

Expert group joint opinion

Evaluation Procedure: Assessment of Study Field

Higher Education Institution: Rīga Stradiņš University

Study field: Sport

Experts:

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

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Rīga Stradiņš University`s (RSU) study field “Sports” aims to align education with sector needs, emphasizing academic relevance and employability. Its development is based on a SWOT analysis highlighting strengths such as a qualified faculty, strong research capacity, and programme consolidation, which reduces fragmentation and enhances integration with short-cycle studies. However, weaknesses remain, notably limited internationalisation, regional programme availability, and insufficient global exposure for students, impacting their competitiveness.

The study programmes (Short-Cycle Professional Higher Education Study Programme “Sports Coach” and First-Cycle (Professional Bachelor’s) Study Programme “Sports Science”) are clear, logical structure facilitates progression from short-cycle to bachelor’s degrees, with continuous refinement based on labour market feedback. The quality assurance system, rooted in EFQM and Deming principles, ensures ongoing monitoring and transparency. Despite this, challenges include the inactive Liepāja campus due to low student interest, limited international experiences for students, and inadequate workload planning that hampers faculty research. Staff salaries – particularly regionally – are seen as insufficient, threatening motivation and retention. The lack of systematic employer feedback reduces responsiveness to labour market needs.

Facilities are generally modern and well-equipped, supporting both education and research, though some infrastructure, like outdated library collections and unused sports facilities, requires upgrading. The staff is highly qualified, actively engaged in research and industry cooperation, and supported by ongoing professional development. However, international collaboration remains underdeveloped, with limited joint research projects and low engagement of international guest lecturers, especially in regional programmes. Disparities among staff research productivity highlight the need for a more cohesive research culture.

While existing international partnerships are extensive, the level of engagement remains modest, with reliance on informal contacts and limited student mobility. Research efforts are aligned with institutional priorities but lack distribution among faculty members, with few publications in high-impact journals. Overall, RSU maintains suitable resources and facilities, but strategic enhancements in internationalisation, regional engagement, and research outputs are necessary to strengthen long-term sustainability and competitiveness.

In summary, RSU’s study field “Sports” has established a solid foundation through a coherent curriculum, qualified staff, and suitable facilities. However, to ensure its long-term relevance and international competitiveness, strategic focus areas such as increasing internationalisation, expanding regional programme access, fostering impactful research, and enhancing employer-student cooperation must be prioritised. Addressing these challenges will be essential for developing a more resilient, globally oriented, and industry-responsive sports education ecosystem.

I - Assessment of the Study Field

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1.1 Management of the Study Field

Analysis

1.1.1.

According to SAR (p. 19–20) in 2025, Rīga Stradiņš University (RSU) will update its strategy to include the development of the study field “Sports” and RSU Latvian Academy of Sport Education (LASE). Compliance of study field goals with the area of the HEI’s activities is determined in two new development plans – Study Quality and Study Programme Development Plan (approved by RSU Senate on 13.02.2024) and RSU Science Development Plan (approved by RSU Senate on 13.02.2024). RSU plans to close the professional master's programme "Sports Science" and will no longer accept students for this curriculum. Due to the rapid growth of the sports and health sector and the increasing demand for professionally trained sports coaches in society, RSU will launch a new sports education programme at the C-category sports coach level in September 2025.

The aim of the study field “Sports” is defined and is realised by two study programmes: short-cycle professional higher education study programme “Sports Coach” (41813) and a first cycle higher education programme “Sports Science” (42813, 42141). The study programme “Sports Coach” and its sub-programmes align with the study field and clearly prepare professionals for the sports sector. Graduates work in fitness clubs, sports organisations, professional orientation and general education schools, and other sports institutions, as well as operate as entrepreneurs in the private sports sector (SAR, p. 149). This was also confirmed by meetings with employers (site visit meetings: 10.09.2025 and 11.09.2025).

During the experts' site visit, employers pointed out that there is a growing need for both B-level and A-level specialists in the field of sports. Therefore, more attention should be paid to training sports specialists with at least a bachelor's degree.

The interconnection of the study programmes included in the study field is clear and logical. For example, the compulsory courses (Part A) in the short cycle programme overlap with the professional bachelor's programme “Sports Science”, so that graduates of the short cycle programme will be able to align the courses they have studied and continue their education in the bachelor's programme (SAR, p. 20, 149).

At a meeting with members of the Liepāja branch management, it became clear that the study group had not been opened in recent years due to a lack of student candidates. RSU agreed to open a study group with a minimum of 20 tuition-paying students, but in the summer of 2025, for example, there were only 14–15 candidates. At the same time, the sports sector in Liepāja and its surrounding region is seeing an increase in the number of people visiting training and fitness centers (site visit meeting with employers on September 10, 2025), which creates a need for highly qualified sports coaches (this is also confirmed by SAR, p. 151). Therefore, not opening a study group in remote areas of the country is unjustified, and RSU should not only consider opening a study group with a smaller number of students, but also create scholarship opportunities to ensure needs and the development trends of society and the national economy.

It is clear that the RSU must manage its financial resources well, so it is understandable that it invests in programmes with higher demand. Discussions with employers at the Liepāja Branch revealed that there is a shortage of coaches and physical education teachers. From the experts' point of view, the income from programmes with higher demand should be directed to support fields that are extremely important to the state and society. The training of coaches and physical education teachers is invaluable from the point of view of public health and sustainability. It should also be borne in mind that education is fee-based, which means that students from more remote areas have to pay for accommodation in Riga in addition to tuition fees. It may be that if they find a job in or near Riga, they will not return to their hometown. We therefore consider it necessary to offer subsidized education to people living near Liepāja, which would help shape the exercise habits of young people in Latvia and promote a healthy lifestyle.

During the SAR review and assessment site visit meetings, it was concluded that attention should be focused on Category B (or even A) level coach preparation and that coach training should also be

available at the Liepāja branch.

1.1.2.

According to Annex 4.1, on 1 July 2024, by decision of the Ministry of Education and Science, the LASE was integrated into RSU as a structural unit, equivalent to the status of a faculty. In the consolidation process, RSU has taken over all the rights and obligations relating to LASE, developing a coherent development strategy and creating a unified health and sports science ecosystem. It is planned that within three to five years, the RSU LASE will ensure internationally competitive, research-based higher education of high quality and good governance. The development plan of the study field "Sports" has been developed within the consolidation process of RSU and the LASE in collaboration with a large number of specialists.

The RSU has identified and analysed the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of the study field "Sports" and integrated them into the development planning document (Annex 4.1). There are 11 strengths indicated in the study field SWOT analysis. One strength mentioned is "the largest reserve of teacher-practitioners among all sports education institutions," but it is clear that the teaching staff is also highly educated, as 35 of the 57 lecturers have a doctoral degree (SAR, p. 131). Among the 14 weaknesses listed, there is no clear mention of the lack/absence of internationalisation among students (Erasmus+ short- and long-term exchanges, lectures by foreign lecturers, including e-lectures) or the failure to open a study group at the Liepāja branch. Both shortcomings became clear during assessment visits and meetings with alumni, students, employers, and faculty members.

In terms of opportunities, the first thing to mention is the integration of LASE into RSU - makes it possible to concentrate sport as a societal, social, achievement and health promoting factor in one university, which can contribute to a unified national policy on sport at different levels. The benefits of consolidation were also clearly visible during the assessment visit - the library and the opportunities it offers (including databases, e-books, etc.), innovative and modern premises, IT facilities and support, and training opportunities for teaching staff and students. The possibility of involving foreign lecturers and creating a wider network of placements with local and foreign employers is also mentioned. Developing a network (including internship bases) at the national level is also important in cities and counties further away from Riga in order to ensure that the necessary trained specialists are available there as well.

Six threats have been identified, one of which is "Ageing of teaching staff and shortage of new lecturers," which definitely requires the development of a separate strategy on how to support new teaching staff.

1.1.3.

The study field "Sports" and relevant programmes are managed in accordance with the Process Description No. 35 "Planning and administration of the study process" (Rector's decree of 31.07.2020; SAR, p. 23). Student satisfaction with studies, success indicators, participation of students in study programme development, as well as employment of graduates in the sector and feedback from employers regarding the work of students during training placement or the competence of graduates indicate the effectiveness of the management structure and process in achieving the aims set (SAR, p. 23). In discussions with employers (site visit on September 11, 2025), it became clear that feedback on the curriculum can be provided informally during everyday conversations, including when supervising students, but there is no known strategy for collecting formal and regular feedback.

During the assessment visit discussions with employers, it was ascertained that none of the employer representatives were aware of the establishment of a formal feedback system by RSU. This indicates a clear communication gap. Furthermore, although it was stated in the report that 'RSU has established a regular and formal feedback system,' it appears to be ineffective in practice,

and there is an absence of a defined strategy or justification for implementing necessary improvements.

In addition to other tasks, the head of the study field manages the structure, quality, and development of the study area, as well as its relevance to the economic interests of the sector. The study programme director is responsible for developing/updating the content of the programme, planning the acquisition of the programme, and preparing a coordination plan to be submitted to the Council of Deans (SAR, p. 24). Discussions with teaching staff (site visit meetings on 10.09.2025 and 11.09.2025) revealed that their work is fully supported by the study programme directors, but more attention needs to be paid to planning the workload of teaching staff whose tasks also include research. Attention should also be paid to the salary levels of teaching staff (including those at the Liepāja branch) and the workload of the study programme directors themselves.

According to the SAR document (p. 24), the educational process at the Liepāja branch of RSU is managed through cooperation between the head of the curriculum, the management of the Liepāja branch, and the teaching staff. Unfortunately, however, no study groups have been opened in Liepāja in recent years.

Technical staff ensure that all curriculum requirements are met, and a unified system and procedure has been established for the improvement and purchase of materials, technical, methodological, IT, and other resources (SAR, p. 49). RSU's physical IT infrastructure is impressive. The infrastructure and material and technical support created by RSU (including the library, databases, and e-books) are equally accessible to all RSU study programmes (SAR, p. 50-51, Annex 23.3). Scientific research is an integral part of the learning process, which is why a scientific environment has been created in the premises – scientific equipment, computers, audio/video equipment, material and technical equipment, and access to scientific databases. The latter is confirmed by both SAR (p. 52) and during site visit to various RSU buildings and laboratories.

Experts recommend developing a formal and regular feedback system for employers; developing a strategy for planning the working hours of teaching staff and study programme directors so that teaching staff engaged in research actually have time to conduct research during working hours; and finding ways to ensure competitive salaries for teaching staff (including at the Liepāja branch).

1.1.4.

RSU has implemented a comprehensive, coherent system for student admission, recognition of prior learning, and evaluation of academic achievements, governed by the "Regulations on Crediting Study Results and Resuming Studies at Subsequent Study Stages" (available in RSU website). These procedures, which encompass recognition of formal and non-formal education and professional experience, are structured to ensure logical efficacy in supporting student progression (SAR, p. 24). Admission processes at RSU are conducted in accordance with study-level-specific requirements approved annually by the RSU Senate. Detailed admission regulations, accessible on the RSU website in Latvian and English and outlined in Annex 1 and Annex 23.1, Paragraph 1.4, stipulate criteria pertaining to student enrolment, recognition of qualifications, and certification. These regulations are systematically reviewed and updated each year by the Study Department in collaboration with study programme directors, ensuring alignment with institutional and legal standards.

The RSU admission policy (SAR, p. 25) mandates transparent, fair, and non-discriminatory selection procedures, grounded in open competition and equal opportunity principles. Uniform admission regulations are applied institution-wide, rooted in national legal frameworks and statutory principles, thereby safeguarding access rights for qualified applicants. RSU ensures the proper processing of application documents, adherence to admission criteria, and timely communication of results, followed by the formalisation of study agreements with successful candidates. Post-agreement, RSU facilitates candidate matriculation.

Recognition of prior qualifications is conducted through cooperation with other higher education

institutions, quality assurance agencies, and the national ENIC/NARIC centre, ensuring harmonised recognition within the national context. The recognition procedures align with the principles of the Lisbon Convention and are executed by a unified recognition commission. This commission involves experts across various thematic areas and includes student representatives delegated by the Student Union, thereby promoting equitable decision-making and consistent interpretation across all educational disciplines.

