in scientific enquiry and developing sophisticated epistemological views to understand the nature of science. To achieve this, the emphasis in teacher education is on the development of general cognitive skills (literacy, numeracy, text literacy, problem-solving, information literacy, ICT skills, etc.) and STEM subject-specific skills (science literacy understanding, research); as well as interpersonal (communication, collaboration, etc.) and personal skills. The mathematics module ensures teachers’s skills to develop pupils' values-based uniform worldview. Particular attention is paid to teachers' ability to organise the understanding and application of mathematical concepts in different contexts, teaching problem-solving skills, literacy, critical thinking, self-directed learning skills and strategies to their pupils. In the study process, teachers plan and implement a teaching/learning process that is oriented to attaining the LOs and assessment of these outcomes. In the language module, by studying language teaching methods, learning strategies and techniques for the development of all aspects of the language and skills, new teachers develop the skills to effectively plan and implement their methodological work in teaching Latvian, a foreign and/or second language. They use examples of good practice, learn practically the principles of planning language lessons; develop their methodological competence, learning how to apply the most appropriate teaching/learning methods and principles for the set learning outcomes and pupils’ language proficiency level. In the social and civic module, students learn practice-based methodological solutions, taking into account the challenges of today's digital world - the use of technology in blended learning. Students learn planning and assessment techniques to create their own unique methodological approach through which to implement the acquisition process of pupils' knowledge, skills and competences. There is also a strong emphasis on the integration of content and skills, given the diversity of the content and skills to be taught in this domain.

Since the licensing procedure the study programme did not initiate significant changes or updates regarding requirements of professional qualification and is meeting with national regulations and

professional qualification requirements for a teacher qualification as these attributes have been met in the period of the licensing procedure.

2.2.2. N/A

2.2.3.
The SAR (chapter 3.2.3), course descriptors (Annex. Course descriptions_EN.docx) and meetings with academic staff, graduates and students indicate the SP applies a variety of teaching methods, such as introductory lectures, interactive lectures, problem-oriented lectures and seminars. Practitioners, professionals from different institutions are invited to give individual lectures in study courses in order to promote close relation of theory and practice. Practical exercises, seminars, individual, pair and group work, discussions and project development, study excursions are widely used. Employers are involved in the implementation and development of study courses (invited to lead individual seminar sessions, participate in the evaluation and development of the study process, etc.). Although this diversity of methods students and graduates still report that more emphasis should be given on the real context of teaching and learning in a classroom.

Studentcentered learning is promoted by involving active learning which develops students' research competence and analytical skills. Graduates reported that peer learning is actively applied in the study process. Active learning is also applied in a way of developing students' presentation and discussion skills, solving real problems in the field, modelling situations in lectures and seminars.

Student centered learning is also supported by the physical environment of studies: classrooms can be easily converted for group work, individual work, and students can use digital technologies. Teaching staff mostly apply methods (e.g. analysis of work-based situations, analysis of video materials, develops a research plan for the performance of research tasks in an educational institution; creates the teaching / methodological materials necessary for the implementation of pedagogical research; study tours, field trips, outdoor classes, classes in small groups in different educational institutions, and pedagogical supervision; besides, the study courses are organised in a multifaceted collaboration with experts from various fields) that encourage students' active participation, critical thinking and reflection. The e-learning environment is used to support the learning process and independent learning. An e-learning environment (Moodle) has been created for each study course, where students have access to lesson materials, assignment descriptions, additional learning materials related to the course topics, as well as assignments (tests, forums, seminars, conferences, etc.). All interim and final examination grades, with the reasons for the grade, are recorded and are available to students in the e-learning environment. Some courses have been demonstrated in the e-learning environment and provided evidence on applications. On the other hand, still writing based assessment is dominating and even large diversity of assignments could be promoted in the digital and media formats.

Students and graduates during the meetings with experts reported that they receive support and feedback from the teaching staff. The assessment criteria for grading are made public in advance. Assessment provides an opportunity for students to demonstrate the extent to which they have achieved the expected LOs.

It is important to note that the SP provides students with additional support over two years, providing emotional and professional support in individual and cooperation groups. This support was highly appreciated by graduates in the meeting. They reported that there is an opportunity to receive daily support from a mentor in the school, who helps the student to get to know the daily

routine, rules and requirements of the specific school, and provides professional communication and guidance after observing the lessons on a monthly basis.

The main benefits of support mentioned by students are regular lesson observations and feedback from the curator on the delivery of the lesson, which leads to growth, new ideas and helps to formulate the next task to achieve their professional goal. Reflection skills are developed with the curator; ideas and answers are found among the group members for different situations already experienced in the classroom or for which the new teacher is preparing.
Achievement of LOs is supported in the induction year after obtaining the qualification. This is ensured by a 240-hour professional development programme, as well as support in development groups. During the induction year, the UL currently offers four programmes - Organisation of Technology-Enhanced Learning, Special and Inclusive Education, Classroom Management for Effective Lessons and Change Management in Education. Participants of the induction year acquire new theoretical knowledge, which is complemented by practical experience through meetings with experts in various fields and visits to schools to experience the implementation of different ideas and discuss real-life experiences. The induction year also includes observation of the participant-led lessons, and providing the guidance and growth-oriented feedback, as well as ensuring other professional and emotional support.

In the induction year, the focus is more on building and strengthening the “Mācītspēks” community by fostering collaboration between new teachers who have graduated from the programme throughout the year. This community was mentioned in the meetings with all stakeholders groups.

In the courses of Teacher of Culture and Art, the Science module, the Mathematics module, the subject in the field of language teaching in practice, the social and civic module, the field of health and physical activity, an educational psychology course, and a course for professional activity of teacher student oriented teaching and learning methods are applied to engage students into cases of good practice. The teaching staff from the UL, Liepaja Academy of Riga Technical University and Daugavpils University collaborate (e.g. in the beginning when this study programme was designed and launched at three Universities in the project) in the development of innovative educational solutions and modeling of collaborative work in the implementation of the study course in professional activity of teachers. This collaboration is a successful case from the previous project when this SP 1stCprof Teacher was launched and licensed. Students of all three universities had an introductory week in the beginning of their studies. Project funding supported this joint collaboration and activities.

2.2.4.
The aim of the internship is to provide students with the opportunity to develop their professional competence as teachers by demonstrating their practical activity in planning and managing the teaching process. An internship in the SP 1stCprof Teacher is an important component of work-based studies that is combined with employment of a student in a Latvian school. To monitor and regulate the students' workload, a tripartite cooperation agreement is concluded between the student, the school and the university. The recommended workload is 14-20 contact hours per week. On the other hand, this employment and almost full time teaching workload limits students opportunities to experience diversity of contexts during the internship period while this period is overlapping with employment.
The SAR (chapter 3.2.4), description of internship (SAR, Annex_31 _OLPSP Description of the organisation of students practice.docx) and meetings with students, graduates, the Director of the SP and social partners confirmed that this model of collaboration is successful and helps schools to minimize shortage of teachers.

The school mentor works in close collaboration with the internship supervisor. The collaboration ensures the student's professional growth and achievement of goals, gaining new insights for further work. The mentor provides a monthly review of the student's performance, which allows the mentor to monitor the progress of the group and the individual student, as well as to identify the need for additional support. Despite this successful model the Director of the SP reported that the institute of mentorship is organised on a voluntary basis.

The Teacher Professional Development Framework is used as the requirement of regulatory enactments to monitor participants' performance. This framework enables mentors to assess students' performance and monitor their growth. This allows us to verify how the internship helps to achieve LOs.

Moreover, cooperation with schools and mentors is purposefully developed and maintained, e.g. the UL implements a professional competence development programme "Mentoring for work-based learning" for school mentors working with students of the SP 1stCprof Teacher. Mentor training runs in parallel with student training, so it is possible to coordinate university and mentor support for the student. For example, the use of the e-classroom is acquired in a real school environment rather than in a demo version at the university, and mentors provide monthly feedback on the student's (new teacher's) professional performance. The information helps to focus on the students' needs and provide individual support.

The SAR (chapter 3.2.4), course description of internship (Annex. Course descriptions_EN.docx) indicate and students as well as graduates reported that during the internship they develop a research plan for the implementation of research tasks in the educational institution, create the teaching/methodological materials necessary for the pedagogical research, plan independently, organises and conducts lessons related to the teacher's research activity, develop data collection instruments and collects data, analyse the data collected, evaluate the results of their work and plan their professional development.

2.2.5. N/A

2.2.6.
Study programme LOs (SAR, section 3.2.1) and programme mapping (SAR, Annex 28) identify that the SP areas in technology education, the culture and arts, science, mathematics, languages, social and civic education, and health and physical education have been developed in line with the new curriculum Skola 2030. Therefore both diploma and teacher's experience papers explore the problems of design and technology teaching methodology in both primary and secondary education. This confirms that students' experiences and the final theses are matching and confirm the relevance of the study programme.

Generally students' final theses demonstrate rather high marks of the final assessment. Provided list of the topics justifies that there is strong connection to a real school context, new school curriculum issues and areas for improvement in teacher's performance (e.g. "Development of teaching tools for acquiring the design process and developing self-directed learning in design and technology", "Methods to promote learning-by-doing in design and technology for Grades 10-12 at the stage of idea development"; "Game methods for Grade 6 music subject about popular personalities in music", "Immersive approach as a teaching method in remote learning in Theatre Arts in Grades 1-3"; "Acquisition of research skills in basic chemistry education through distance learning", "Cooperative learning for the development of collaborative skills in the acquisition of electromagnetism topics in physics in Grade 9"; "Cross-curricular link in biology, science and design

and technology subjects in secondary school"; "Problem-solving tasks in science learning in Grades 4-6" or the use of subject-specific teaching methods, such as "Using video experiments for the acquisition of "Oxidation-reduction processes" in primary chemistry course in Grade 10"). Mostly students choose topics related to specific general teaching methods and their use in a particular school subject.

Conclusions on this set of criteria, by specifying strengths and weaknesses

The results of the mapping show that the intended learning outcomes of the study courses included in the study programme are in line with the learning outcomes of the study programme. Therefore, it can be concluded that the study programme provides students with the opportunity to achieve all the intended learning outcomes of the study programme. The information included in the study courses is based on the aims of the study course and the learning outcomes. These aims and outcomes are derived from the programme's aim and LOs to be achieved. Descriptors provide information on the content of the study course necessary for the achievement of LOs and the study course calendar. All courses provide available mandatory and supplementary literature in various channels. Description of the organisation and tasks for the independent work of students is provided in the course descriptor and also in the e-learning platform. All intended LOs in the courses are determined by the evaluation criteria.

Strengths:
1) The organisational forms, teaching and assessment methods chosen to achieve the aims, objectives and LOs are implemented in accordance with the aims of the SP and the student-centered approach to education as well as work based education.
2) The internship objectives that are focused on improving students' professional competence, gaining real experience in teaching, and evaluating critically the strengths and weaknesses of their own teaching are achieved in collaboration with mentors in schools.
3) Strong "Mācītspēks" community is fostering collaboration between new teachers who have graduated from the study programme.
4) The teaching staff from the UL, Liepaja Academy of Riga Technical University and Daugavpils University collaborate in the development of innovative educational solutions and modelling of collaborative work in the implementation of the study course Professional activity of teachers.

Weaknesses:
1) Students are not exposed to diversity of pedagogical contexts as their internship school overlaps with their employment schools.
2) The mentorship institution is not operating in a sustainable way in terms of providing to schools financial means to support mentors.

Assessment of the requirement [5] (applicable only to master's or doctoral study programmes)

1 R5 - The study programme for obtaining a master's or doctoral degree is based on the achievements and findings of the respective field of science or field of artistic creation.

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

2.3. Resources and Provision of the Study Programme

Analysis

2.3.1.

All faculty resources available at UL and FEPA are available to students in the 1stCprof Teacher study programme. Financial sources are ensured by state budget funding and tuition fees. SP students have the same right of access to learning resources available in the faculty – lecture rooms, reading rooms, computer equipment, library databases, electronic resources, technical resource materials. The library collection is generally sufficient for the conduct of studies and the development of scientific research, and it is regularly improved and supplemented with the most up-to-date information resources, in accordance with the needs of academic staff and students. IT resources are freely available to students: the application package “MS Office 365”, MS tools such as “Outlook”, “Forms”, MS Teams and the BigBlueButton system, software, and UL maintains e-mail. In the 2021/2022 academic year, video recording and streaming facilities with video/audio tracking of the lecturer via moving video cameras will be provided in two lecture theatres to ensure remote streaming of lectures (SAR, p. 304). An additional incentive to improve educational technology facilities will be the relocation of FEPA to the new House of Letters in the University's academic centre in Torņkalns. In discussions during the assessment visit, the Dean and other lecturers expressed the hope of also obtaining larger offices and more space for all planned activities.

UL Information System (ULIS) policies require that courses in all degree programmes be posted to e-Studies (MOODLE environment) to ensure compliance with UL Regulation No. 1/348 "Requirements for the Development and Use of e-Courses in the Study Process at UL" (December 10, 2013) (SAR, 305). In discussions with lecturers and students of the SP, the experts found that the existing methodological materials in the MOODLE and MS Teams environments are regularly supplemented, updated and modernised and that the uploaded learning content meets the learning needs. The e-learning environment (Moodle) enables students to access learning materials and information from home, which is particularly beneficial for part-time students, who are in the majority. Students were satisfied with the e-learning environment (Moodle, MS Teams and Zoom), which is also used for knowledge assessment and communication between students and lecturers. Students can use software such as SPSS in the library, but also download it to their computers, which facilitates their research work and the preparation of their thesis. Various virtual labs are used in the study courses (e.g. Teacher Professional Activity and Technology Teaching Methodology) as well as platforms that facilitate online coding and testing in different programming languages, creation of graphical content, collaboration and code sharing, etc. Students will have access to the latest trends and news from the industry, including cutting-edge artificial intelligence tools such as ChatGPT and DALL-E, which will enable students to develop creative and critical thinking about the implementation and potential consequences of applying modern technologies in education.

Lectures and seminars take place in versatile and adaptable spaces (all equipped with Wi-Fi, some with wide-angle cameras) that allow for effortless transition between traditional lectures and collaborative group and pair activities. During the tour of the faculty, the experts were also introduced to the computer lab, where courses in computer graphics, multimedia, drawing, modelling and 3D printing are offered. The experts also had the opportunity to see an assistive seat for people with mobility problems, which enables them to move from floor to floor. Students and school mentors have access to supporting materials (presentations) on the implementation of in-service learning, the process and analysis of pedagogical practise, supporting materials for practise supervisors (mentors), guidelines for the preparation of a thesis/teacher presentation. During the on-site interviews some students expressed their surprise with low technical equipment of schools where they have internships. In that sense, it would be recommended to establish a better cooperation between FEPA and schools to ensure at least approximately as good conditions during practice as during studies. It is also important to mention the efforts of the FEPA teachers to ensure equal learning and teaching conditions for the students in the branches by taking with them material and technical equipment needed.

The specificity of studying in the STEM field is manifested in cooperation with other other UL faculties, since FEPA does not posses all the technical and infrastructural equipment (specific instruments, laboratories), which is understandable, but it is also recommended to work on improving the technical equipment of the classrooms with all material and technical stuff needed for the achievement of the learning outcomes. It is important to put emphasis on this fact, because during the on-site visit some students stated that the classes within some subjects (mathematics) in other faculties also include pedagogical/methodological elements that should be provided by FEPA teachers/experts in the field of education.

After the analysis, the experts conclude that the material and technical support for the implementation of the study area and the corresponding study programmes and their availability for students and teachers is assessed as fully sufficient for the needs of the study field, that the capacity exists to ensure a high quality study process.

2.3.2. N/A

2.3.3.
The 1stCprof Teacher uses the state budget subsidy from the Ministry of Education and Science, which is set at EUR 2500 for full-time higher education courses for the academic year 2022/2023; the total budget of the programme is expected to be EUR 155 000 per year, as summarised in Table 3.3.3.1. in the SAR (p. 306). For the calculations, the 1stCprof Teacher implementers used the data on the number of students in the academic year 2022/2023 - 64 full-time students in the study programme, the existing/planned curriculum after accreditation and the existing/planned structure of the academic staff involved. The estimated intramural costs of the programme for full-time students amount to EUR 2484 per year and the total costs of the programme amount to EUR 153996 per year (the percentage breakdown of costs is shown in Table 3.3.3.2. in the SAR, p. 307). According to the calculation, the number of students must be at least 61 for the study programme to be profitable and offer students a high-quality course of study (Figure 3.3.3.1., SAR, p. 307). From the statistics on students enrolled during the reporting period (Annex 24_6 Statistics on students enrolled in the reporting period), the experts can conclude that the study programme has the minimum number of students to ensure the profitability of the programme. However, the statistics also show a significant number of dropouts (14 in 2022), which means that a strategy needs to be developed to keep the number of students in balance and prevent students from dropping out after the first and second semester and not graduating in the final year if FEPA plans such a funding model.

In addition, the development of the study programme can be financed from the income from lifelong learning and other services as well as from the financial resources accumulated by the structural unit. The faculties also receive financial support for study programme development from the UL Study Quality Improvement Fund (SAR, p. 307).

Conclusions on this set of criteria, by specifying strengths and weaknesses

It can be concluded from the analysis that the UL/FEPA has sufficient resources to carry out this study programme and ensure its further development. On the other hand, maintaining the existing funding model also requires that the number of students enrolled is kept in balance, which the faculty should pay attention to. The study programme ensures the quality of studies and provides the necessary resources (e.g. premises, materials, library, etc.). The study programme provides all necessary resources and meets the conditions for the implementation of the study programme.

Strengths:
1) The faculty is equipped with all necessary study materials and technical/technological equipment to support quality education and these are widely available and accessible to students.

Weaknesses:
1) The volatility of the profitability and financial sustainability of the SP, as a considerable number of students drop out after the 1st and 2nd semester and before graduation.
2) A low technical equipment of schools where students have internships.
3) Inconsistency in terms of implementation of pedagogical/methodological elements in teaching in the STEM field during classes carried out in other UL faculties, that should be provided by FEPA teachers i.e. experts in the field of education.

Assessment of the requirement [6]

1 R6 - Compliance of the study provision, science provision (if applicable), informative provision (including library), material and technical provision and financial provision with the conditions for the implementation of the study programme and ensuring the achievement of learning outcomes

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

All requirements are fulfilled, since the financial sources, learning sources (lecture rooms, reading rooms, computer equipment, library databases, electronic resources, technical resource materials), informative sources (library, e-platforms) provide the implementation of the SP and ensure the achievement of learning outcomes.

2.4. Teaching Staff

Analysis

2.4.1.
According to the SAR (chapter 3.4.1.), the teaching staff of this study programme has a strong orientation towards innovation in the field of education, ensuring the link between theory and practice. The number of enrolled students in each area of teaching methodology determines the variable number of teaching staff involved in the study programme's implementation. In the study year 2023-2024, 19 teaching staff members are involved in implementing the programme: one professor, five associate professors, six assistant professors, three lecturers, and four instructors.

The Technology teaching area involves both full-time lecturers with many years of experience and Skola2030 experts, who are also practising teachers, thus ensuring qualitative learning of all topics. Computer science teaching staff are actively involved in various projects.

This experience of teaching staff allows to effectively create a study process that meets modern education trends and student needs, ensuring high-quality education in the field of educational sciences. The teaching staff of the technology teaching module Design and Technology Teaching Methodology regularly improve their professional competence in many continuing education programmes, as well as in internships.