1.1.5.

Since the consolidation of RSU and LASE, internal regulations have been reviewed and aligned, with RSU regulations applying to both entities (SAR, p. 26). Student assessment follows RSU's Academic Regulations and Evaluation Process Description No. 6, which define learning outcomes (knowledge, skills, competence). Course-specific requirements, including assessment criteria, are detailed in individual course descriptions, which form the basis of a contract between lecturer and student. RSU LASE course descriptions are integrated into the RSU system, and HEI will update them in line with future system enhancements. According to students (based on a site visit and discussions with alumni and students on September 11, 2025), the necessary documents are mostly available in the e-learning system, and the course description, independent work, and completion requirements are known and clear. If necessary, clarifications can be requested from the teaching staff or the study programme director. In some subjects, there is a lack of study materials in the e-learning system, but these are rather exceptions.

Assessment adheres to lecturer-specific criteria, with final grades expressed on a ten-point scale. Intermediate assessments may be pass/fail, with feedback provided in writing or orally. Assignments are submitted via the e-learning system and checked for plagiarism. Lecturers are encouraged to utilise RSU e-learning tools, with training provided by the Centre for Educational Growth. Student evaluations consider participation, quality of work, and examination results. The assessment system is outlined at course start, promoting continuous study over cramming and aligning with learning outcomes (SAR, p. 26).

Lecturers have academic freedom in course delivery, provided methods align with intended outcomes. Course quality is monitored regularly through internal reviews, including input from teaching staff and students (some cases with external partners). Teaching methods are evaluated through feedback, and best practices are adopted in course updates. The assessment approach integrates formative and summative methods, with active student participation and responsibility emphasised. Individual assessment results are accessible via the RSU e-learning profile. Research, creative, practical, and reflective work assessments follow documented criteria, regularly updated for clarity and consistency (SAR, p. 26).

1.1.6.

Following the consolidation of LASE and RSU, a unified academic integrity policy was established, encompassing principles, monitoring, and sanctions. This includes measures against plagiarism, falsification, and misconduct, supported by integrated technological tools such as Turnitin. RSU's framework features a Code of Ethics and an Ethics Commission to handle violations. Collaborative efforts with Latvian HEIs aim to harmonise integrity standards nationally. Violations cover plagiarism, use of unauthorised aids, and misrepresentation of resources. RSU's methodological guidelines ensure proper referencing, and staff receive regular training on plagiarism detection and prevention. The institution maintains processes for verifying the originality of final works, enhancing academic honesty across programmes (SAR, p. 28).

Introducing academic integrity within the study field "Sports" entails comprehensive integration of principles through formal coursework, supplemented by video lectures accessible via the RSU Library. The study programme director is responsible for disseminating information on the core concepts of academic integrity and the procedures for prevention and detection. Plagiarism cases

are collaboratively investigated by the programme director and relevant course instructors, with all instances documented in a centralised register. All final thesis submissions, alongside coursework assessments, are uploaded to the electronic learning platform and subjected to plagiarism detection using the Turnitin system. The majority of examination papers are similarly scrutinized with this tool. Additionally, regular pedagogical sessions coordinated with RSU Union aim to reinforce awareness of academic integrity standards (SAR, p. 28).

During the site visit, faculty members, lecturers, alumni, and students confirmed that all research conducted as part of empirical theses (including data collection) requires approval from the ethics committee. Therefore, research is preceded by a quality control check by the ethics committee, which requires students to be aware of research ethics, including data protection.

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

Conclusions:

RSU's study field "Sports" aims to align educational programmes with sector needs, addressing increased demand for qualified sports professionals by transitioning from a master's in Sports Science to a new C-category sports coach programme. The integration with LASE has enhanced research capacity and infrastructure, supporting international competitiveness. The field's development is guided by SWOT analysis, identifying strengths such as qualified faculty and research capabilities (primarily due to the consolidation process), and weaknesses (unfortunately not including limited internationalisation and regional program offerings). Opportunities for growth include national policy influence and international collaborations, while threats such as staff aging and resource constraints are also recognised. The university maintains robust quality assurance practices, with emphasis on continuous monitoring, stakeholder feedback, and research ethics, ensuring strong alignment with societal and economic developments. RSU is actively involved in preventing and detecting plagiarism. To ensure the quality of research, it works closely with the ethics committee.

The development of RSU study field "Sports" must more clearly respond to the needs of employers and the labour market, as the demand for highly qualified specialists and coaches with higher academic degrees is growing, including in regions such as Liepāja. In addition, strategies are needed to recruit and train new teaching staff and researchers, as well as to improve workload management to enable research and development activities during working hours. It is important to establish a regular and formal system for gathering feedback from employers and stakeholders. In addition, competitive salaries for teaching and research staff should be ensured in order to motivate and retain qualified personnel.

Strengths:

1. The relationship between the study programmes belonging to the study field "Sports" is clear and logical, so that graduates of the short-cycle programme can combine their completed courses and continue their studies in a First-Cycle (bachelor's) programme.
2. RSU contributes significantly to ensuring academic integrity by regularly training teaching staff, informing students, and providing access to the Turnitin programme in the e-learning system.
3. Students are prepared to conduct research in accordance with evidence-based principles and research ethics, coordinating the research conducted as part of their thesis with the ethics committee.

Weaknesses:

1. The study group in Liepāja branch has not been opened due to a lack of candidates willing to pay

tuition fees.

2. Lecturers consider their salaries (especially in Liepāja) to be low.
3. Modest attention to training B-level sports specialists.

1.2. Efficiency of the Internal Quality Assurance System

Analysis

1.2.1.

RSU has developed and maintains a clear quality assurance policy, which is based on the EFQM principles and the Deming cycle “Plan-Do-Evaluate-Act” (SAR, part 1.3, 1.4; p. 31.). This system covers the management of the study field “Sports” staff and resource management, the supervision of study and research processes, as well as the evaluation of student and employer satisfaction. Quality management is implemented both through mechanisms integrated into daily operations (e.g., distribution of duties, evaluation of work quality, coordination of documents) and through regular and targeted control measures throughout the year. A structural management structure can be seen in Annex 4.2.

To ensure study quality, internal process descriptions have been developed, which define the requirements for planning, evaluation, and supervision of results (SAR, p. 32). Data on student performance, study programme evaluations, e-learning usage, and other quality indicators are regularly collected and analysed. The results and indicators are presented in academic councils and used to improve study programmes and plan enhancement measures. Each year, programme directors prepare reports on key development indicators and planned improvement activities (SAR, p.32).

Overall, RSU’s quality assurance system is comprehensive, publicly available (<https://www.rsu.lv/en/study-quality-department>), and oriented towards the continuous improvement of study fields and programmes, ensuring effective performance and the achievement of established goals and learning outcomes.

1.2.2.

RSU has established a clear and coherent study quality assurance system, within which procedures for the development, review, and monitoring of study fields and programmes are defined (SAR, p. 22). The responsibility of study programme directors is to ensure the content’s compliance with regulatory requirements, labour market demands, industry development trends, and student needs. Each year, quality indicators are measured, study results and academic performance data are analysed, and these serve as a basis for implementing necessary improvements. The evaluation procedures are specified in the course descriptions, and before the start of each course students are informed about the expected learning outcomes and assessment criteria.

Feedback mechanisms include regular analysis of student performance, evaluation of teaching staff, collection of opinions from society and employers, as well as the use of reputation survey results for strengthening RSU’s public image. The process involves both students and staff, as well as independent external experts and employers. However, during experts` site visit, it became clear that although RSU have established a regular and formal feedback system for employers, in reality they do not respond to these surveys and communication between HEIs and employers remains rather informal and random. Despite this, the quality assurance system is multi-level, logical, effective, and accessible to all stakeholders, ensuring the continuous development and improvement of study programmes (SAR, p. 26).

It would be advisable to periodically organise seminars with employers and alumni on opportunities to pursue education in the field of “Sports”. Such initiatives would not only strengthen collaboration and create a platform for exchanging experiences, but also help universities to better understand the evolving needs of the labour market. By fostering dialogue between academic staff, students,

graduates, and employers, these seminars could serve as a valuable feedback mechanism for improving study programme content, aligning it more closely with professional practice, and identifying new skills that are increasingly demanded in the industry. Furthermore, alumni participation would highlight successful career pathways, inspire current students, and promote stronger networking opportunities that benefit both the academic community and the broader field of sports. There is currently no regular feedback system in place for collecting suggestions and evaluations from employers. The recommendation would be establishing such a system that ensures continuous improvement and better communication between all parties involved. A structured approach to gathering feedback could help identify areas for development, recognise what is working well, and ultimately contribute to more effective collaboration and mutual understanding.

1.2.3.

Evaluation reveals that RSU has developed a clear and detailed mechanism for the submission and review of student complaints, appeals, and suggestions. The established procedures, designated submission channels (Student Service, Student Union, Quality Management), and centralised registration and monitoring ensure that submissions are not overlooked but are forwarded to the responsible units, with results summarised in the annual Quality Management Report. Students are informed about the available options both on the RSU website (<https://www.rsu.lv/>) and in the student portal, and they receive written feedback on the outcomes of their submissions. This demonstrates a certain level of effectiveness and transparency, as well as the system's significant contribution to the process of quality improvement (SAR, p. 46).

At the same time, it must be critically noted that the increase in the number of complaints and appeals (more than doubling in 2024 compared to 2023) indicates substantial student dissatisfaction with aspects such as study process implementation, examination procedures, communication, and teaching staff performance (SAR, p. 41; Figure 8). This suggests that while the mechanism functions as an instrument for raising concerns, the corrective measures may not yet be delivering sufficient systemic improvements. Furthermore, although the procedures provide for student information and feedback, the aspect of anonymity is insufficiently emphasised. The lack of anonymity may discourage students from openly reporting problems, particularly in cases related to staff performance, communication, and attitudes. Therefore, to strengthen both the effectiveness and credibility of the system, it would be necessary to introduce stronger mechanisms ensuring student anonymity, thereby fostering more open and comprehensive student engagement in quality enhancement.

1.2.4.

The statistical data collection and analysis mechanism established at RSU in the study field "Sports" is comprehensive and regular, ensuring centralised accumulation and monitoring of information related to the study process at different levels (institutional, study field and programme, faculty and course levels). Data is automatically replicated from multiple RSU information systems into a data warehouse, allowing analysis across various dimensions. Information is regularly collected on student numbers and status, admission results, academic performance, dropout rates and their causes, use of the e-study environment, distribution of academic staff workload, research outcomes, as well as graduate numbers. The collected data are actively used for the improvement of the study field, including enhancement of programme content, teaching quality, and communication with students (SAR, p. 43).

The feedback mechanism is effective and systematic – student surveys on courses are conducted twice a year, programme evaluations are collected annually, and structured feedback from lecturers is published in MyRSU and the e-study environment (SAR, p. 44). However, the survey data collected from students cannot be regarded as highly quantitative, which limits the possibility of drawing conclusions with the highest degree of objectivity. The relatively limited scope and voluntary nature

of the responses reduce the representativeness and reliability of the findings. In order to strengthen the validity of the results and ensure a more comprehensive evidence base for decision-making, it could be considered to make student surveys mandatory. Such an approach would likely increase response rates, improve the robustness of the data, and provide a more accurate reflection of the overall student experience. Furthermore, during the visit, no clear assurance was obtained that students are able to submit complaints in a fully anonymous manner; instead, the process appeared to require addressing the programme director first, which cannot be considered genuinely anonymous.

Graduate surveys are organised once a year, while employers' opinions are gathered twice a year through online questionnaires (SAR, p. 44). Survey results are compiled, analysed, and presented to the relevant institutional bodies (programme directors, faculty councils, the Deans' Council, etc.), ensuring their use in the improvement of the study process. Based on the feedback received, significant adjustments have been introduced in the study field, such as strengthening practical training, integrating pedagogy and psychology, and developing digital and administrative competences. This confirms that RSU's mechanism is efficient and oriented towards the continuous improvement of the study field.

However, during the site visit, no clear assurance was obtained regarding staff awareness of the situation of international students. In addition, there was no clear evidence whether practice providers (internship hosts) are systematically and actively involved in such surveys and feedback processes. The panel could not fully ascertain whether the perspective of practice providers is consistently integrated into the evaluation of study programmes, nor whether their input is effectively used for the further development of the study field. This raises a concern about the comprehensiveness of the feedback loop, particularly in relation to practice-based learning and the professional relevance of the study programmes.

1.2.5.

The information published on RSU's website about the study programmes corresponding to the study field "Sports" – the short-cycle professional higher education programme "Sports Coach" (until accreditation "Health Sports Specialist"), the First-Cycle (Professional Bachelor's) Study Programme "Sports Science" and "Health Sports" (until the end of the accreditation period) – is available in both Latvian and English. Currently, the RSU website lacks information about study programmes that have already been developed and submitted for accreditation but have not yet received final approval. Although these programmes are conceptually and substantively based on the existing study programme framework and content, their absence in the publicly available information space may create uncertainty for prospective students.

It would be advisable for these programmes to be included on the RSU website at least in an informative capacity, for example, as "planned" or "submitted for accreditation." This would allow prospective students to become familiar in advance with the potential future study offer, gain an understanding

of the development perspectives of the study field, and make more informed decisions regarding their study choices. At the same time, such an approach would also strengthen the university's image as an open, transparent, and forward-looking institution that continuously updates and expands its programme portfolio to meet the needs of the labour market and society.

The published information is consistent with that contained in the official registers (VIIS and the E-platform) and is available in both Latvian and English. It provides applicants and students with all essential details regarding the study programmes and ensures transparency and accessibility throughout the programme implementation process (SAR, p. 46).

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

Conclusions:

At RSU, in the study field “Sports”, a comprehensive quality assurance system has been developed and maintained, based on EFQM principles and the Deming cycle. It covers study process planning and monitoring, staff and resource management, as well as the evaluation of feedback from students and employers. The mechanisms are clear, publicly available, and oriented towards continuous improvement, however, feedback with employers should be more systematic. At the same time, some aspects require additional attention to strengthen the effectiveness and credibility of the system, particularly regarding student anonymity. In addition, it should be emphasized that increasing the number of outgoing mobility (Annex 8.2) opportunities, where students go abroad, as well as considering the admission of incoming students by offering at least certain study courses in English.

Strengths:

1. A clear quality policy has been established, based on internationally recognised principles (EFQM, Deming cycle).
2. Regular data collection and analysis at several levels (institutional, programme, course).
3. Mechanisms ensure transparency and accountability, with students being informed about decisions and the outcomes of complaints.
4. Positive examples of study process improvements (strengthening practical training, developing digital competences, etc.).
5. Information on study programmes is available in both Latvian and English, corresponding to official registers.

Weaknesses:

1. Student surveys should be more quantitatively usable to support evidence-based conclusions.
2. A significant increase in complaints and appeals (more than doubling in 2024) indicates problems in the study process and insufficiently effective corrective measures.
3. Lack of anonymity in submitting complaints and feedback, which may discourage students from openly reporting issues.
4. There is no functioning formal and regular feedback system from employers.
5. Involvement of practice providers in surveys and feedback is not sufficiently documented, raising doubts whether their perspectives are consistently used in programme development.

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

RSU has developed the internal quality assurance system defined by internal regulatory documents described in Paragraphs 1.3, 2.1.1, 2.2.1 and 2.2.2 and Paragraph 1.1 of Annex 23.1 (Compliance of RSU study programmes with Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) Part 1) of the SAR (part 1.4).

One criterion is partially fulfilled (No. 1.4), but this does not affect the assessment of the requirement, as developing the planning of teaching staff working hours and offering existing training courses to practical training supervisors are activities that can be implemented quickly and easily.

- 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

RSU has established a policy and procedures for assuring the quality of higher education, which is based on the EFQM principles and the Deming cycle “Plan-Do-Evaluate-Act” (SAR, part 1.3; p. 31).

- 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

A comprehensive quality assurance system has been developed and maintained, based on EFQM principles and the Deming cycle. RSU has established a system for developing, monitoring, and periodically testing study programmes, supervised by the Centre for Educational Growth, which also supports and improves the process. Development is guided by a plan, reviewed regularly by the Quality Council of the study field and the Faculty of Health and Sports Sciences, with ongoing analysis of academic performance, student numbers, dropouts, and other indicators (SAR, paragraphs 2.2.1-2.2.3, 1.2, 1.7, and 1.9 of Annex 23.1). Since 2024/25, data from RSU LASE programmes has also been incorporated into this process (SAR, paragraphs 2.2.2 and 2.2.3).

- 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

Appropriate criteria, conditions, and procedures have been established for assessing student performance and ensuring the achievement of expected learning outcomes (SAR, paragraph 2.1.5; Annexes 17.1, 23.1), which confirm the curriculum's compliance with national and European quality standards. Starting from the 2024/25 academic year, RSU has also adopted these assessment criteria and procedures. Student progress and compliance with learning outcomes are ensured. Compliance with this requirement was also confirmed by discussions held during the site visit with students, alumni, teaching staff, and programme directors.

- 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: Partially compliant

The internal procedures and mechanisms to ensure the qualification and work quality of academic staff are outlined in SAR (paragraphs 2.3.5-2.3.7; Annex 23.1), with compliance assessed annually and mechanisms reviewed accordingly. From the 2024/25 academic year, RSU LASE follows RSU’s overarching procedures, while still applying its previous internal norms during a transitional period until 31 May 2026, as authorised by the RSU Rector’s Decree. The LASE has established specific regulations, including the “LASE Academic Staff Regulation” and related protocols, which remain in force during this transitional period.

Despite the strong support measures provided by HEI for teaching staff and researchers, more attention should be paid to the planning of researchers' working hours / timetable. Attention should also be paid to the training of supervisors at the internship base.

- 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 institution monitors students' academic performance, gathers feedback from students and graduates to improve programmes, and assesses student and graduate satisfaction through surveys and evaluations. It regularly reviews the effectiveness of academic staff, including their qualifications, publications, and mobility activities. The institution also manages study funds, resources, and infrastructure, ensuring they meet quality standards, and evaluates operational indicators such as delivery of educational resources and IT infrastructure. Since 2024/25, student achievements are systematically collected and analysed via the e-learning environment and Student Information System, with semesterly reports providing comprehensive overviews of progress across all study programmes.

The RSU works closely with various parties in developing its programmes, but more attention should be paid to collecting regular and formal feedback from employers.

However, this weakness does not affect the overall assessment of this point.

- 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 RSU maintains a robust system for the continuous improvement, development, and effective functioning of the "Sports" study field by implementing its own quality assurance protocols. The high rating is rooted in significant systemic improvements, which are clearly defined in internal documents and ensure continuous improvement. This commitment to quality is evident in several key areas: RSU successfully systematized the alignment of learning outcomes and reduced programme fragmentation using a new electronic course description format; it performed significant infrastructure modernization and improved the e-study environment with EU funding; and it demonstrated strong responsiveness to past feedback, successfully integrating necessary changes into the unified "Sports" study field following institutional consolidation.

These achievements confirm the RSU capacity for development and operational effectiveness. However, while the formal QA system is strong, two operational weaknesses must be addressed to enhance its practical effectiveness: the existing formal mechanism for employer feedback suffers from a poor response rate, leading to communication that is often informal, and a significant increase in student complaints and appeals suggests that corrective measures are not yet resulting in sufficient systemic improvements regarding the study process and faculty work. In summary, RSU has the necessary comprehensive system and the demonstrated capacity for change, but particular areas—such as feedback loops and complaint resolution—still require refinement for effective day-to-day operation. Given that the system is demonstrably working and showing improvements, this section is rated as compliant, though continued effort is needed to address the identified weaknesses. (based on assessment of 1.2. and 1.6. sections of this report).

1.3. Resources and Provision of the Study Field

Analysis

1.3.1.

According to the SAR (p. 47–48), the study field “Sports” is financed from three main sources: state budget allocations, tuition fees, and externally attracted funding, most significantly through EU structural funds. This financial model has provided stability and predictability, ensuring the continuation of programme delivery, salaries for academic and administrative staff, as well as the purchase of teaching materials.

Over the past years, EU-funded projects have been particularly important in enabling the renewal of equipment and the modernisation of facilities, which otherwise would have been difficult to achieve with state or tuition funding alone (Annex 13.2). These projects have supported the acquisition of specialised laboratory devices, improvements in ICT systems, and upgrades to sports facilities.

Overall, financial resources can be considered sufficient to support the sustainable implementation of the study field. At the same time, information gathered during the site visit highlighted that resource allocation is not fully balanced between Riga and the Liepāja branch. While core financing covers the essential needs of both locations, the differences in scale and investment result in variations in the learning environment available to students. This creates a risk that the quality of study experience may depend on where the programme is followed. Addressing this imbalance would strengthen the long-term equity and sustainability of the field.

The funding system is functioning and meets the criterion, yet experts noted that comparatively lower investment in the Liepāja branch limits equal opportunities for students. A clearer redistribution mechanism would strengthen balanced provision across locations.

1.3.2.

Despite the fact that the RSU teaching building on Brīvības Street 333 is not modern, it nevertheless offers decent conditions for practicing various sports.

Unfortunately, during the experts' site visit, all the rooms were empty, with no students or teaching staff present, though there are some cooperation agreements with sports clubs or schools for renting them out (SAR: Annex ENG_ RSU LSPA telpu noma 2025-2026 kopejais). RSU could consider to improve this cooperation as a way of finding additional funding, for example, to create free study places at the Liepāja branch.

RSU has a functioning system for infrastructure provision, meeting the criteria. Experts, however, note that fuller use of facilities and more practical sessions, especially in Liepāja, would ensure a more balanced learning experience.

1.3.3.

Library services for the study field are ensured through RSU's central library and the RSU (Brīvības street) library, including its branch in Liepāja. The combined library system provides access to printed books, journals, theses, and methodological materials, as well as an extensive range of electronic resources. Students and staff can use international databases such as EBSCO, PubMed, ScienceDirect, and SportDiscus, which offer up-to-date literature in health sciences, sports, and education (Annex 23.2). Students interviewed during the site visit evaluated the availability of digital resources very positively, highlighting that the range of online databases sufficiently supports both coursework and independent research.

Printed resources also play a significant role. The RSU library network provides core textbooks, while the RSU (Brīvības street) library ensures subject-specific literature in sports pedagogy, physiology, and coaching. Students confirmed that printed materials are generally available when needed, although some noted that the expansion of Latvian-language resources would further strengthen the learning process.

It was also noted during the site visit that the printed collections of the RSU Liepāja library are regularly used not only by students, but also by sport and health professionals from the wider local community. This shows that the library functions not only as an academic support tool, but also as a regional knowledge hub, strengthening ties between the university and professional practice. Such outreach enhances the visibility and social role of the study field in Liepāja and contributes to knowledge exchange beyond the student body.

In the experts' assessment, the provision of library resources is adequate and ensures access to the necessary literature and databases for achieving the intended learning outcomes. At the same time, experts note that maintaining up-to-date collections and monitoring students' needs will remain

important to ensure continuous relevance.

1.3.4.

The information and communication technology (ICT) provision supporting the study field “Sports” is comprehensive and covers both Riga and the Liepāja branch. Students and staff have access to several integrated systems that facilitate learning, teaching, and research. Moodle and MyRSU serve as the main platforms for course organisation, materials, assignments, and communication, while Zoom and Panopto provide solutions for online and hybrid teaching formats. Academic integrity is supported through the systematic use of Turnitin plagiarism detection, and research visibility is strengthened by the use of Pure and DSpace (Annex 23.3).

During the site visit, students confirmed that these platforms are well integrated into the study process and that they appreciate the user-friendly structure of digital resources. Staff also noted that ICT solutions are not only accessible but are actively applied in daily practice, with training and technical support provided when necessary. The functionality of these platforms proved particularly significant during periods of distance learning, where ICT resources ensured programme continuity and minimised disruption to students’ progress.