The leader of the module Cultural Awareness and Self-Expression in Art is a full-time employee of the UL. The Science module involves staff members representing their subject areas: biology, chemistry, physics, geography and chemistry.

The teaching staff involved in the mathematics module are experienced educators of pre-service mathematics teachers of the UL, who also have been actively involved in the development of Skola2030 ideas and professional development of teachers, as well as in the review of mathematics teaching materials.
The language module is delivered by both full-time UL lecturers with many years of experience in language methodology courses, school practices and teachers' professional development courses, and practising language teachers.
The head of the Health and Physical Activity module is a developer of normative documents, sample programmes and methodological tools in this field.

Between 2020 and 2023, four study programme staff members have developed their professional skills through internships in schools.

Students told the Experts during the on-site visit, that they are pleased with the quality of teaching and the general attitude of study.
Lecturers participate actively in research projects and in conferences - so they can bring the freshest information to the students.
According to SAR Annex 11 (Teaching Staff's CV), most teachers have practical pedagogical experience over 10 years. All those aspects enable the achievement of the aims and learning outcomes of the study programme and the relevant study courses.

2.4.2.
According to the Experts, one of the strengths of this curriculum is flexibility - the composition of the teaching staff can be changed easily, depending on the needs. For example: the number of the teaching staff depends on the presence or absence of students in some of the fields of study offered, as is written in the SAR (chapter 3.4.2.).

For example, when three students in the academic year 2021/2022 and two students in the academic year 2022/2023 opted to study Methodology of Russian as a Foreign Language, a new lecturer for the course - a Russian as a Foreign Language Specialist - was attracted to the study programme. In Latvia, there are about 87 000 students in general education, who have Russian as their second foreign language, so - teachers of this language are needed. Experts find this kind of operative, flexible management is really the best/optimal solution.

During the on-site visit Experts got the impression that students value practical knowledge, shared by teaching staff: there are lecturers who also work at general educational institutions. According to the SAR (p. 315), the experience of teaching staff during internships or working at school allows for effective planning, implementation, and evaluation of the teaching process using innovative teaching methods and technologies.
These skills correspond to the objectives of the study programme regarding the quality of the learning process.

2.4.3. N/A

2.4.4.
Publications of the teaching staff are mostly in international journals indexed in Web of Science, ERIH+ and Scopus.
Many articles were written by several authors, which is a sign of good cooperation. Most of the publications are in proceedings of international scientific conferences, indexed in highly respected databases. According to the headlines, the themes/subjects of research papers/articles are

connected to the curriculum, which is a sign of commitment.

From the SAR, (p. 310-315), one can read that some teachers from this curriculum are authors of study books and monographs, used all over Latvia.
For example these textbooks: Methodology of science teaching (2020),; Information technology in formative assessment (2018); Culture in art, art in culture, Guidance for teachers (2018); Recommendations for behaviour and interaction in the classroom (2018), etc.

Some other methodical materials, for example, are:
- The importance of improving posture in secondary school pupils (2020),
- Freehand sketching as part of the curriculum in Latvia (1920-1940) (2022),
- Drawing as a research method in art history studies (2021),
- Visual literacy as a 21st century competence (2018),
- Cultural Competence Portfolio as a Long-term Innovation for All Levels of Education (2020), The Role of Cultural Capital in 21st-Century Teacher Education (2018),
- Teacher competences for the challenges of Globalisation in education (2018).

In 2020/2021, six members of the teaching staff have developed innovative study materials in development project "Development of Innovative Study Materials for New Study Programmes in the Field of Education, Pedagogy and Sport" of the UL FEPA, which have been placed in the Moodle environment and are available to the students of the study programme.

The publications are available in the libraries - students are pleased with the plurality of materials in this field, as was told to the Experts during the on-site visit.

2.4.5.
According to the SAR (chapter 3.4.5.), the regular meetings and workshops are organised for all members of the teaching staff, involved in the study programme. A form of cooperation is the joint involvement of science teaching staff in the organisation of the Interdisciplinary section on science didactics at the UL conferences and their participation with scientific presentations, involving teachers and students, thus creating a bridge between theoreticians and practitioners.

In October and January, the teaching staff and the students are invited to the conference of the teaching practice, where they discuss the current issues of the practice, lesson observation and assessment of the practice.
The study programme director, who has access to the student surveys in aggregate form, discusses with the teaching staff twice a year any necessary changes in the course content, organisation or the possibility of changing the teaching staff.

Science teaching staff meet regularly with each other, both remotely and in person. During the meetings, they talk about current issues and discuss how to improve the content and implementation of the courses. Discussions are also held with students to obtain their views on the study process.

Another interesting form of cooperation is the joint involvement of science teaching staff in the organisation of the Interdisciplinary section on science didactics at the UL conferences and their participation with scientific presentations, involving teachers and students, thus creating a bridge between theoreticians and practitioners.
According to the SAR, from the first year of the study programme, the Language module staff have been active initiators of collegial meetings to discuss current issues, especially during the teaching

practice, and to agree on a common and clear approach to the evaluation of students' practice materials and final practice reports. Also the teaching staff of the Social and civic education domain, and the teaching staff of the Health and physical activity domain communicate with each other regularly.

Interdisciplinarity is one of the most important keywords in this field of study. It all ensures the achievement of the aims of the study programme and the interconnection of study courses within the study programme.

Conclusions on this set of criteria, by indicating strengths and weaknesses

The staff of this study programme is active in science, teaching and innovation. Many teaching materials/manuals have been developed by the staff members of this study programme. Some members of the teaching staff also work in general educational institutions, which helps to add practical knowledge into the study programme.

Strengths:
1) Feedback from students is collected regularly, and it has been taken seriously.
2) Some staff members have developed their professional skills through internships in schools.
3) The teaching staff creates innovative study materials also for the Moodle environment.
4) Many articles were made by several authors, which is a sign of good cooperation.
5) Publications of the teaching staff can be found in the library - also as electronic versions.

Weaknesses: Not identified

Assessment of the requirement [7]

1 R7 - Compliance of the qualification of the academic staff and visiting professors, visiting associate professors, visiting docents, visiting lecturers and visiting assistants with the conditions for the implementation of the study programme and the requirements set out in the respective regulatory enactments.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

According to the information gathered for this chapter, all requirements are fulfilled as the qualifications of the academic staff correspond to the needs of the study programme.

2.5. Assessment of the Compliance

Requirements

1 1 - The study programme complies with the State Academic Education Standard or the Professional Higher Education Standard

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Compliance of the study programme with the Regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers of June 13, 2023 No. 305. Regulations on the State Standard of Professional Higher Education are evident by the SAR Annex 25_6.

2 2 - The study programme complies with a valid professional standard or the requirements for the professional qualification (if there is no professional standard required for the relevant occupation) provided if the completion of the study programme leads to a professional qualification (if applicable)

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The relevance of the qualification obtained in the study programme to the Teacher Professional Standard (agreed by the Tripartite Cooperation Sub-council of Professional Education and Employment as of 12.06.2020) is evident by the SAR Annex 26_6.

3 3 - The descriptions of the study courses and the study materials have been prepared in all languages in which the study programme is implemented, and they comply with the requirements set forth in Section 561 , Paragraph two and Section 562 , Paragraph two of the Law on Higher Education Institutions.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The requirement is fulfilled as evident by the SAR Annex “Course descriptions_EN.docx”.

4 4 - The sample of the diploma to be issued for the acquisition of the study programme complies with the procedure according to which state recognised documents of higher education are issued.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The sample of the diploma includes elements associated with the state-recognised documents of higher education (Cabinet Regulations No 202) as evident from the SAR Annex 22_6.

5 5 - The academic staff of the academic study programme complies with the requirements set forth in Section 55, Paragraph one, Clause 3 of the Law on Higher Education Institutions.

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

6 6 - Academic study programmes provided for less than 250 full-time students may be implemented and less than five professors and associated professors of the higher education institution may be involved in the implementation of the mandatory and limited elective part of these study programmes provided that the relevant opinion of the Council for Higher Education has been received in accordance with Section 55, Paragraph two of the Law on Higher Education Institutions.

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

7 7 - At least five teaching staff members with a doctoral degree are among the academic staff of an academic 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 teaching staff members with a doctoral degree are among the academic staff of a professional doctoral study programme in arts (if applicable).

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

8 8 - The teaching staff members involved in the implementation of the study programme are proficient in the official 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.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The requirement is fully met as evident by the SAR Annex 10 and and by the Head Of Study Field Declaration, SAR Annex “30-37_85_Head of study field declaration_knowledge of the official language_EN.edoc”.

9 9 - The teaching staff members to be involved in the implementation of the study programme have at least B2-level knowledge of a related foreign language, if the study programme or any part thereof is to be implemented in a foreign language (if applicable).

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The requirement is fully met as evident by the SAR Annex 10.

10 10 - The sample of the study agreement complies with the mandatory provisions to be included in the study agreement.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The sample of the study agreement complies with the mandatory provisions (Cabinet Regulations No 70) to be included in the study agreement as evident from the SAR Annex 8.

11 11 - The higher education institution / college has provided confirmation that students will be provided with opportunities to continue their education in another study programme or another higher education institution or college (agreement with another accredited higher education institution or college) if the implementation of the study programme is terminated.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Based on the cooperation with Daugavpils University (DU) in the field of studies and scientific research, in case of discontinuation of the study programme Teacher (46141), the DU undertakes to provide students with study opportunities in the corresponding study programmes at the DU as evident by the SAR Annex 6.

12 12 - The higher education institution / college has provided confirmation that students are guaranteed compensation for losses if the study programme is not accredited or the study programme’s license is revoked due to the actions (actions or omissions) of the higher education institution or college and the student does not wish to continue studies in another study programme.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The requirement is fully met as evident by the SAR Annex “25.03.2024 - 71-61_4 - Rektora apliecinājums par SV “Izglītība un.edoc”.