Overall, the ICT infrastructure is sufficient, modern, and reliable. Its consistent use across both RSU and LASE contributes to the quality of teaching, learning, and research, and provides students with experience in digital tools that are also relevant for their future professional environment.

Thus, the ICT provision fully meets the criterion, as it is both appropriate and effective for programme implementation. ICT solutions are actively and effectively used to support remote studies and hybrid formats.

1.3.5.

According to SAR (p. 61), the RSU has established, implemented, and actively follows transparent procedures for attracting qualified teaching staff. These procedures include clear recruitment and evaluation processes for academic and scientific personnel, ensuring that only highly qualified, competent, and reputable staff are involved in delivering study programmes. The institution's management sets strategic quality goals and oversees resource management, while stakeholders are kept informed through regular assessments, reputation surveys, and compliance with national and European standards. The institution also encourages staff development and innovation in teaching, fostering strong links between education and scientific research.

The study field is supported by specialised equipment for biomechanics, physiology, movement analysis, and sports performance testing (Annex 23.4). The available equipment is adequate for the implementation of study courses, and several devices have been renewed in recent years with the support of EU-funded projects. Further upgrading of technologies, such as cardio monitoring systems and motion sensors, is planned in upcoming development projects (Annex 13.2).

Students interviewed during the site visit highlighted that they would like more opportunities for practical training. They explained that, although the necessary equipment exists, access to hands-on learning is limited in practice. This was confirmed by teaching staff at the RSU, who noted that students can only use sports halls and certain laboratory facilities under direct supervision. While this ensures safety, it reduces opportunities for independent practice and exploration, which are essential for skill development.

It is important that students are given clearer information about the available resources and are more actively encouraged to use laboratories and equipment within the permitted framework. At present, the facilities are not fully utilised, partly because students are not sufficiently aware of the opportunities or lack confidence to engage with them. More systematic motivation and guidance from staff could help students to make better use of resources and strengthen their practical competences.

In summary, the study field has the necessary laboratories and equipment, and these are generally

up to date. However, the actual utilisation of resources is somewhat constrained, both by limited individual access during classes and by restrictions on independent use outside formal supervision. Addressing these aspects would help to ensure that students can make fuller use of the resources available.

1.3.6.

According to the Analysis of Academic Staff (Annex 24.7), RSU systematically identifies the professional and didactic development needs of teaching staff in the study field “Sports” and addresses them through targeted measures such as pedagogical training, participation in research, and sectoral seminars. The effectiveness of these activities is monitored to ensure continuous improvement of competences required for high-quality teaching and learning.

The teaching staff can be described as highly qualified and experienced, with expertise covering both theoretical and practical aspects of the study field. Their involvement in research projects and publications contributes significantly to the academic profile of the programmes (Annexes 6.4, 6.5). The staff-to-student ratio is adequate and supports effective learning and supervision.

Looking ahead, succession planning will be important. The current staff profile includes relatively few younger lecturers, which may affect the long-term renewal of the academic body. Another issue relates to the situation in Liepāja. Since programme delivery there has not been active in recent years, teaching staff are engaged mainly on external service contracts and are involved only when specific teaching is required. This arrangement means that lecturers in Liepāja are not consistently integrated into RSU’s internal communication flows and often remain outside the regular exchange of information on professional development, research activities, or sectoral updates. Being left outside this information loop limits their opportunities for professional growth and reduces consistency in the delivery of teaching between Riga and Liepāja.

Ensuring that all staff, regardless of contract type or location, are equally informed and supported in their professional development would help to maintain high-quality teaching across the study field “Sports” and strengthen sustainability in the long term.

In addition, experts consider that RSU has procedures for identifying staff development needs and offers professional development opportunities, including pedagogical training and involvement in research activities. These needs are identified through annual staff evaluations, student and peer feedback, and strategic planning at faculty level. Professional development opportunities include certified pedagogical courses, training workshops, participation in international projects and conferences, as well as methodological seminars organised by RSU. The effectiveness of these measures is monitored through internal evaluations and feedback. To ensure full compliance, it remains important that staff in Liepāja are systematically included in these processes.

1.3.7.

The workload of academic staff in the study field “Sports” is structured to cover teaching, research, and, where relevant, administrative duties. According to the SAR and staff data (Annexes 6.1, 6.2), teaching is combined with research activity, conference participation, and project involvement, while a smaller number of staff also assume programme or departmental management responsibilities. During the site visit, lecturers confirmed that workload allocation is transparent, monitored at the faculty level, and adjusted when necessary to prevent overload. Overall, the balance of responsibilities allows staff to combine teaching with research and professional development. At the same time, researchers' working hours / timetable should be better planned so that they have time to conduct research during the working day.

CVs of the academic staff (Annex 6.2) demonstrate that many lecturers are actively engaged in publishing, applied research, and cooperation with professional organisations. This indicates that staff responsibilities are aligned with their competencies and contribute to the integration of

research into teaching.

Experts concluded that the system ensures compliance with the criterion, yet noted that more attention should be paid to workload planning, particularly for staff with significant research responsibilities, to secure adequate time for scientific work alongside teaching.

Experts concluded that the system ensures compliance with the criterion, yet noted that more attention should be paid to workload planning, particularly for staff with significant research responsibilities, to secure adequate time for scientific work alongside teaching. Overall, the workload of academic staff is balanced, and language skills fully meet regulatory requirements.

1.3.8.

The institution has identified the main support needs of students and has established services to address them. These include academic mentoring, psychological counselling, career guidance, and assistance for students with specific learning difficulties or personal needs (SAR, part 2.3.8). RSU ensures that students can receive individual consultations with lecturers and study advisors, which helps them to manage their studies and solve academic issues on time.

Different groups of students are provided with tailored support. For international students, information is available in English – if international students were to enrol, RSU has the capacity to provide information in English, with coordinators available to assist with admission, residence, and adaptation processes (SAR, Part 2.2). Part-time students benefit from flexible schedules and broad access to online resources through Moodle and Panopto, which allow them to combine studies with professional commitments. Students with special needs are supported by adjustments to the learning environment, including accessible infrastructure (ramps, lifts, adapted restrooms) and individualised academic arrangements when necessary (Annex 23.4). At the same time, during the on-site visit, it became clear that, according to the students, study days sometimes last 10-12 hours, because often enough students have to change locations of studies from Anņņmuižas bulvāris to Brīvības street or other way around and that takes a lot of time, making these days of studies sometimes too long and exhausting.

During the site visit, students confirmed that support services are accessible and effective. They particularly valued the opportunity to consult lecturers individually outside regular classes and emphasised that staff are generally approachable and responsive. Student representatives also pointed out that formal feedback mechanisms, including surveys and the Student Union, are used to identify needs and improve support provision (Annex 05).

It should be noted that, during the transition period related to the integration of LASE into RSU, there were short-term uncertainties and a lack of information parity between different groups of students. However, students now report that these issues have been resolved and that support mechanisms are clearer and more consistent than before. At the same time, students in the short-cycle programme, many of whom study partly in a distance format, demonstrated a more limited awareness of the available support services. This suggests that communication about support options could be further strengthened for students who engage less frequently with on-site activities.

Overall, the study field has a functioning support system that responds to the needs of diverse student groups, including international, part-time, and students with special needs. Maintaining equal access to these services across both Riga and Liepāja, and ensuring that students studying in remote or hybrid modes and students in short-cycle programmes are equally well informed, will further strengthen their effectiveness.

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

Conclusions:

The study field is supported by adequate financial, infrastructural, and human resources. RSU

provide students with access to modern facilities, digital platforms, and library resources that are sufficient to support academic progress. Academic staff are highly qualified and engaged in both teaching and research, and workload distribution is generally balanced, although more attention should be paid to workload planning, particularly for those whose duties also include research. Student support services are in place, and students reported improvements in clarity and accessibility of support following the institutional integration process.

At the same time, challenges remain. In the event of enrolment in Liepāja, students could face fewer practical opportunities compared to those in Riga, and staff there, mostly engaged through external contracts, are not fully included in RSU's information and professional development systems. Students in short-cycle programmes and in remote or hybrid study modes also have lower awareness of available support services. Succession planning for academic staff is needed to ensure long-term sustainability.

Overall, the study field meets the requirements of this set of criteria, with sufficient resources to ensure programme delivery, but some areas require further attention to secure balanced provision and long-term stability.

Strengths:

1. Adequate financial resources and strategic planning ensure stability of the study field.
2. Modern infrastructure, ICT systems, and access to extensive digital library resources, positively evaluated by students.
3. Highly qualified and experienced academic staff actively involved in research and professional practice.
4. Functioning student support system, with recent improvements in clarity and accessibility.

Weaknesses:

1. In the event of enrolment students in Liepāja could face fewer opportunities for practical learning, and staff engaged there remain outside RSU's regular communication and professional development system.
2. Limited generational renewal of staff, with relatively few younger lecturers entering the field, raising sustainability concerns.
3. Students in short-cycle programmes and in remote or hybrid study modes demonstrate lower awareness of available support mechanisms, indicating a need for clearer communication.
4. Students and staff require more systematic encouragement and guidance to use practical resources such as laboratories and sports facilities.

1.4. Scientific Research and Artistic Creation

Analysis

1.4.1.

Scientific research is well presented in the SAR, section 2.4, and the document was also confirmed and supplemented by the responsible for the RSU management, study field director, study programme directors and teaching staff of the RSU in the site visit interviews. There are some projects and publications carried out by the teaching staff and researchers involved in the study field, including publications indexed in Web of Science and Scopus (SAR, Annexes 6.4, 6.5). Research in the study field "Sports" is carried out in cooperation with several research fields, developing scientific and applied research and taking advantage of the consolidation process. RSU research has three research platforms (SAR, p. 68): (i) health and natural sciences, (ii) social sciences, and (iii) RSU LASE. Each of these platforms conducts research in several groups of scientific disciplines, in priority science directions for the economy of Latvia and in areas determined by the health policy of Latvia and the European Union.

The priority direction of the RSU development is to encourage staff members to develop high-quality scientific projects and outputs. In the interviews during the assessment visit (Meeting with the HEI management, with members of the group responsible for the preparation of Self-Assessment report and the person responsible for QA; Meeting with the study field and with the Short-Cycle Professional Higher Education Study Programme "Sports Coach" director + subprogrammes directors; Meeting with the First-Cycle (Professional Bachelor's) Study Programme "Sports Science" director), the HEI management responsible mentioned that the strategic development plan of the RSU focuses on international research. The goal of RSU research is not only increasing internationally high-quality scientific results but incorporating them into the study process of the study field "Sports".

The RSU focuses its efforts on providing quality studies and developing scientific research of good quality, namely creating structures open to interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary research and studies (SAR, p. 68, 70), which is very positive. Nevertheless, when analysing in detail the list of the publications presented by the teaching staff, the most relevant ones are not totally related to "Sports" and linked to the study programmes (Annexes 6.4, 6.5). There is also a gap on the publications in the most significant and impactful journals in this study field (e.g., British Journal of Sports Medicine, Journal of Sport and Health Science, Sports Medicine, International Journal of Sports Physiology and Performance, European Journal of Sport Science, Sports Biomechanics). Moreover, there are some significant differences among academic staff members (including elected academic staff) in their research publications and projects (Annexes 6.4, 6.5, 13.2). Therefore, at this consolidation phase of the RSU it would be important to define an overall strategy to overcome these concerns, namely, to decrease the differences in the scientific outputs among the elected academic staff and to focus the research scope on a more centered "Sports" approach related to the specific study programmes.

1.4.2.

Study courses included in the study programmes are related to the research areas of the teaching staff, especially considering the interdisciplinary focus of the interventions. Teaching staff integrate their research experience and the involvement in specific research projects into their study courses, thus ensuring students acquire continuously up-to-date knowledge and skills (SAR, p. 72). Moreover, RSU presents good facilities, IT systems and some important equipment and support for teachers and students. The Sports Lab is updated and well-equipped to train students and staff and for research purposes with staff dedicated full time to research assistance. Although it would be important to update some literature in the RSU (Brīvības street) library, in general, RSU libraries are well equipped with access to databases of scientific publications allowing the development of study courses using the latest research findings, that can be used either by teachers or students.

The integration of research results from academic staff and students in the study programmes of the study field "Sports" is carried out using various methods and activities that promote student engagement, knowledge exchange, and the development of practical skills (SAR, p. 77–78). For example, in the course "Research Methods in Sports" of the short-cycle study programme "Sports Coach" students familiarise with the basis of scientific research. Students of the study programme "Sports Science" are familiar with scientific research already in the first year of studies when they choose a scientific topic in their course paper.

Moreover, students can participate annually in the RSU Student Scientific Conference and RSU Research Week, where the results of joint scientific activities of academic staff and students are presented (SAR, p. 78).

1.4.3.

To promote cooperation and attract funding for the development of priority research areas, RSU takes an active part in various EU and national programmes and initiatives, such as Horizon Europe,

COST Actions, ERA-NET, ERDF, and FLAG-ERA. RSU is a member of international research infrastructures (EATRIS, BBMRI, EOSC, SHARE, EIT Health), and participates in important international consortia (CIMBA, BCAC). (SAR, p. 74).

In the context of RSU programmes, international collaboration has also been established with some partners: both among universities, through participation in different mobility projects, and by participating in international scientific conferences. To promote international-level cooperation and enhance the international experience of academic staff, collaboration agreements have been signed with foreign universities (Annex 7).

There are some approaches highlighting international cooperation in the field of scientific research, namely the projects developed under Erasmus+ funding, where the teaching staff are involved in these activities (SAR, p. 74). One can underline the experience in the Erasmus+ projects, within the Sport-IE project, involving some important sports universities in the region (German Sport University Cologne, the Swedish School of Sport and Health Sciences, the Lithuanian Sports University, University of Luxembourg) (SAR, p. 75).

The main benefits of international cooperation in the study programmes “Sports Science” and “Sports Coach” in the study field “Sports” are the initiation and implementation of various projects that could contribute to the improvement of the quality of the study process. For example, the NordPlus project “Sportpreneurship: sustainable and smart sport business” (NPHZ-2020/10068) with 20 participants from 5 universities – Molde University College in Norway, Jyväskylä University of Applied Sciences in Finland, Latvian Academy of Sport Education, Malmö Sports School in Sweden, Lithuanian Sports University, – allows the opportunity to develop a sustainable business idea based on a design thinking model that builds a set of methods for generating creative alternatives (SAR, p. 74-75).

Although these participations are very positive, RSU should reinforce international cooperation in the field of scientific research more related to the study field of “Sports” and also to the study programmes, namely the short cycle professional study programme “Sports Coach” and the First cycle (professional bachelor) study programme “Sports Science”. For instance, one should be aware that the main aim of the Erasmus+ calls and other similar initiatives is not to develop research projects, thus a broader strategy must be prepared by the RSU board to integrate the staff members involved in this study field into a research and internationalisation plan.

1.4.4.

RSU has developed effective mechanisms for the involvement of the teaching staff in scientific research and applied research. Researchers are supported in their work and international cooperation is possible with the support of RSU. Moreover, an incentive system for researchers and other mechanisms (e.g. RSU Growth Portal, School of Young Lecturers) has been set up in relation to publishing and research, aiming to motivate research activities and the development of scientific outputs (SAR, p. 76), which during the assessment visit was positively valued by the RSU board but also by the teaching staff.

RSU academic staff participate in the preparation of publications and conferences both in Latvia and abroad, such as the Baltic International Sports Science Conference. They also take part in the International Scientific Conferences organised by RSU, by Riga Technical University, and the University of Latvia, among others. Additionally, they actively participate in other international scientific conferences outside Latvia. RSU lecturers are also involved in scientific research resulting in some publications in citation databases (Web of Science, Scopus), which is very positive.

Nevertheless, as above mentioned, there are still some gaps to fill as there are significant differences between the research outputs of the teaching staff and most of the relevant staff CVs are not directly associated with study field “Sports”, and with the study programmes. Furthermore, the strategy of the RSU should position the direction of the HEI to the standards that they are willing to achieve, namely publications as original research in the most prestigious journals in the field of

the study programmes.

1.4.5.

RSU students participate in scientific research based on their knowledge, abilities, competency, and experience. Hence, RSU has developed several strategies and procedures to promote the involvement of the students in scientific activities. In general, RSU students can conduct research as follows (SAR, p. 85–86): (i) participate in vertically integrated projects, (ii) applying for Student Research and Innovation Grants, (iii) Enhance research skills through RSU Business Incubator B-Space PINK and INK programmes, (iv) participating in student research interest groups in various areas, (v) applying for funding from the Students Union for research support to participate in conferences or seminars within or outside the country, as well as to publish a scientific article in an internationally cited journal, (vi) participating in RSU international scientific conference “Research Week”, (vii) presenting own research paper at the RSU International Student Conference. Although these measures are very positive, the incorporation of LASE into RSU provides an opportunity for students to participate more actively in RSU research activities, including developing new research interest groups related to the study field “Sports” and the study programmes, which at this moment is not fully developed.

Additionally, attention is given to integrating research into the teaching process and content, as well as encouraging the involvement of students in some research projects, making it part of their learning process and thus developing research skills and motivation to pursue an academic career (SAR, p. 77–78). The laboratory of the RSU Sports Healthcare Research Centre is available for both lecturers and students to conduct research. Students carry out research under the supervision of both laboratory technicians and research supervisors, as it was mentioned during the site visit. This approach and these projects are very positive and can be highlighted as good practices that can be followed in other domains under this study field.

Although experts' opinions positively evaluate the mechanisms developed by RSU to promote the involvement of the students in scientific and applied research, during the site visits it was reported that students could be more integrated in these types of initiatives namely, to be able to experience different laboratories approaches and equipment allowing them to complement some theoretical contents of the courses.

1.4.6.

Innovative solutions are applied in the study field, though this application is yet a minor focus in the global development of the study field “Sports” at RSU. Major contributions are related to learning and teaching innovations, with several activities of much importance. One can highlight the use of the new e-learning platform, methodological and technological innovations, with updated facilities, including IT systems and some important equipment and support for teachers and students (SAR, p. 79–81; and observed during the assessment visit at the RSU). To foster a culture of learning and teaching innovation, RSU not only organises training and best practice exchange sessions, but has also developed learning and teaching innovation guidelines, which have been validated among lecturers and received feedback to help understanding the full innovation cycle and start working on modernising their courses (SAR, p. 80).

Although these approaches are very important and positive, there are some steps to be applied to highlight this innovation content, namely in deep cooperation with the scientific research activities, using new technologies and new research approaches as part of the study process.

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

Conclusions:

The study field "Sports" at RSU aligns well with the HEI's goals and the broader scientific landscape,

showcasing some important research and interdisciplinary collaboration. The integration of research into the educational process is noticed, fostering a dynamic learning environment where students are actively engaged in scientific activities and encouraged to participate in international projects and conferences. However, there are several gaps in the alignment of research outputs directly with the study field "Sports" and disparities among academic staff in research productivity. To address these challenges, RSU should develop a cohesive strategy to enhance research focus on this field and promote publications in high-impact journals. Strengthening international research cooperation and innovation initiatives will further enhance the quality and impact of RSU contributions to sports related to these study programmes.

Strengths:

1. RSU focuses its efforts on providing quality studies and developing scientific research of good quality, namely creating structures open to interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary research and studies.
2. RSU has developed effective mechanisms for the involvement of the teaching staff in scientific research and applied research. Researchers are supported in their work and international cooperation is possible with the support of RSU.
3. RSU has developed some strategies and procedures to promote the involvement of the students in scientific activities.

Weaknesses:

1. When analysing in detail the list of the publications presented by the teaching staff, the most relevant ones are not directly related to "Sports" and there is a gap on the publications in the most significant and impactful journals in this study field associated with the study programmes.
2. There are some significant differences among academic staff members in their research publications and projects.
3. International cooperation in the field of scientific research is not fully developed.

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: Partially compliant

RSU has developed effective mechanisms and opportunities for the involvement of the academic staff in research activities. Moreover, there are some good projects and publications carried out by the academic staff and researchers involved in the study field, including publications indexed in Web of Science and Scopus. However, the most relevant publications are not directly related to "Sports" and there are some differences among academic staff members in their output research publications and projects.

1.5. Cooperation and Internationalisation

Analysis

1.5.1.

RSU within the study field "Sports" sustains broad and purposeful cooperation with different Latvian employers, employers' federations, municipalities and public bodies (Annex 7) that is directly tied to programme aims and learning outcomes through internships, assessments and joint activities, but no cooperation with scientific or other higher education institutions is described. Selection principles

for cooperation partners (relevance, reputation, mutual benefit) (SAR, p. 82-85) are stated and applied. Employers and federations contribute mostly through internships, but also guest lectures, methodological seminars, participation in state examinations (incl. thesis reviewing), and co-delivery of sport-specific study blocks – linking cooperation on developing coaching competences, event organisation and training design (SAR, p. 82-85). Indeed, during the site visit, it was confirmed that cooperation is successful and mutually beneficial in Riga and also in the Liepāja branch, but often based on personal communication, making informal contacts very important. Also, Annex 7 states only five Cooperation agreements which are in force, indicating the urgent need to formalise successful cooperation with other employers etc. Although employer representatives mentioned the surveys sent to them, sporadic informal communication seemed more important. Regular meetings on programme development, graduate and intern skills, the latest trends in the industry, etc. would probably be useful, thus involving employers more closely in the development of study programmes. Also, more frequent guest lectures from employers would definitely be useful.

During the site visit, experts also learned that changes are currently being made to the way student internships are organised within the programmes in the study field. Experts believe that the changes are well-intentioned, but since they're still in progress, it is difficult to evaluate them. However, it should be noted that the proposed changes stipulate that cooperation agreements must be concluded before students begin to choose their internships, so RSU should focus on actively concluding agreements. Special attention should be paid to ensuring that students have opportunities to undertake internships in various regions of Latvia, not only in Riga.

1.5.2.

RSU within the study field “Sports” meets Criterion 1.5.2 well. In general, international cooperation is purposeful, selection principles (relevance, reputation, mutual benefit) are stated, and activities clearly serve programme aims and learning outcomes through mobility, visiting lecturers, joint research and authentic learning contexts (SAR, p. 85-86). Annex 7 confirms a broad Erasmus+ partner network (32 active agreements) renewed through 31.12.2027, allowing student and staff exchanges without any interruptions related to LASE consolidation. RSU states that they aim to cooperate with the best sports higher education institutions in the region and really, the current portfolio spans leading European sport/HEIs – e.g., Charles University (CZ), University of Rome “Foro Italico” (IT), University of Jyväskylä (FI), Istanbul Kent University (TR) and Ege University (TR) – supporting structured mobility routes and co-teaching opportunities.

In parallel, sustained OSRESS International Summer Schools (since 2010) successfully combine outdoor-sport practicums with an annual scientific conference, catalysing visiting lectures, staff-student co-publications (SCOPUS/ERIH Plus trajectories), and Nordplus/Erasmus mobilities—thereby embedding internationalisation in teaching and assessment rather than treating it as an add-on (SAR, p. 85-86).

Looking forward, the international Sport-IE project (July 2025 – April 2027) (<https://eit-hei.eu/projects/sport-ie/>) anchors cooperation with the Norwegian School of Sport Sciences (lead) and partners in Germany, Luxembourg, Lithuania, Romania and Estonia, UK, Denmark and Cyprus), and industry (G Fitness, Start NIH, Bergans, GrewAI) under EIT Health/Digital – a “Knowledge Triangle” approach expected to strengthen innovation, entrepreneurship, and employability outcomes in the programme. This project may be a great opportunity to strengthen the study field, but it is hard to evaluate the impact of the project currently in action. It should be noted that it will be challenging to involve students in this project – students enrolled in short-cycle and professional bachelor's degree programmes are traditionally less interested in participating in scientific or international activities.

To fully evidence impact of current international activities, RSU should track each Erasmus+/project partnership to concise KPIs (incoming/outgoing flows, visiting-lecture hours, co-supervisions, co-publications/outputs, graduate destinations linked to partners), and formalise an international

partner registry with periodic re-validation – building on the already documented Erasmus+ agreements in the Annex 7.