13 13 - The joint study programmes comply with the requirements prescribed in Section 55.(1), Paragraphs one, two, and seven of the Law on Higher Education Institutions (if applicable)

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

14 14 - Compliance with the requirements specified in other regulatory enactments that apply to the study programme being assessed (if applicable)

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Compliance with the Regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers No. 569 in Riga on September 11, 2018 “Regulations on Education and Professional Qualifications Necessary for Pedagogues and Procedures for Improving the Professional Competence of Pedagogues” and Regulation of the Cabinet of Ministers No. 716November 21, 2018 "Regulations on national guidelines for pre-school education and model pre-school education programmes" is evident by the SAR Annex 27.

Assessment of the requirement [8]

1 R8 - Compliance of the study programme with the requirements set forth in the Law on Higher Education Institutions and other regulatory enactments.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The compliance of the study programme with the requirements set forth in the Law on Higher Education Institutions and other regulatory enactments are evident through analysis of the requirements and documents attached to the SAR, including statements signed by the Study Field Director, the Rector, approved by the UL Senate, etc.

General conclusions about the study programme, indicating the most important strengths and weaknesses of the study programme

In general, the study programme fulfils the requirements corresponding to the study field, state regulations and UL's strategy. The study programme is being implemented only in Latvian language and only for full-time studies.

The most important strengths identified in the study programme:
1) Content-intensive development of SP, in line with labour market needs, by providing a new approach to tackling employment problems and entering sectoral knowledge into education, including by attracting specialists.
2) The organisational forms, teaching and assessment methods chosen to achieve the aims, objectives and LOs are implemented in accordance with the aims of the SP and the student-centered approach to education as well as work based education;
3) The internship objectives that are focused on improving students' professional competence, gaining real experience in teaching, and evaluating critically the strengths and weaknesses of their own teaching are achieved in collaboration with mentors in schools;
4) Strong “Mācītspēks” community is fostering collaboration between new teachers who have graduated from the programme;
5) The teaching staff from the UL, the University of Liepaja and Daugavpils University collaborate in the development of innovative educational solutions and modeling of collaborative work in the implementation of the study course Professional activity of teachers.
6) The staff of the curriculum is flexible - new modules can be added, if needed, and new teachers can be hired according to the students wishes.

The most important weaknesses identified in the study programme:
1) Students are not exposed to diversity of pedagogical contexts as their internship school overlaps with their employment schools;
2) The mentorship institution is not operating in a sustainable way in terms of providing to schools financial means to support mentors.

Evaluation of the study programme "Teacher"

Evaluation of the study programme:

Excellent

2.6. Recommendations for the Study Programme "Teacher"

Short-term recommendations

To ensure and provide opportunities to students to complete their internship in diverse pedagogical contexts.

To continue negotiations with the policy makers in order to sustain mentorship and to provide schools and mentors with financial means.
To ensure the application of the required STEM didactic level, not only in FEPA, but also in other UL faculties that FEPA cooperates with.
To construct more flexible scheduling, provide support services and increase communication in order to balance overload in full time studies.

Long-term recommendations

To develop a strategy for keeping the number of students in balance and to prevent students from dropping out after the first and second semester and not completing their studies in the final year.
To reevaluate the mode of implementation of the SP, managing overload in the study process and full-time work at schools.
To establish a better cooperation between FEPA and schools where students have internships to ensure at least approximately as good material and technical conditions during internships as during the studies.

II - "Educational Sciences" ASSESSMENT

II - "Educational Sciences" ASSESSMENT

2.1. Indicators Describing the Study Programme

Analysis

2.1.1.
The Joint Academic Doctoral (Third-cycle) Study Programme “Educational Sciences” 51142 (3rdC EduSc) corresponds to the field of study and has been listed in the list of study programmes related to teacher education since October 26, 2022.

The SAR states that the relevance of 3rdC EduSc to the field of study is determined by the specificity of Educational Sciences as a field of study and its relation to the goals of the field of study - excellence, internationalisation and interdisciplinarity, which aim to increase the research capacity of Latvian universities (SAR, p. 238). The main aims of the SF "Education and Pedagogy" are providing excellence and internationalisation-oriented, interdisciplinary high-level studies and research, which includes ensuring the quality of research in education sciences and pedagogy, providing students with student-centred, inclusive and science and practice based studies, contribution to society, talent development, ensuring environmentally friendly and modern infrastructure focused on collaboration and creativity, and ensuring an innovation-oriented and inclusive organisational culture (SAR, p. 17). The main aims of the SP 3rdC EduSc is focused on ensuring research-based studies; ensuring excellence, internationalisation and interdisciplinarity of the studies; improving the doctoral students’ research and academic competence in educational sciences and enable them to conduct independent and innovative research activities, develop theories in educational science, improve pedagogical practice at various levels of education (SAR, p. 234-238), which is in accordance with the stated SF aims.

Proof of compliance of the 3rdC EduSc with the requirements of the Law on Higher Education is contained in SAR Annex 23.

2.1.2.
The title of the study programme, the degree to be awarded and the compliance of the study programme parameters with the established study programme outcomes are regulated by external regulations, i.e. Section 55.1 of the Law on Higher Education Institutions of the Republic of Latvia. Joint Study Programme, Amendments to the Law on Scientific Activities (adopted: 14.07.2022, entered into force on 29.07.2022), Regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers No. 595 of 27 September 2022, Regulations on Scientific Sector Groups, Scientific Sectors and Subsectors of Latvia (entered into force on 30.09.2022), Regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers No. 322. (13.06.2017) on the Classification of Education in Latvia. Study programme code 51142 corresponds to Cabinet of Ministers Regulations No. 322 on the Classification of Latvian Education. It corresponds to the eighth qualification level of the Latvian Qualifications Framework and the qualification level of the third cycle of the Qualifications Framework for the European Higher Education Area (SAR, p. 239).

The content of the SP is in accordance with the Regulation of the Cabinet of Ministers No. 345 of June 25, 2020 on the Conceptual Report “On the Introduction of a New Model of Doctoral Education in Latvia“. It is related to the purpose of the study programme and the expected learning outcomes. The study programme outcomes correspond to the 8th level of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) and the Latvian Qualifications Framework (LQF) and the qualification level of the third cycle of qualifications of the European Higher Education Area. They are aligned with Oxford Brookes University's doctoral study programme "Education" and course mapping has been undertaken to ensure and assess the alignment of outcomes achieved in the courses with those of the programme (SAR, Annex 28_9_DSP_IZ_kartejums_mapping).

The admission criteria, scope and duration of the 3rdC EduSc enable the achievement of the defined study outcomes. The study outcomes (e.g. to understand and use research methods and methodology and understand interdisciplinary approach to research; systematically analyse and interpret concepts related to educational sciences, topicalities of theory and current educational policy; independently assess and rationally choose design and methods appropriate for scientific research in educational sciences; see: Annex 28_9_DSP_IZ_kartejums_mapping) correspond to the defined objectives and targets (ensuring excellence, internationalisation and interdisciplinarity of the studies, science integration, specialising in several competitive areas, increasing the research capacity of universities, SAR, p. 238). Upon completion of the JDSP "Educational Sciences", the degree of Doctor of Science (Ph.D.) in Social Sciences is awarded. The duration and scope of the study programme in Latvian and English do not differ.

The implementation of the study programme aims to strengthen the capacity of educational sciences in general. Study programme in Latvian is oriented to strengthening mentioned capacities in Latvia, and the implementation of the study programme in English provides an opportunity to attract young educational scientists to Latvia, which is in line with FEPA's efforts to improve the internationalization of higher education. During the on-site visit and communication with teaching staff in JDSP experts can conclude that there are no obstacles in providing implementation of SP in English.

2.1.3.
The SP was licenced on May 27, 2020 and included in the accredited study field “Education, Pedagogy and Sport” on October 26, 2022. No changes are requested as part of this assessment.

2.1.4.
The 3rdC EduSc was established in accordance with the informative report of the Ministry of Education and Science, which envisaged the creation of a joint doctoral study programme in

educational sciences in Latvia to ensure the sharing of resources and synergies between the different competences of universities at the doctoral level. Accordingly, UL, as the largest university in Latvia, which is important both for the development of the entire education system and for the growth of the entire national economy, has taken the leading role in the implementation of the this joint study programme 3rdC EduSc (the other partners are the University of Daugavpils, the University of Liepaja and the Rezekne Academy of Technologies). The SP is designed and implemented in line with the development directions set out in the UL Strategy (2021 - 2027): scientific excellence, study development and contribution to society. It is also partly aimed at the economic function - the need for new personnel in the education sector (school leaders, education policy makers, researchers or university teachers) and ensuring the renewal of scientific and academic staff with doctoral degrees.

The SAR noted that 3 out of 10 graduates of the study programme work in universities (1 has already defended his thesis, 1 has submitted it for defense and 1 plans to do so at the end of 2024); 2 work in colleges; 4 work in schools, 1 of them is the head of the Teachers' Association (SAR, p. 243), which confirms the high employability of graduates. The SAR also noted that the 3rdC EduSc increases professional development opportunities for doctoral graduates, but specific strategies and steps are not clearly stated.

The first students of the 3rdC EduSc were enrolled three years before this report was written (winter semester 2020/2021). The dynamics of student numbers during this period are well analysed, together with the indication of the reasons for dropping out for each student who dropped out. The numbers of enrolled students show that the 3rdC EduSc has a constant number of first-year students, offers a perspective and proves the justification of the SP. However, the number of students who drop out is high (see SAR Annex 24_9 DSP Educational Sciences Statistics on students enrolled in the reporting period) and the reasons for dropping out are financial, health problems, failure to fulfil study commitments and other personal reasons. There are only five students who dropped out of 3rdC EduSc within three years (SAR, Annex 24_9). On the other hand, according to SAR, the dropout of PhD students during their studies and the low number of PhD students compared to the number of graduates from PhD study programmes is a major problem for Latvia (SAR, p. 246). Efforts are being made at national level to solve this problem, e.g. new employment agreements that exempt doctoral students from having to pursue paid work in parallel with their studies (SAR, p. 246). It would also be beneficial if doctoral students were offered more content/courses in English to better prepare them for their studies, as the students expressed this need in the expert interviews.