1.5.3.

RSU within the study field “Sports” meets Criterion 1.5.3 with some reservations – the institutional system (International Department, Erasmus+ network, International Week, EAEC/EAIE participation) exists and enables both incoming and outgoing mobility (SAR, p. 87-90), but the volume and distribution of activity are way too small to demonstrate strong added value for the study process (Annexes 6.3, 8.1, 8.2). The infrastructure is well established (as mentioned before, Erasmus+ agreements for Sports were renewed to 31.12.2027; Annex 7) and allow mobility beyond signed bilaterals, creating ample channels for staff and students. However, incoming academic input is very low – Annex 8.1 lists only 8 international guest lecturers in 6 years (2 lecturers in the short-cycle and 6 in the Bachelor’s programme). These numbers are insufficient for meaningful internationalisation and RSU should attract guest lecturers in this study field much more actively and on a regular basis. Student mobility is uneven: the short-cycle programme recorded no mobility in the period, while the Bachelor’s programme shows activity concentrated in specific years (Annex 8.2). Most likely, greater attention should be paid to introducing students to short-term mobility opportunities, as a large proportion of students in both programmes are working, and short exchanges, including international internships, would be much more convenient for them. It should be noted that incoming mobility for students is not high, as the programmes are only offered in Latvian. Staff flows regarding internationalisation operate but are modest and volatile – the highest number of foreign academic staff occurred in 2020/2021, and outgoing staff trips peaked only in 2024/2025, suggesting opportunistic rather than embedded practice (Annex 6.3). It seems that the most active academics use these activities regularly, but it is necessary to ensure that all lecturers are aware of these opportunities. It should be noted that mobility opportunities are also used by the Liepāja branch (in a case when and if there are students admitted).

RSU acknowledges fragmented data capture across units, which limits monitoring effectiveness of international activities more robustly. RSU should address the fragmented data capture noted in Annex 6.3 by consolidating mobility and visiting-staff records into a single registry with annual KPIs (incoming/outgoing counts by programme, visiting-hours, course/learning outcome links, graduate outcomes).

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

Conclusions:

RSU’s cooperation and internationalisation in the study field “Sports” meets the criteria requirements but with notable reservations. Locally, cooperation with employers, federations, municipalities and public bodies (Annex 7) is purposeful and tied to learning outcomes through internships and other joint activities, though it is often person-dependent and under-formalised. Also, the number of agreements should be rapidly increased in order to at least ensure internship places for students – Annex 7 lists only five active cooperation agreements. Internationally, the portfolio is structurally very good (32 Erasmus+ inter-institutional agreements renewed to 31.12.2027; Annex 7), OSRESS Summer Schools embed internationalisation in teaching/assessment, and the Sport-IE (2025–2027) project promises stronger innovation and employability links. However, effectiveness evidence is thin: Annex 8.1 records only 8 guest lecturers across 11 years, student mobility is uneven with no students using mobility opportunities in a short-cycle programme (Annex 8.2) and data capture is fragmented. Staff mobility numbers look promising (Annex 6.3), but RSU should focus on systematic support for all members of academic staff, not only active ones.

Ongoing internship reforms are sensible but not yet evaluable; agreements must precede student internship choices, with equitable internship options beyond Riga. Given the closure of the doctoral programme and the master's redesign, RSU should strongly calibrate international activity to the specific profile of short-cycle and professional bachelor students (more short-term, English-medium, practice-integrated formats).

Strengths:

1. Cooperation with the institutions from Latvia in general is good and close – tied to internships, assessments and joint activities.

Partner selection principles are very clearly stated.

2. Wide international framework – 32 active Erasmus+ agreements, there is a continuity through consolidation process – both students and academic staff have a lot of opportunities.

3. OSRESS Summer Schools integrate visiting lectures, staff-student outputs and mobility into curricula very well.

4. There is a good international project with a potential in progress via Sport-IE (2025–2027) with leading regional HEIs and industry partners (EIT Health/Digital).

Weaknesses:

1. There are a small number of local partnerships with active agreements (only five active cooperation agreements in Annex 7).

2. Cooperation with local partners relies heavily on informal contacts.

3. Very low numbers of incoming academic staff (only 8 international guest lecturers in 6 years), undermining course-level internationalisation.

4. Mobility activities are uneven across both study programmes, with staff mobility concentrated among a few active academics.

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 cooperation implemented within the study field "Sports" with various Latvian and foreign organizations ensures the achievement of the programme aims and learning outcomes. Locally, cooperation with Latvian employers, employers' federations, municipalities, and public bodies is purposeful and directly tied to the curriculum through internships, assessments, and joint activities. These partners contribute via guest lectures, methodological seminars, participation in state examinations, and co-delivery of sport-specific study blocks, thereby developing essential coaching competences, event organisation, and training design skills. Internationally, cooperation is also purposeful and serves programme aims through mobility, visiting lecturers, joint research, and authentic learning contexts. Key examples include the OSRESS International Summer Schools, which successfully integrate international visiting lectures and staff-student outputs into teaching and assessment, and the Sport-IE project (2025–2027), which is expected to strengthen innovation, entrepreneurship, and employability outcomes through collaboration with leading regional HEIs and industry partners.

However, the effectiveness is tempered by notable reservations, specifically the reliance on informal contacts, the low number of formal local cooperation agreements (only five active agreements), and the low volume and uneven distribution of incoming academic staff and student mobility. Overall, the structural framework for cooperation is strong and directly linked to the programme's goals, despite the need to formalise and increase the volume of activity.

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

Analysis

1.6.1.

RSU have, on the whole, acted on the 2011 expert recommendations and used consolidation to implement most of the changes. Experts have to remember that currently, after consolidation there is one study field - "Sports", whereas previously there were two study fields in "Education, Pedagogy, Sports" at two different universities - consequently, recommendations for two different institutions with a wide variety of study programmes and content, which are now merged, have been analysed from today's situation and point of view. Also, it should be noted that a bunch of recommendations written in 2011 were very general and implementation of them cannot be measured and won't be analysed here further due to lack of structure or if they are no more relevant. Examples are recommendations which won't be analysed in more detail are regarding Quality (recommendations (rec) 1, 2 and 5 may be combined, implementation of rec 4 and 6 cannot be measured), Resources (implementation of rec 3 cannot be measured), Sustainability (implementation of rec 3 cannot be measured), Cooperation/overlapping (implementation of rec 1 cannot be measured), Quality (rec 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11), Resources (implementation of rec 3, 4 cannot be measured, rec 2 and 3 are no more relevant) etc. Most of these recommendations suggest to "develop", "increase", "proceed further" etc. without any measurable indicators mentioned and, for example, states "In some study programmes some teachers should change their attitude to needs and demands" - this is not the only recommendation which is inherently subjective (Annex 11).

A bunch of recommendations were connected with learning-outcomes alignment and also mapping. It now has been systematised and should be considered implemented: programme aims are now mapped to programme learning outcomes and down to course learning outcomes via a new electronic course-description format, with study plans reworked to reduce fragmentation (Annexes 18.1, 18.2). Also, suggestions regarding involvement of employers in the development of study programmes were made during previous accreditation procedures. Although RSU states that stakeholder involvement has been strengthened by regular employer/graduate surveys, and structured internship bases and agreements are in place in the study field "Sports", including sectoral organisations and federations, this is only partly true and is analysed more in detail in Report` chapter 1.5 "Cooperation and Internationalisation". In this regard, several processes are currently undergoing change due to consolidation. Recommendations regarding development of the infrastructure and digital delivery were upgraded by using EU/ESF/ERDF funds funds (SAR, p. 90-91, specific funds mentioned in Annex 11), environment for e-studies has been improved, especially with the opportunities RSU currently implements in e-studies. English-language capacity has been incentivised via changes to remuneration (additional payment for teaching in English at \geq B2.2) and both RSU have offered courses and a lot of opportunities to learn English for the academic staff. However, it should be noted that the recommendation to "develop and deliver course units in English to increase internal and external internationalisation" has not been implemented, as evidenced by low internationalisation numbers (Annex 8.1) and the implementation of programmes only in Latvian. The RSU currently has no plans to implement programmes in English. Some of the recommendations were related to promoting internationalisation, and these can be considered only partially fulfilled and these aspects are more analysed in detail in this report previously - 1.5. "Cooperation and Internationalisation".

Undeniably, RSU has read and taken into account the content of the recommendations made during the previous external evaluation, especially in this consolidation process, in which the programmes have undergone significant changes (SAR, p. 90-92). However, some of the previously recommended measures are still relevant and are in the process of being implemented.

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

Conclusions:

On balance, RSU have acted on the 2011 recommendations and used consolidation to implement most changes within a single study field (“Sports”), while acknowledging that many legacy recommendations were generic and non-measurable; hence, conclusions focus on evidence-based items. Learning-outcomes alignment and de-fragmentation have been systematised by using electronic course-description format and explicit mapping of learning outcomes across programme and course levels, and can be noted as implemented. In parallel, mobility/international inputs are not so easy to evaluate, but in general there is still a place for improvement, especially regarding measurable outcome indicators. Mechanisms for developing internationalisation exist, but systematic results are still expected in the future. Infrastructure and e-studies have been upgraded largely over past years by using EU funds, supporting a more modern delivery environment. Overall, the institution has engaged with the spirit of prior recommendations and embedded several into structures and processes, but some measures are still in progress and should be monitored against clear KPIs.

Strengths:

1. Learning-outcomes based redesign and de-fragmented curricula implemented and evidenced; mapping infrastructures are in place.
2. Engagement of employers and other stakeholders has been improved.
3. The digital resources and e-studies environment has been upgraded.
4. Recommendations from licensing procedure for study programme “Health Sport(s)” have mostly been addressed very well (aims, internships, QA criteria).

Weaknesses:

1. Recommendations regarding internationalisation are still relevant and numbers of different mobilities are low.
2. The RSU should develop external quality procedures and a plan for implementing recommendations received from external stakeholders, currently, there is a lack of information about those responsible, deadlines, and measurable results.

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: Partially compliant

RSU have acted on the recommendation received in 2011 by using consolidation to implement most changes within the single study field “Sports”. A lot has been done regarding learning-outcomes alignment and de-fragmentation systematisation by electronic course descriptions and explicit mapping of learning outcomes, and infrastructure/e-studies has been upgraded through EU funds. However, internationalisation and mobility impacts are weakly evidenced, so while mechanisms exist, systematic results with clear, measurable KPIs are still needed.

1.7. Recommendations for the Study Field

Short-term recommendations

<p>Within the next academic year, RSU should increase communication and guidance for students, especially in short-cycle programmes and in remote or hybrid study modes, to raise awareness of available support services.</p>
<p>Within the next academic year, RSU should strengthen encouragement and practical guidance for students to use laboratories, sports facilities, and other practical resources more actively.</p>
<p>Within the next academic year, RSU should evaluate the schedule (12-hour study days) of part-time students so that they can combine studies with work.</p>
<p>Within the next academic year, RSU should ensure that teaching staff in Liepāja engaged on service contracts are systematically included in RSU’s information exchange and professional development activities.</p>
<p>Within the next 2-year period, RSU should find a way to open a study group even with a smaller number of students at the Liepāja branch and create scholarship opportunities for students.</p>
<p>Within the next 2-year period, RSU should develop a strategy for planning the working hours of lecturers/researchers and study programme directors.</p>
<p>Within the next 2-year period, RSU should create a system for regularly and formally collecting feedback from employers, and their targeted involvement in teaching.</p>
<p>Within the next 2-year period, RSU should gather quantitative data in surveys in order to draw clear and evidence-based conclusions.</p>
<p>Within the next 2-year period, RSU should create a system for monitoring and regularly reviewing the implementation of recommendations, specifically identifying the departments responsible.</p>
<p>Within the next 2-year period, RSU should define a global strategy to develop the research activities, namely, to decrease the differences in the scientific outputs among the elected academic staff and to focus the research scope on a more centered “Sports” approach, namely to publish original research in the most prestigious journals in this field related to the study programmes.</p>
<p>Within the next 2-year period, RSU should develop a strategy and, in accordance with it, conclude agreements with all possible internship bases in the counties in order to offer internship opportunities outside Riga, thus ensuring the availability of trained sports specialists in other regions in the future.</p>
<p>Within the next 2-year period, RSU should develop a strategy for training C and B level coaches so that it is not a hindrance within the university.</p>

Long-term recommendations

<p>RSU should clarify the specific need for B-level sports specialists and, accordingly, develop a strategy and train the specialists needed in the world of work.</p>
<p>RSU should develop a strategy and opportunities for ensuring competitive salaries for staff (including those at the Liepāja branch).</p>
<p>RSU should develop a strategy for improving the learning process through feedback and provide feedback to the parties involved on what has been done based on the feedback.</p>

RSU should develop a strategy to ensure that all students have an internationalisation experience (including short- and long-term exchanges, lectures by foreign lecturers).