2.1.5.
The 3rdC EduSc was developed with the aim of ensuring the joint use of resources and synergies between different university competencies at doctoral level. It was established in accordance with the informative report of the Ministry of Education and Science entitled "Proposals for ensuring teacher education that meets the requirements of a conceptually new competence-based education in Latvia", 2017 (SAR, p. 242). It is regulated and implemented in accordance with the National Development Plan of Latvia 2021-2027, Latvian Science, Technology Development and Innovation Guidelines 2021-2027, Latvian Education Development Guidelines 2021-2027 “Future skills for the society of the future” and as well as the conceptual report “On the introduction of a new model of doctoral studies in Latvia (SAR, p. 243).

The course can be grouped into three categories:
1) 22 CP of courses only implemented by UL (12 CP in part A and general courses of 10 CP in part B);
2) 108 CP of courses implemented by one of the partner universities, including UL (doctoral thesis

development of 86 CP, doctoral examination of 6 CP, general courses of 8 CP in part B and elective courses of 8 CP);
3) 14 CP of courses implemented by specific partner, including UL (five optional modules - each offered by a different partner university - UL, DU, LiepU and RTA).

The SP can be completed both in-person and partly remotely, which ensures the mobility of students and lecturers. The development of the joint study programme is also justified by the fact that, according to the conclusions of OECD experts, the percentage of graduates with doctoral degrees in Latvia is too low (less than 1%), as was emphasised in the discussion with the SP management. The quality assurance of the study programme is carried out by two-stage doctoral councils - the joint doctoral council and the subordinate doctoral councils of the university and the partner institutions. Their tasks are clearly described in the SAR (p. 247). Some of main tasks are: to decide on significant changes in the content or implementation of the joint study programme; to ensure effective operation, assessment and continuous improvement of the quality assurance system of the joint study programme; to determine the principles of selection, planning, evaluation and development of teaching staff; to administer doctoral examinations in the field of sciences and to organise discussion of doctoral theses; to determine uniform procedures and principles for the admission of students, the implementation of the study programme, incl. for assessment, development of methodological materials, etc.

During studies students can choose in optional modules courses implemented in UL, which means it is possible to complete 144 out of 144 CP only in UL while still receiving a diploma from all four universities. It is recommended that in this type of situation UL ensures that the contributions from partners are made at least in the form of mobility, research, projects, or other ways that assures collaboration between the institutions and the students.
According to statements of the management, teaching staff and students during on-site visit, the experts can conclude that the communication and cooperation between four Latvian partner universities is mostly satisfying and mutually supportive. On the other hand, management of the faculty and PhD study programme recognised that collaboration among three institutions is not leading to the equally understood standard of the final thesis and there is a room for improvement in the new cycle of the PhD study programme.

Conclusions on this set of criteria, by specifying strengths and weaknesses

The SP responds to the educational needs of Latvia and the efforts of the entire University of Latvia to combine various study programmes and scientific activities to create new knowledge and apply it in solving problems of importance to the Latvian economy and society, and to promote competitiveness. The economic and social justification of the SP is supported by the fact that there is a need for higher education in all three study cycles and for highly qualified teachers. After analysing all criteria, the experts concluded that the correlation between all evaluated elements – title, code, degree to be obtained, objectives, learning outcomes and admission requirements – is strong and the economic and social justification of the SP is satisfactory. The experts can also conclude that 3rdC EduSc as a unique concept for doctoral studies in the field of educational sciences corresponds to the field of study and the reasons for its development at national, regional and international level are justified.

Strengths:
1) The SP aims to strengthen Latvian higher education, as there is a need for higher education in all three study cycles and for highly qualified educators.

Weaknesses:
1) Specific strategies and steps for increasing career development opportunities for doctoral students are not clearly stated.
2) Insufficient knowledge of English is one of the reasons for dropping out of studies, and should be used as an opportunity to organize English language courses for doctoral students.
3) A collaboration among UL and partner institutions is not leading to the equally understood standard of the final thesis, which should be improved.
4) All 144 CP can could be collected only in UL while the study programme is a joined program between four universities.

2.2. The Content of Studies and Implementation Thereof

Analysis

2.2.1.
SAR Annex 27 (Compliance of the DSP “Educational Sciences” with the specific regulatory framework.docx) provides information that the content of the 3rdC EduSc has been developed in accordance with the set of national documents regarding higher education and specialisations provided by the partners of this joint study programme in the field of education science.

SAR (chapter 3.2.1 and Annex 29_9_DSP IZ plans_Plan.docx) demonstrate that the content (144 CP) of the 3rdC EduSc comprises of part A (104 CP), which includes development of the doctoral thesis (86 CP) also involving preparation of publications and participation in scientific conferences, doctoral examination (6 CP), obligatory courses (12 CP) and part B (40 CP). The last part (B) also includes development of general skills (18 CP: research ethics, scientific communication, project management, and university didactics). The UL as the leading partner in the joint study programme is responsible for the content and delivery of the majority of these courses. Moreover, the 3rdC EduSc also includes 5 elective modules (14 CP each) that are implemented in the partnership universities (1 in Daugavpils University, 1 in Liepaja Academy of Riga Technical University, 1 in Rezekne Academy of Technologies and 2 in University of Latvia).

Course descriptions (SAR, Annex 30_9_Study course descriptions_DSP_Educational Sciences_EN.docx) and meeting with the Director of the study programme demonstrate that courses are updated regularly - course descriptions are supplemented with the latest scientific literature, as well as course content is supplemented according to the latest research in the field of Education science (e.g. Educational Research. Taylor&Francis Online; European Journal of Teacher Education. Taylor&Francis Online; International Journal of Smart Education and Urban Society (IJSEUS); International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education. Routledge; International Journal of Educational Research Elsevier; Journal of Teacher Education for Sustainability; El Chaarani, H., El Abiad, Z. (2023); How to Write Your PhD Thesis: the Easy Handbook. Journal of Contemporary Research in Business Administration and Economic Sciences, January 2023). Other partners of the joint study programme also are following the same procedure and principles of designing courses.

SAR (chapter 3.2.1) illustrates that during the study process, the academic staff applies methods and criteria for assessment aligned with expected learning outcomes (e.g. in the courses "UL Think Tank: Digital Solutions in Education I" and "UL Think Tank: Digital Solutions in Education II", doctoral students use diverse interactive study methods to formulate the needs in educational practice). Under the guidance of the academic staff and in cooperation with social partners, they develop products for the digital learning environment to solve the challenges in educational practice. Thus, they validate the achievement of the planned outcomes practically. Social partners take part in the evaluation of the results.

2.2.2.
The SAR (chapter 3.2.2) and meeting with management of the faculty indicate that the awarding of a degree is based on the achievements of an academic staff and their research in the field of Education science. List of achievements provide evidence that achievements meet the requirements of relevant regulatory acts, ensure reaching the goals and outcomes of the study programme and corresponding study courses. The teaching staff involved in the study programme carry out research in Educational sciences, thereby validating and developing their scientific qualifications and the fact that the content of the study programme is based on the latest achievements in educational sciences. The most important research directions of teaching staff and doctoral students are general pedagogy, research on educational technology and digitization, as well as inclusive education.

At the UL, 11 faculty members are involved in the 3rdC EduSc (8 in Educational Sciences, 2 in Psychology and 1 in English philology) who regularly work on the development of new research, methodological, and teaching materials, edit and publish books, publish their research in journals, conference proceedings, etc. The content of the courses is based on the lecturers' research results, and their publications are included in the course descriptions as mandatory or additional reference (e.g. Ķestere I. (2015). Pedagoģijas vēstures pētniecība Latvijā: laikmeti, izaicinājumi un iespējas. in: Laikmets un personība. Riga: RaKa, Issue 15., 196-243.p..; Kūle M. (red.) (2018). Kritiskā domāšana. Izglītība, medijpratība, spriestspēja. LU FSI.; Mārtinsone, K., Pipere, A., Kamerāde D. (ed.). (2016). Pētniecība: teorija un prakse. Riga: RaKa; Martinsone, B., Di Sano, S., D'Elia, P., & La Salle-Finley (2023). A Conceptual Framework for Sustainable Promotion of a Positive School Climate: Context, Challenges, and Solutions. Journal of Teacher Education for Sustainability, 25 (1), 64–85. doi: 0.2478/jtes-2023-0005; Martinsone, B., Stokenberga, I, Damberga, I., Supe, I., Simões, C., Lebre, P., Canha, L., Santos, M., Caetano Santos, A., Fonseca, A.M., Santos, D., Gaspar De Matos, M., Conte, E., Agliati, A., Cavioni, V., Gandellini, S., Grazzani, I., Orgaghi, V.M., & Camilleri, L. (2022). Adolescent Social Emotional Skills, Resilience and Behavioral Problems During the COVID-19 Pandemic: A Longitudinal Study in Three European Countries. Frontiers in Psychiatry, section of Public Health. doi: 10.3389/fpsyt.2022.942692).
The publications show that achievements of staff involved in the 3rdC EduSc are internationally recognized in their fields of science. It is illustrated that between January 2018 and January 2023, the total number of publications of the academic staff involved in the implementation of the doctoral study programme in journals that are indexed in the Scopus database was 89, and the number of publications in the WoS database was 96. The publications of the academic staff are internationally cited. For example, the highest Hirsch index in the Scopus database of one lecturer is 11, followed by the faculty with a Hirsch index of 5 and 4. The highest Hirsch index in the WoS database is 9, followed by several teaching staff with an index of 3.

Relevance of achievements for the 3rdC EduSc is also demonstrated by several collective monographs in Springer, Routledge, IGI Global and UL Academic Publishing, and several entries have been developed for the Latvian National Encyclopaedia.

The teaching staff involved in the study programme can be considered as Latvian and internationally recognized researchers with an impact on the development of the research field as a whole. This is evidenced, for example, by the inclusion of one professor in the top 2% of the world's most important scientists, another professor regularly publishes her research in the most recognized educational history journals.

Recognition of achievements is also evident by participating in the international research networks and organizing ATEE (Association of Teacher Education in Europe) international conferences and publishing a conference proceeding indexed by Web of Science.

2.2.3.
SAR (chapter 3.2.3) and meetings with the PhD students, faculty management and staff confirmed that the 3rdC EduSc as a doctoral SP is highly individualized and this mode of implementation establishes an academic culture for individualized feedback. This demonstrates student-centered learning and teaching in a place. Moreover, the on-site visit provided evidence that also various input and practice methods are used in the studies, such as introductory lectures, interactive lectures, summarising lectures, and problem-oriented lectures. PhD students confirmed that practitioners and professionals from various institutions are invited to teach classes in courses in order to promote integration of theory and practice. Practical tasks, seminars, individual, pair and group work, discussions and project work, study visits to the organisations are widely used. Employers are also involved in the implementation and development of courses, as they are invited to conduct seminars.

During the study process, doctoral students receive support and feedback from the scientific supervisor and other academic staff of the study programme. The assessment criteria for receiving marks are made public in advance. Assessment gives students the opportunity to demonstrate the level of the expected learning outcomes they have achieved.

Meeting with the PhD students provided evidence that studies in the 3rdC EduSc is dominated by methods focussing on the constant activity of the doctoral student, as well as methods that facilitate communication of doctoral students in performing study tasks, solving real problems of the sector, modelling learning situations.

In the implementation and improvement of the courses, the study programme involves employers, academic staff from other universities, which can potentially become future workplaces for doctoral students. To promote the development of students' research competence, doctoral students in subsequent courses can analyse and study in-depth problems in the education practice. Senior year doctoral students of the UL are involved in the study process for first-level and Bachelor's level students as teaching assistants.

The physical environment of the studies also promotes the implementation of a student-centered approach: the auditoriums can be easily transformed for group work, individual work, and students can use digital technologies. The specifics of 3rdC EduSc provide for remote study opportunities and diverse combined learning methods.
The 3rdC EduSc is implemented in 3 institutions of higher education throughout Latvia, therefore the 22 CP programmes provided by the UL to doctoral students of all partner universities are implemented remotely. The UL e-learning environment (Moodle) is available to students in the study process in all the 3rdC EduSc partners’ universities, and it promotes independent studies. The academic staff mostly use methods that encourage students' active participation, critical thinking in the development of doctoral research and reflection. In the study process, the diversity of students' learning needs is considered when choosing pedagogical methods, encouraging students' motivation, self-reflection, and participation.

2.2.4. N/A

2.2.5.
The SAR indicates that the 3rdC EduSc has clearly defined promotion procedure which is described as a set of requirements, e.g. doctoral students who have successfully completed a doctoral study programme, passed courses in the volume of 144 CP, including the three doctoral examinations, as well as the preliminary defence of their doctoral research at the doctoral council, which is a part of

the course "The Doctoral Thesis in Education Sciences VI", are eligible. The promotion procedure demonstrates that a doctoral student has to develop the doctoral research within the framework of the doctoral study programme in cooperation with their scientific supervisor (in some cases also with the scientific consultant) and the doctoral council. The scientific adviser organises individual consultations with the doctoral student at least once a semester to discuss the work done, involves the doctoral students or helps them get involved in research projects, think tanks, hackathons, etc. related to innovations in educational sciences. The supervisor of the doctoral research monitors the doctoral student's participation in international scientific conferences (participation in at least one conference per year is mandatory), supervises the process of developing scientific publications, helps to prepare for the annual report, colloquia, field exams, and the presentation of the doctoral thesis. Attestations, colloquia, exams, and defences are carried out under the supervision of the doctoral council. Within two years after the completion of the doctoral study programme, the doctoral thesis must be submitted for the defence of the PhD degree to the Promotional Council of the relevant scientific field, for the public defence of the doctoral thesis.

A doctoral thesis can be a dissertation, a thematically unified set of scientific publications, or a monograph - a peer-reviewed scientific book dedicated to one topic. The director of the PhD study programme pointed out that the new model of doctoral studies will change the promotion process and regulations but this idea is just in planning stages at the national level.

Annex 27 “Compliance of the DSP “Educational Sciences” with the specific regulatory framework” provides extensive information on above mentioned procedures.

2.2.6.
Presented in the SAR (chapter 3.2.6.) the PhD students demonstrate a wide range of research problems in the field of Education sciences. The topics represent teacher education and professional development, bullying phenomenon at schools, subject’s learning skills, digital competence, social innovations in educational sciences, etc. (e.g final thesis "Learning the semiotics of contemporary fine arts in vocational cultural education", "Development of self-directed learning skills in the learning process", "Digital competence of health care students and the factors affecting it", "Conceptualization of pedagogical entrepreneurship for the improvement of teacher education" "Development of pedagogical digital competence for providing online learning", "Integration of augmented reality technology in the design learning process in high school", "High school students' transition skills in mathematics education", "Pedagogical concept model of gaming for the development of learning motivation"). These research topics and problems also reflect academic achievements of academic staff. The selection procedure of the research problems is possible in three ways that represent: a) connection with educational institutions and their areas of development; b) involvement in the big research projects of the UL; c) individual cooperation with a researcher on the basis of the individual research interests. These selection principles represent diverse options to enter the PhD studies.

Conclusions on this set of criteria, by specifying strengths and weaknesses

The 3rdC EduSc as a joint SP is an individualised programme by research interests of the PhD students who are selected by applying three options that reflect development of research culture from different perspectives. The UL takes a lead in the consortium of three HEI. The SP is designed in a way to equip Phd’s for solid research and provides international opportunities to establish discussions on the research topics.

Strengths:

1) High international reputation of research achievements and researchers who are participating in the PhD study programme;
2) Research areas and topics for PhD studies are allocated taking into account achievements and specialised areas of the partnership universities;
3) Selection procedure of PhD's and their research topics is clear and diverse to ensure academic freedom;
4) The content of the PhD study programme is based on scientific research of academic staff and new developments of the field.

Weaknesses:
1) Weak cooperation among the partnership universities regarding understanding of quality for defending PhD thesis.

Assessment of the requirement [5] (applicable only to master's or doctoral study programmes)

1 R5 - The study programme for obtaining a master's or doctoral degree is based on the achievements and findings of the respective field of science or field of artistic creation.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Achievements and findings of the field of Education Science are presented in the SAR and confirmed during on-site visit and meetings. PhD students provided very positive feedback on their studies and opportunities that the study programme is providing for their development as researchers. The study programme is built on recent research of academic staff and meeting strategic development directions of the Development plan 2021-2027.

2.3. Resources and Provision of the Study Programme

Analysis

2.3.1.
Implementation of the study programme takes place in the premises of the faculty, which is adapted for the needs of the study process, providing the study rooms with the necessary equipment (SAR, p. 265). Responsibility of management provided by the established Department of Education Sciences and Pedagogical Innovation. Rooms are available according to the needs of the study process. Experts were introduced to faculty infrastructure this year on May 14 and in interviews with students on the 15th of May, they heard positive feedback about the faculty's material-technical facilities during the study process. During interviews with students (15th of May, 2024) experts noticed student satisfaction with available library resources, especially electronic databases.

SP is supported by a robust infrastructure and advanced technological resources, critical for achieving the study programme's learning outcomes. The investment in innovative technologies, such as 3D printing workshops, advanced lecture rooms with hybrid and live-streaming capabilities, and equipped computer classrooms, ensures that doctoral students have access for research and teaching. Additionally, the integration of E-learning platforms like Moodle, MS Teams, and Zoom supports flexible learning and effective communication between students and faculty. Overall, the infrastructure and resources provided are crucial for developing the competencies required for high-level pedagogical and educational research (SAR, p. 265).

2.3.2.

The doctoral study programme is implemented in cooperation with several research institutions (SAR, p. 265). The SP is implemented in cooperation with partner universities - Daugavpils University, Riga Technical University's Academy of Liepāja and Rēzekne Academy of Technologies, along with the FEPA Scientific Institute of Pedagogy, providing extensive resources, research projects, and funding opportunities. Additionally, the study programme leverages e-learning platforms, international research databases, and a new PhD funding model to support doctoral students' research and studies. The UL FEPA implements research projects (Latvia Science Council, European Commission, European Social Fund), which gives the opportunity to involve doctoral students, as well as to attract funding for the innovations necessary for the study programme. The UL provides students with access to international research databases.

PhD study programme implementation is going to be organized based on the new PhD funding model and teaching staff as well as students are involved in development of the SP by commonly developing the concept of PhD model.

2.3.3.
The implementation of the SP takes place according to the available financial resources, the information confirms that both operational costs and investments are covered, as well as administrative deductions are made. The minimum number of students (34) is calculated and monitored in the establishment of the SP, the number of reflectants and enrolments is higher than the minimum. Study costs have been calculated and monitored according to how they are implemented (total revenue 182 898,24 eur, expenditure 182 516 eur). The costs of implementation of study programmes have been calculated in detail, the course of the continued study process is ensured (SAR, p. 267).
Although the PhD model is yet to be developed, experts in interviews have identified high expectations of sustainable funding system development through these improvements. New model will provide salary based remuneration for PhD students with clear involvement in FEPA research work.

Experts during student interviews noticed the challenging necessity of balancing study process with paid work outside of studies that leads to drop-out through social and employment conditions among students. Although there are high expectations for the new PhD funding model, its implementation is still in progress. This ongoing development creates some uncertainty regarding the sustainability and effectiveness of funding for doctoral students.