RSU should create a system that allows students and staff (including faculty and researchers) to provide feedback and submit complaints anonymously.

RSU should develop a strategy for the internationalisation of teaching staff and for supporting international cooperation (including research).

II - "Sports Coach" ASSESSMENT

II - "Sports Coach" ASSESSMENT

2.1. Indicators Describing the Study Programme

Analysis

2.1.1.

The short-cycle professional higher education study programme "Sports Coach" is coherent and fits very well within the study field "Sports". It should be noted that this study programme, which is undergoing accreditation, is essentially considered a new programme, as it combines two previously implemented study programmes. Two intended sub-programmes - "Sport-Specific Coach" and "Fitness Coach" - share a common core and diverge mainly through sport-specific specialisation blocks (12 ECTS), with both routes leading to the same qualification ("Sports coach") and recognised employment roles in the sector (clubs, schools, federations, private practice) (SAR, p. 147-149, Annex 18.1).

The curriculum of the renewed study programme is built around sport-specific content and is reflecting current trends (digital literacy, innovative research methods) identified in the study field's development process through the RSU consolidation process. Content renewal has drawn on employers and practitioners alongside RSU, strengthening relevance and keeping the syllabus aligned with sector needs and best practice (Annex 4.1). Faculty and delivery capacity are appropriate - professionals from sports federations, academic staff with appropriate knowledge and certified coaches (A and B category) are engaged in an academic work, and practical learning is supported by METC and the Brīvības Street 333 sports complex, available infrastructure in Liepāja. Taken together, the goals, mapped learning outcomes, curriculum architecture, staff expertise and resources is a clear match to the purpose and scope of the study field "Sports" and provide sufficient foundations for field-relevant skills and knowledge.

2.1.2.

The study programme name "Sports Coach", awarded qualification ("Sports Coach"), aims ("To prepare sports coaches for professional activity, using a student-centred approach in the study process, facilitating mental and physical development. The teaching strategy is to develop a free, responsible and creative personality, providing the opportunity to get acquainted with the latest scientific achievements in theory and practice in the sports sector, facilitating the acquisition and understanding of interdisciplinary knowledge and skills of sports coaches, which ensures the acquisition of a fifth-level professional qualification and facilitates competitiveness in changing socio-economic and geopolitical conditions. To create a flexible and integrated study system to motivate continuing education and provide the opportunity to prepare to obtain a first-cycle professional higher education and sixth-level professional qualification (SAR, p. 144)), tasks (SAR p. 144), learning outcomes (SAR, p. 145) and admission requirements (SAR, p. 146) are mutually aligned and mapped to the professional standard ("Sports Coach", approved in 14.12.2022.). The

implementation of the study programme is possible in full-time (2 years/4 semesters) and in part-time (2 years and 6 months/5 semesters) (SAR, 149-151).

The duration of the short-cycle professional higher education study programme is logically justified - as the amount of the study programme is 120 ECTS (24 of them as internships) according to Section 57, Point 3 of the Higher Education Law and Cabinet Regulation No. 305 of 13 June 2023 Regulations on the National Standard of Professional Higher Education (SAR, p. 150 and Annex 17.1.).

The study programme code, 41813 matches with Cabinet Regulation No. 322 "Regulations on the Classification of Latvian Education" - "41" = short-cycle; "813" = Sports) (SAR, p. 149-151). Admission procedure follows RSU Senate rules and Cabinet Reg. No. 846, combining centralised exams (Math, Latvian, foreign language) with an OSPPP (Objectively Structured Professional Aptitude Test) interview, a cycle-ergometer fitness test, and recognition of federation-confirmed achievements, ensuring candidate - profession fit and supporting retention (Annex 1.2.1; SAR, p. 149-151). Since the students in the programme are and must be professionals in the sports industry, such admission requirements are understandable and logical.

Overall, the study programme meets the criteria requirements. The fact that both full-time and part-time studies are offered is considered a positive thing, as many students emphasise that they often already work in the industry during their studies. Currently, the study programme is only available in Latvian, but, of course, the RSU should consider the possibility of offering individual courses or, in time, perhaps even the entire programme, in English as well, in order to promote internationalisation. However, this aspect would be more relevant for bachelor's and master's programmes than for short-cycle programmes, which mainly train local professionals.

2.1.3.

The study programme has undergone significant changes - in the process of consolidation between RSU, two short-cycle programmes previously offered at both universities have been merged into a single one. Overall, the corrections to the short-cycle programme are coherent, evidence-led and (on balance) supportable. The programme developers have really focused on making sure that the new programme is modern and up-to-date - a single "Sports Coach" programme with two sub-programmes is a good fit. Eliminating course fragmentation and hard-wiring outcomes mapping (new electronic course-description format; programme→course learning outcome linkage) hopefully has paid off, but is difficult to assess at present, as implementation only began this academic year. However, actions and their completion status are explicitly tracked in the implementation plan, which shows the mapping work "implemented" and course de-fragmentation addressed through plan reviews and new courses aligned to updated professional standards. The development plan (Annex 4.1) carefully documents the rationale behind changes and stakeholder inputs behind the corrections and records concrete priorities - content restructuring, infrastructure adequacy, and cooperation with the sports sector - that clearly explains the redesigned programme parameters. For example, the qualification internship has been changed from a two-week "observation" to an assistant-coach role after employer feedback. Stakeholder meetings also surfaced specific content gaps (digital literacy, methods, anatomy/physiology load) that the revised plans now address. The graduate survey (Annex 21.2) reports positive quality and preparedness signals - but there were only 8 graduates from the short-cycle programme filling this survey, however, it seems that their comments have been taken into account when developing the content of the new programme. Overall, the changes are well analysed and justified, with implementation instruments in place. The next step is systematic evidence-gathering (placements, graduate outcomes, regional uptake, especially including Liepāja branch).

2.1.4.

The programme's economic and social rationale in general is plausible, but under-evidenced. The narrative links demand to EU/Latvian policy priorities (health promotion, coach professionalism) and

to a purported shortage of qualified coaches (SAR, p. 152), confirmed by employers during the meeting with experts during the visit, yet it provides no hard, programme-level labour-market indicators (e.g., regional vacancy data, wage medians, employer commitments) to quantify need or to demonstrate that this short-cycle offer is the most efficient response. As a result, the case reads as strategically aligned but insufficiently quantified for planning and capacity decisions about budget places etc.

Student dynamics are mixed. In Riga admissions in the former Health Sport Specialist programme are described as stable and are confirmed by admission numbers (this academic year Sports Coach: 43 students, Fitness Coach: 49 students). But Liepāja has not admitted students for four consecutive years, raising questions about the regional delivery model and outreach (Annex 16). Most likely, Liepāja could admit students, if the minimal group requirements were a bit lower. Drop-out rate is significant, and while the causes are well identified (work-study conflict, family/finance, academic performance) (SAR, p. 154), the statistics point to structural frictions – part-time schedules, one-day in-person format, and uneven English skills that also limits mobility options. Annex 16 shows no state-funded places previously, no foreign students, and Latvian-only delivery, limiting both social accessibility and international exposure; the consolidated programme has no graduates yet, so effect on employment can be evaluated after 2–3 years.

2.1.5.

NA

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

Conclusions:

The short-cycle professional higher education study programme “Sports Coach” fits very well with the study field “Sports” and, in effect, constitutes a new, modernised offer with two sub-programmes – Sport-Specific Coach and Fitness Coach. Both sub-programmes share a common courses and diverge mainly via a 12-ECTS specialisation, both leading to the same professional qualification. The curriculum reflects current trends and employer input which was intensively listened to during the consolidation process. Experts believe that the changes could be considered positive and support them, believing that changes can also make the program more effective. However, effectiveness of the changes will only be clear after the first full implementation cycle. The economic and social reasoning is strategically aligned (EU/LV health and coaching priorities; employer testimonies) yet weakly quantified at programme level (no vacancy, wage, or placement-to-hire metrics). Student dynamics are very mixed: Riga shows stable demand while Liepāja has not formed student groups for four years. Drop-out rate is notable (work-study conflicts, one-day format), and Latvian-only delivery with low mobility constrains international exposure; employment impact should be evaluated once the consolidated programme students graduate.

Strengths:

1. Clear title – qualification – aims – admission alignment.
2. Two-path structure (Sport-Specific / Fitness) with a shared core study content and recognised sector roles is a reasonable solution.
3. Content renewal is heavily influenced by employers and labour-market tendencies.
4. Consolidation remedied course fragmentation and implemented learning-outcomes mapping.

Weaknesses:

1. Liepāja branch hasn’t admitted students in 4 years, because the requirements for group size are not appropriate for regional branches.
2. Notable drop-out linked to work-study patterns and one-day contact model, no clear indications of

how it will be reduced in the future.

3. KPIs need to be defined for the future outcomes (retention, time-to-employment, in-field %, salaries etc.) and to evidence impact of the new structure and content of the programme.

2.2. The Content of Studies and Implementation Thereof

Analysis

2.2.1.

The aim and content of the short-cycle professional higher education study programme “Sports Coach” are generally in line with the needs of the labour market. The content of the programme corresponds to the existing infrastructure of the RSU, which in the near future will be supplemented by the development of a new sports complex, thereby expanding the opportunities for the implementation of the study process (SAR, p. 114). The study courses can be regarded as appropriate. They include both practical (for example Didactics of Sports Games (Football, Volleyball) and Leisure Physical Activity (Skating, Skiing (Cross-Country, Mountain), Hiking, Parkour)) and theoretical components (for example Teaching and Learning in Sport), which together provide a solid foundation for students to become coaches (Annex 19). Overall, the study plan can be considered logical and appropriate for the acquisition of coaching skills. Particularly commendable is the emphasis on the preparation of fitness trainers, as this industry is currently developing more rapidly than other sport-related sectors (Annex 19). In the Liepāja branch as well, the field of fitness appears to be developed at a good level, and there is a clear demand for trainers (Annex 2).

The programme consists of 120 CP, including compulsory courses (Part A, 105 CP), restricted electives (Part B, 12 CP), and free electives (Part C, 3 CP), as well as 24 CP of placement and 12 CP allocated to the final examination and thesis. Its thematic structure is logically organised into comprehensive study courses in the humanities, social sciences, and entrepreneurship, basic theoretical courses in sports science and information technology, field-specific professional specialisation courses, and elective courses (Annex 18.2). The total scope of 120 CP fully complies with the National Educational Standard, which stipulates that the volume of short-cycle professional higher education programmes must range between 120 and 180 CP (17.1).

Study programme “Sports Coach” with its two sub-programmes (“Sport-Specific Coach” and “Fitness Coach”) complies with the requirements set out in Section 55 of the Law on Higher Education Institutions for short-cycle professional study programmes, as it has clearly defined aims and learning outcomes, a structured division of courses (Parts A, B, and C, 120 credits, internship and final thesis (Annex 18.2)), content aligned with the professional standard (Annex 18.2) and labour market needs, as well as compliance with the national education standard (17.1) and the LQF/EQF level. Given that both sub-programmes have the same content structure (compulsory part, internships, final thesis) and differ only in specialization courses, it can be considered that both sub-programmes comply with the Law on Higher Education Institutions.