Conclusions on this set of criteria, by specifying strengths and weaknesses

Taking into account the improvement and development of the study programme, experts have obtained assurance that SP infrastructure, technological resources, and collaborative efforts significantly contribute to a high-quality study process, though attention must be paid to the evolving PhD funding model and vigilant financial monitoring to maintain sustainability and support.

Strengths:
1) SP benefits from a comprehensive infrastructure that includes advanced lecture rooms, 3D printing workshops, and equipped computer classrooms, all of which are crucial for achieving the program's learning outcomes and supporting high-level research and teaching activities.
2) The cooperation with partner universities and research institutions ensures extensive resources, research projects, and funding opportunities, creating a solid foundation for achieving learning and research outcomes.

Weaknesses:
1) The new PhD funding model creates some uncertainty regarding the sustainability and effectiveness of funding for doctoral students.
2) Detailed monitoring and calculation of study costs indicate a need for continuous assessment to ensure that operational and investment costs are consistently covered without compromising the program's quality.

Assessment of the requirement [6]

1 R6 - Compliance of the study provision, science provision (if applicable), informative provision (including library), material and technical provision and financial provision with the conditions for the implementation of the study programme and ensuring the achievement of learning outcomes

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Implementation of the joint doctoral SP provides well evaluated, demanded SP, implementation is provided on sound financial conditions and further improvements are planned to increase attractiveness of PhD SP.

2.4. Teaching Staff

Analysis

2.4.1.
According to the SAR (p. 269.), the selection of the academic staff for this study programme was based on the following specific criteria: doctoral degree in a scientific field corresponding to the research field; elected professor, associate professor, or leading researcher in one of the partner universities; active LSC expert status in the scientific sector corresponding to the research field.

According to the SAR (chapter 3.4.1.), all together 11 teaching staff members from the UL teach in this study programme: all of them hold a doctoral degree, and have been elected to academic positions at the UL (7 professors, 2 associate professors and 2 leading researchers/ docents). The 9 out of 11 teaching staff members are LSC experts.

The level of English language proficiency of the teaching staff (C1 for 8 faculty members, B2 for 3) allows the study programme to be implemented in English. Since the licensing of the study programme, the academic staff have improved their professional competence in several professional development courses.

According to the SAR, the total number of study hours per programme is 658 (the study workload for lecturers is 1000 hours). The specifics of the doctoral study programme provide for the fact that in the 600-hour part of the annual workload allocated for research, the academic staff has 50 hours for supervising 1 doctoral thesis, 20 hours for reviewing the manuscript before the defence of the thesis, as well as for work in the doctoral council, and 2 hours for each doctoral student for each member of the doctoral council.

As in 2023, there are 25 active doctoral students, for the implementation of the study programme, 1,250 hours of thesis supervision are paid from the research work. A total of 658 study hours and 2110 hours of scientific work are foreseen for the implementation of the programme, i.e. 1.73 FTE for 25 students. Reviewing the pre defence manuscripts of 9 doctoral theses (2 reviewers for each paper) requires 360 hours. And 500 hours are planned for the 10 doctoral council members, considering that 25 students are actively studying in the study programme.

In 2020, the possibilities of virtual mobility were used by 2 teaching staff from the study programme. In-person ERASMUS + mobility opportunities have been used 6 times in 2022 and 2023 by 5 members of the teaching staff.

It all enables the achievement of the aims and learning outcomes of the study programme and the relevant study courses.

2.4.2.
According to the SAR (chapter 3.4.2), since the study programme was licensed, there have been no significant changes in the composition of the academic staff: one professor has retired from the UL, two associate professors have become professors and two assistant professors have become associate professors.

Since 2022/2023, one associate professor has stopped teaching, because the course overlaps in the study programme. According to the Experts view, this is good evidence of optimality, that after the overlap was found, one staff member stopped teaching.

In 2020/2021, a visiting professor from Germany worked in the study programme and taught several courses together with LU teaching staff. In 2021/2022 guest professors from Cyprus, Lithuania, Germany, and the USA worked in the study programme, and in 2022/2023 there was one from Estonia. Three of the mentioned professors worked in the study programme thanks to the funding of the ESF project, which ended in 2023.

Professors from abroad always bring fresh ideas. But the SAR (p. 272) states that "the lack of funding may cause difficulties in attracting visiting professors in the future.

However, considering that one visiting professor was on the Fulbright scholarship, and two more on the ERASMUS+ mobility programme, in general the possibility of attracting foreign lecturers to the study programme is not at risk.

2.4.3.
According to the SAR (chapter 3.4.3), since the start of this curriculum in 2020, the majority of the academic staff (8) have led the projects, and 9 out of 11 teaching staff of the study programme have been involved in various projects as leading researchers and experts. In total, during the period from 2020 to 2023, the academic staff have worked on 43 research projects.

The 23 Erasmus+ projects have been implemented, of which 3 are Erasmus+ K3, 8 Erasmus+ K2 projects. In the period from 2020 to 2023, the academic staff have also participated in projects financed by INTERREG, EERA, Latvia-Lithuania-Taiwan project grant, as well as CERV (Rights and Values Programme) financed by the European Commission.

In 2020, the staff participated in the National Research Programme (NRP) study "Life with COVID”. The academic staff implements several European Social Fund projects. Since 2020, the programme has been implementing 2 projects: "Childhood discourse in Latvian museums and its integration in the e-learning environment at a university" and "Scientific culture in secondary education for the sustainability of society".

Several projects are also being implemented at the request of the Interdepartmental Coordinating Centre, Ministry of Education and Science, and NCE.

Activities in the research field raise the teaching, writing and learning quality, especially when students can participate in this. As every scientific publishing is a longer project, it helps to connect both theory and practice, which in doctoral studies is essential.

2.4.4.
According to SAR (Table 3.4.3), the members of the staff of this programme have excellent results in the context of publishing and being quoted. From January 2018 to January 2023, the total number of scientific publications of the academic staff, in journals that are indexed on the Scopus database was 89, and on the WoS database was 96. The average number of scientific publications per one teacher (during 6 years) is 18. The activity of publishing differs - some teachers wrote 6-7, but some 21; 40, or even 61.

Many publications are written jointly by the lecturers involved in the programme. Some examples:
- 2021. Daniela, L., Rubene, Z., Rūdolfa, A. Parents' Perspectives on Remote Learning in the Pandemic Context. // Sustainability Vol. 13, N 7 (2021), Article number: 3640, p.[1]-12: tab., fig. https://doi.org/10.3390/su13073640 URL: https://www.mdpi.com/2071-1050/13/7/3640/ ISSN 2071-1050. (SCOPUS, WoS).
- 2021. Stars, I., Rubene, Z. How Do Adolescents Obtain Health Information: A Phenomenographic Study of Adolescent Health Literacy in Health Education // Research Anthology on Public Health Services, Policies, and Education Hershey : IGI Global, 2021. P. 190-206. DOI: 10.4018/978-1-7998-8960-1.ch009 , URL: https://www.igi-global.com/gateway/chapter/281976 ISBN 9781799889601. (SCOPUS).

The data about quoted papers is significant, too: according to the SAR, the articles of the staff members of this programme are highly valued in the world. For example, the highest Hirsch index on the Scopus database for one lecturer is 11, followed by lecturers with a Hirsch index of 5 and 4. And - the highest Hirsch index on the WoS database for a professor participating in the programme is 9, followed by several faculty members with an index of 3.

Experts find this statistics excellent, especially in the context of doctoral study programmes, as the scientific activity is the main factor here.

2.4.5.
According to the SAR (chapter 3.4.4.), there are 4 types of cooperation of the academic staff of this study programme:
1) cooperation among the teaching staff, involved in the study programme within the framework of the LU;
2) cooperation of teaching staff of partner universities involved in the study programme;
3) cooperation with teaching staff from other universities in Latvia;
4) cooperation with teaching staff from abroad.
According to the Experts view, this ensures the achievement of the aims of the study programme and the interconnection of study courses within the study programme.

Doctoral students work in the research projects alongside teaching staff. Some of the ways of promoting cooperation are joint work of study programme lecturers in research projects, preparation of joint scientific publications, which give the opportunity to improve the content of study courses, based on the latest research.
In a similar way, cooperation with partner universities is realised through joint research and publications, as well as the representation of UL, the academic staff and the promotion councils of DU and LiepU.

Active international cooperation has also been realised. Experience exchange visits have been carried out with doctoral students and heads of doctoral programs at Oxford Brookes University in Great Britain, University of Helsinki in Finland, University of Leuven in Belgium, etc.

Cooperation with the academic staff from abroad is also implemented by engaging colleagues as advisors for doctoral theses if the research is comparative, as is written in the SAR, and was confirmed in the site visit meetings in UL.

Conclusions on this set of criteria, by indicating strengths and weaknesses

The staff of this joint doctoral study programme is committed to science. They are active publishers and eager to cooperate with each other inside the university and also with colleagues from other universities. The statistics of research projects, scientific articles and quotations is a proof for that.

Strengths:
1) The academic staff implements several European Social Fund projects.
2) Doctoral students work in the research projects alongside teaching staff.
3) International cooperation between scientists is significant; there were visiting professors from abroad.
4) The academic staff have improved their professional competence in several professional development courses.
5) Many publications are written jointly by the lecturers involved in the study programme.
6) During the period from 2020 to 2023, the academic staff have worked on 43 research projects.
7) The total number of scientific publications during this period: in the Scopus database was 89, and in the WoS database 96 articles. The average number of scientific publications per one teacher (during 6 years) is 18.

Weaknesses: Not identified

Assessment of the requirement [7]

1 R7 - Compliance of the qualification of the academic staff and visiting professors, visiting associate professors, visiting docents, visiting lecturers and visiting assistants with the conditions for the implementation of the study programme and the requirements set out in the respective regulatory enactments.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

According to the information experts found in context of this chapter,
all requirements are fulfilled as the qualifications of the academic staff correspond to the needs of the study programme and their publishing activity is excellent.

2.5. Assessment of the Compliance

Requirements

1 1 - The study programme complies with the State Academic Education Standard or the Professional Higher Education Standard

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

2 2 - The study programme complies with a valid professional standard or the requirements for the professional qualification (if there is no professional standard required for the relevant occupation) provided if the completion of the study programme leads to a professional qualification (if applicable)

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

3 3 - The descriptions of the study courses and the study materials have been prepared in all languages in which the study programme is implemented, and they comply with the requirements set forth in Section 561 , Paragraph two and Section 562 , Paragraph two of the Law on Higher Education Institutions.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The requirements are fully met, as evident by the study course descriptions in SAR Annex 30_9.

4 4 - The sample of the diploma to be issued for the acquisition of the study programme complies with the procedure according to which state recognised documents of higher education are issued.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The sample of the diploma includes elements associated with the state-recognised documents of higher education (Cabinet Regulations No 202) as evident from the SAR Annex 22_9.

5 5 - The academic staff of the academic study programme complies with the requirements set forth in Section 55, Paragraph one, Clause 3 of the Law on Higher Education Institutions.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Seven professors and two associate professors who are elected to academic positions at the UL are involved in the implementation of the study programme as evident by the SAR, p. 270, and by the SAR Annex “24.03.2023 - 30-37_72 - Apliecinājums AL55 Izglītības zinātnes ENG.edoc”.

6 6 - Academic study programmes provided for less than 250 full-time students may be implemented and less than five professors and associated professors of the higher education institution may be involved in the implementation of the mandatory and limited elective part of these study programmes provided that the relevant opinion of the Council for Higher Education has been received in accordance with Section 55, Paragraph two of the Law on Higher Education Institutions.

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

7 7 - At least five teaching staff members with a doctoral degree are among the academic staff of an academic 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 teaching staff members with a doctoral degree are among the academic staff of a professional doctoral study programme in arts (if applicable).

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Eleven teaching staff members with a doctoral degree are among the academic staff, nine of which are experts approved by the Latvian Science Council as evident by SAR, p. 270, by the SAR Annex “17.01.2024 - 30-37_2 - Declaration - 5 doctors - DSP Educational Sciences.edoc” and by the SAR Annex “24.03.2023 - 30-37_72 - Apliecinājums AL55 Izglītības zinātnes ENG.edoc”.

8 8 - The teaching staff members involved in the implementation of the study programme are proficient in the official 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.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The requirement is fully met as evident by the SAR Annex 10 and and by the Head Of Study

Field Declaration, SAR Annex “30-37_85_Head of study field declaration_knowledge of the official language_EN.edoc”.

9 9 - The teaching staff members to be involved in the implementation of the study programme have at least B2-level knowledge of a related foreign language, if the study programme or any part thereof is to be implemented in a foreign language (if applicable).

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The requirement is fully met as evident by the Annex 10 and by the Head Of Study Field Declaration, SAR Annex “26.04.2023 - 30-37_84 - Apliecinājums - Angļu valoda B2 - EN.edoc”.

10 10 - The sample of the study agreement complies with the mandatory provisions to be included in the study agreement.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The sample of the study agreement complies with the mandatory provisions (Cabinet Regulations No 70) to be included in the study agreement as evident from the SAR Annex 8.

11 11 - The higher education institution / college has provided confirmation that students will be provided with opportunities to continue their education in another study programme or another higher education institution or college (agreement with another accredited higher education institution or college) if the implementation of the study programme is terminated.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

In case of discontinuation of the joint doctoral study programme, the UL undertakes to provide students with opportunities to continue their studies in the doctoral study programme Social Sciences (51312) in the study field Sociology, Political Science and Anthropology as evident by the SAR Annex 6.

12 12 - The higher education institution / college has provided confirmation that students are guaranteed compensation for losses if the study programme is not accredited or the study programme’s license is revoked due to the actions (actions or omissions) of the higher education institution or college and the student does not wish to continue studies in another study programme.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The requirement is fully met as evident by the SAR Annex “25.03.2024 - 71-61_4 - Rektora apliecinājums par SV “Izglītība un.edoc”.

13 13 - The joint study programmes comply with the requirements prescribed in Section 55.(1), Paragraphs one, two, and seven of the Law on Higher Education Institutions (if applicable)

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The requirement is met as evident by the SAR Annex “Annex_23_Compliance of the joint DSP Educational Sciences_requirements of the Law on HE”.

14 14 - Compliance with the requirements specified in other regulatory enactments that apply to the study programme being assessed (if applicable)

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Compliance with the Law on scientific activity and the Procedures and criteria for the award of the degree of Doctor of Science (PhD) is met as evident by the SAR Annex “Annex 27_Compliance of the DSP “Educational Sciences” with the specific regulatory framework”.

Assessment of the requirement [8]

1 R8 - Compliance of the study programme with the requirements set forth in the Law on Higher Education Institutions and other regulatory enactments.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The compliance of the study programme with the requirements set forth in the Law on Higher Education Institutions and other regulatory enactments are evident through analysis of the requirements and documents attached to the SAR, including statements signed by the Study Field Director, the Rector, approved by the UL Senate, etc.

General conclusions about the study programme, indicating the most important strengths and weaknesses of the study programme

In general, the joint doctoral study programme fulfils the requirements corresponding to the study field, state regulations and UL's strategy. The study programme can be well implemented in all applied languages (Latvian, English). The 3rdC EduSc as a joint SP offers an individualised approach by research interests of the PhD students. The UL has a leading role in the consortium of three other HEI. The SP is designed in to equip PhD students with strong research and provides international opportunities to establish discussions on the research topics.

The most important strengths identified in the study programme:
1) High international reputation of research achievements and researchers who are participating in the PhD program;
2) International cooperation between scientists is significant; there were many visiting professors from abroad.
3) During the period from 2020 to 2023, the academic staff have worked on 43 research projects. The total number of scientific publications during this period: in the Scopus database was 89, and in the WoS database 96 articles. The average number of scientific publications per one teacher (during 6 years) is 18.

The most important weaknesses identified in the study programme:
1) Weak cooperation among joined partnership universities regarding understanding of quality for defending PhD thesis.

Evaluation of the study programme "Educational Sciences"

Evaluation of the study programme:

Excellent

2.6. Recommendations for the Study Programme "Educational Sciences"

Short-term recommendations

To develop the plan for increasing career development opportunities for doctoral students and monitor their careers after defence of the thesis.
To propose or organise English language courses for PhD students to eliminate the gap in proficiency of English.

Long-term recommendations

To establish clear guidelines between joint partner universities on the quality for defending PhD thesis and to ensure monitoring on agreed quality for finalising the PhD thesis.
To ensure that, if students chooses to study only the modules offered by UL, then the contributions from partners are made at least in the form of mobility, research, projects, or other ways that assures collaboration between the institutions and the students.
For UL should to take a leading role (e.g. to establish a quality committee before defense of the PhD thesis) in the new cycle of the joined PhD study programme.

III - Assessment of the Requirements for the Study Field and the Relevant Study Programmes

III - Assessment of the Requirements for the Study Field and the Relevant Study Programmes

Assessment of the Requirements for the Study Field

Requirements	Requirement Evaluation			Comment
R1 - Pursuant to Section 5, Paragraph 2.1 of the Law on Higher Education Institutions, the higher education institution/ college shall ensure continuous improvement, development, and efficient performance of the study field whilst implementing its internal quality assurance system:	Fully compliant			The Quality Assurance System and continuous improvement procedures are described in the Quality Management Handbook. The efficiency of the system was confirmed during the on-site visits via multiple representatives from the managerial structures of UL.
R2 - Compliance of scientific research and artistic creation with the level of development of scientific research and artistic creation (if applicable)	Fully compliant			All requirements are fulfilled: in this study field the focus is on science integration, specialising in several areas of competitiveness and increasing the research capacity of the university. The main thematic areas of research (the quality of education, history of education, philosophy of education, technology enriched learning, inclusive education, educational psychology, educational policy and comparative research) are very diverse and correspond to the goals of the UL.

Requirements	Requirement Evaluation	Comment
R3 - The cooperation implemented within the study field with various Latvian and foreign organizations ensures the achievement of the aims of the study field.	Fully compliant	The compliance assessment is fully met, as the institution cooperates with domestic and foreign institutions, especially in the area of teaching by pursuing similar subjects and study programmes (SAR, Annex 16_List of partnership and cooperation agreement_EN).
R4 - Elimination of deficiencies and shortcomings identified in the previous assessment of the study field, if any, or implementation of the recommendations provided.	Fully compliant	SAR Annex 20_Report on implementation of recommendations_EN.docx presents evidence on implemented recommendations from the previous assessment procedures. It has to be noted that recommendations of assessment of the study field in 2013 are not applicable and recommendations from 2020 are related just to single study programmes that were licensed recently. During this site visit interviews and presented evidence demonstrate strategic thinking of the UL and the leadership of the Faculty's management to respond and eliminate deficiencies regarding studies, research and internationalisation.

Assessment of the Requirements for the Relevant Study Programmes of the Study Field

No.	Study programme	R5	R6	R7	R8	Evaluation of the study programme (excellent, good, average, poor)
1	Preschool Teacher (41141)	Not relevant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Good
2	Teacher (42141)	Not relevant	Partially compliant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Good
3	Teacher of Primary Education (42141)	Not relevant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Good

No.	Study programme	R5	R6	R7	R8	Evaluation of the study programme (excellent, good, average, poor)
4	Educational Sciences (45142)	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Partially compliant	Excellent
5	Technological innovations and design for education (45142)	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Excellent
6	Teacher (46141)	Not relevant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Excellent
7	Educational Sciences (51142)	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Excellent

The Dissenting Opinions of the Experts

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