The programme fully complies with Latvian and European regulatory frameworks, including the National Educational Standard (Cabinet Regulation No. 305, Annex 17.1), field-specific regulations for sports education (Annex 17.2), and the professional standard for sports coaches approved by the Tripartite Sub-Council on 14 December 2022 (Annex 18.2). The compliance is evidenced through the mapping of study courses to programme learning outcomes (Annex 18.1), the planning of the study programme across all implementation forms (Annex 19), and the provision of detailed course descriptions (Annex 20.1).

However, an analysis which requires the acquisition of two foreign languages, reveals that the content of the offered study courses does not fully correspond to this requirement (Annex 18.2). Also according to Paragraph 11 of Cabinet Regulation No. 305 (Annex 17.1), a short-cycle study programme must include at least 9 CP in the field of entrepreneurship. RSU fulfils this requirement through three separate courses: “Fundamentals of Economics and Entrepreneurship” (3 CP),

“Entrepreneurship: From Idea to Business” (3 CP), and “Fundamentals of Law” (3 CP). However, it raises the question of whether this structure might be overly fragmented and whether there is a clear link to the field of sport.

2.2.2.

NA

2.2.3.

The assessment methods applied within the study programmes are appropriate and well aligned with the requirements of the respective professions. They ensure a comprehensive evaluation of both theoretical knowledge and practical skills, thereby fostering the integration of academic competence with professional readiness. Such an approach contributes to the development of well-rounded graduates capable of meeting the expectations of the labour market (SAR, p. 120).

The principles of a student-centred approach are ensured through the offering of elective courses, opportunities for various specializations, as well as extensive placement opportunities in sports clubs, federations, and fitness centres, which are broad in scope given RSU’s well-established practices from previous years. Students are involved in the development of research skills, digital literacy, and personalized training planning, all of which correspond to labour market requirements (SAR, p. 155). However, during the site visit, no clear assurance was obtained that research activities are widely practiced among students. Considering the available sports laboratories, this should be encouraged to a greater extent. Overall, assessment includes both course outcomes and the final qualification paper, thereby ensuring a link between theoretical knowledge and practical application.

Based on the site visit, it can be concluded that the academic staff in both Riga and Liepāja demonstrate a high level of professionalism and expertise (also Annex 6.2). The assessment processes are carried out in a consistent and modern manner, reflecting current trends in higher education pedagogy. The use of diverse evaluation forms and methods further supports the achievement of intended learning outcomes, while also ensuring objectivity, transparency, and fairness in the evaluation of students’ performance.

However, following the expert’s site discussions with students, it became evident that part-time students, in particular, face considerable difficulties in managing their study schedules. The workload appears to be overly extensive and is concentrated within a single day, which creates challenges in balancing academic requirements with professional and personal responsibilities. Such an arrangement risks reducing the effectiveness of the learning process, as students may experience fatigue, limited capacity for knowledge retention, and decreased motivation.

2.2.4.

The organisation of internships is well-structured and effectively implemented. Students are provided with opportunities to complete their practice in a variety of settings, including professional sports schools, general education schools, and fitness centres. This diversity of internship placements ensures that students gain a broad perspective on the professional field and are exposed to different contexts in which their future competencies will be applied (SAR, p. 122). It would be beneficial if internship placements were also available outside of Riga, allowing future coaches to gain broader experience working with diverse target groups.

It is logical and appropriate that internship mentors/supervisors are required to hold at least a Category B coaching licence, as this significantly increases the likelihood that mentors possess the necessary professional expertise and pedagogical skills. Such a requirement contributes to maintaining the quality and credibility of the internship experience, as students benefit from guidance provided by qualified professionals (Annex 9.1).

The internship process is carefully monitored and assessed according to well-established and

appropriate principles. Supervision mechanisms ensure that students receive continuous feedback, while the evaluation criteria are aligned with the intended learning outcomes of the study programme. This systematic approach strengthens the link between theory and practice and supports the overall professional development of students (Annex 9.1).

Students are provided with diverse placement opportunities through cooperation agreements with sports clubs, fitness centres, federations, schools, and health promotion institutions, with additional flexibility to propose new placements in Latvia or abroad, thus supporting dual careers. The structure of the internship is clearly defined across semesters (24 ECTS in total), with a progressive increase in complexity and a balance of observation, independent work, and supervised practice. The tasks—such as lesson planning, training programme design, session delivery, video analysis, and reflective reporting—are directly linked to the intended learning outcomes and assessed by qualified mentors. Overall, the internship system effectively supports the acquisition of professional competences and, in line with the Law on Higher Education Institutions, the Vocational Education Law, and Cabinet of Ministers Regulations No. 305 (2023) and No. 481 (2023), fully complies with national standards and legal enactments (Annex 9.1).

It remains unclear whether, and in what form, the mentors themselves receive systematic training or methodological support related to the provision and supervision of internships. Given that mentorship constitutes an essential part of the academic process, the preparation and continuous professional development of mentors should be regarded as an integral academic task. Adequately trained mentors are not only expected to provide professional guidance but also to ensure that the internship experience is closely aligned with the intended learning outcomes of the study programme.

From a quality assurance perspective, it would be advisable to strengthen institutional cooperation with internship providers, thereby fostering a closer and more structured partnership. Such collaboration could include the development of mentor/supervisor training modules, regular workshops, or joint feedback sessions between academic staff and mentors. These measures would enhance consistency in internship supervision, support the professional growth of mentors, and ultimately contribute to a more effective and academically grounded internship system.

2.2.5.

NA

2.2.6.

It is a well-developed area of the study programme. There is clear evidence that students have a good understanding of both the structure of their final theses and the ways in which these works can be implemented in practice. Students are able to approach and consult their academic supervisors, which ensures continuous guidance and academic support throughout the research process (SAR p. 127).

A particularly strong asset is the availability of the sports laboratory located on Brīvības Street 333. This facility provides students with valuable opportunities to conduct practical measurements, apply research methodologies, and integrate empirical findings into their final works. It is to be hoped that the laboratory will be preserved and further developed, as it represents an important element of the programme's academic infrastructure.

In the short-cycle professional study programme "Sports Coach", the qualification thesis is a compulsory component of the state examination, demonstrating students' theoretical knowledge, ability to apply research methods, analyse data, and draw conclusions. These are developed in accordance with RSU regulations, methodological guidelines, and legal requirements, with topics proposed by university departments or suggested by students themselves. Research covers a wide range of areas in sports science, including training methodologies, physical fitness, psychological preparation, sports nutrition, and the use of technologies in training.

These undergo pre-defence and are defended before a state examination committee that includes independent experts and employer representatives. Many works are experimental, and several results have been presented at the RSU International Scientific Conference. Most theses receive high grades (8-10), (Annex 22) reflecting continuous improvements in programme quality. The results contribute both to the advancement of sports science and to practical applications in training processes and health promotion.

At the same time, an important question remains as to whether, and in what ways, students are encouraged and motivated to continue their research at a more advanced, scientific level. While the final thesis provides a strong foundation, additional mechanisms – such as opportunities for involvement in faculty-led projects, participation in academic conferences, or access to research grants – would further stimulate student engagement in scientific inquiry and strengthen the programme's contribution to research capacity building.

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

Conclusions:

The short-cycle professional higher education study programme “Sports Coach” is overall well-designed and aligned with labour market needs – its content includes both theoretical and practical courses, a logically structured internship system with progressive complexity, and close cooperation with employers. The programme complies with professional standard requirements, although full compliance regarding the acquisition of foreign languages has not yet been ensured. A student-centred approach is implemented through elective courses, specializations, and extensive placement opportunities; however, research activities among students should be further promoted by making greater use of the opportunities offered by sports laboratories. A strong element of the programme is the qualification thesis, in which students demonstrate both theoretical knowledge and practical research skills, with several works presented at international conferences. At the same time, challenges remain in balancing part-time students' study schedules and ensuring the continuous professional development of mentors to improve the quality of internship supervision. Overall, the programme successfully prepares professionally competent sports coaches, with potential to further strengthen the research and international cooperation dimensions.

Strengths:

1. Well-organised internship arrangements that ensure students' exposure to diverse professional contexts.
2. A clearly structured and well-managed final thesis process.
3. Overall, the study programme can be regarded as modern and aligned with contemporary higher education practices.

Weaknesses:

1. Student dissatisfaction regarding the organisation of lecture schedules, which are perceived as overly demanding and insufficiently flexible.
2. Limited cooperation with internships outside Riga and its surroundings, which indicates the need for closer ties and systematic cooperation.

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.

2.3. Resources and Provision of the Study Programme

Analysis

2.3.1.

This Short-Cycle programme is implemented in Riga and Liepāja. The available resources for the programme implementation allow the achievement of the intended learning outcomes. RSU provides the necessary infrastructure to achieve all study outcomes. RSU facilities are suitable for conducting the study process, featuring computers, multimedia resources, and internet access, along with specialised auditoriums and sports facilities. In expert opinion, the Sports Laboratory is well-equipped (SAR, p. 127–128; site visit) and supports the implementation of the study programme as well as scientific research associated with the programme. The expert team was impressed with the equipment that is available: The laboratory equipment at Brīvības street is up to date in the different significant areas of Sports Coach research and different environment approaches. The materials allow RSU members to conduct innovative research, namely in the field of Biomechanics, Physiology and Psychology (force platforms, EMG, kinematic analysis apparatus, balance analysis equipment, ergometers of different types, cardiorespiratory assessment equipment, reaction time facilities, among others from daily basis work) (site visit).

Both students and staff can use specialised lecture halls and sport halls, suited for both theoretical and practical classes in a variety of sports fields. A key resource in the implementation of the sub-programmes is the cooperation with sports centres and clubs, which provides venues for practical sessions during placements and a real work environment for students (SAR, p. 165–166), which could be very positive for the development of students' skills and knowledge. This cooperation with sports organisations and partners ensures extensive internship opportunities, promoting students' professional growth and competitiveness in the labour market, not only in Riga but also in the Liepāja branch. However, during site visit, it became apparent that many students do not make full use of the available resources (e.g., laboratories, sports halls, library collections). Therefore, RSU should take a more active role in motivating and encouraging students to use these resources for independent and practical learning. Graduates of the Liepāja branch noted that they would have preferred more practical classes (e.g., in anatomy and muscle physiology). This reflects a broader concern that practical training opportunities in Liepāja are not as extensive as in Riga. The Liepāja Olympic Center is also a well-equipped facility that RSU staff and students can use for research and internship purposes, but it should be noted that it is a municipal institution that does not guarantee regular access to RSU students.

In addition, students have access to computers and internet access in the study rooms and reading room, where they can study the required literature and complete assignments, as well as to use e-resources, which is very positive. The common room has a comfortable leisure area equipped with a microwave and vending machines, supporting students' transition periods between classes during the day (SAR, p. 127–128).

Students and teaching staff can use the e-learning platform, where all study materials, course descriptions, tasks and tests are available. E-resources allow students to work independently using modern technologies, having access to different e-books and e-journals, and conduct research using online resources. The RSU library provides 24/7 access for students and its free-access subscription offers a wide range of books relevant to the study programme. RSU offers access to more than 30 online databases relevant to the fields of the study programme, which is very positive. These databases provide students with access to high-quality study materials and research related to physiology, biomedicine, psychology and sports pedagogy. Subscription databases such as ClinicalKey and AccessMedicine offer access to handbooks and textbooks on medical sciences and

sports medicine. The EBSCO and ProQuest databases also provide access to scientific studies that are important for sports science research. (SAR, p. 127-128; Annex 23.2). However, the book collection of RSU (Brīvības street) library looks rather outdated and contains several old books (site visit), namely regarding some fundamental contents of the study programmes (e.g., sports terminology, motor learning, biology).

Moreover, all study activities are available in the e-environment, which facilitates students' independence and self-directed learning. Students can access all study materials from their digital devices, allowing full mobility and access to the study process at any time. The relevance and accessibility of these resources were highlighted during the site visit (presentation of learning platform).

2.3.2.

N/A

2.3.3.

According to the SAR (p. 167), for the study programme, funding is used for staff remuneration, guest lecturers, licences and research activities. In addition to the direct costs of lectures and classes, the study programme must cover the costs of infrastructure maintenance (premises, IT solutions) and other common RSU resources used in the study programme (Student Services, Library, organisation of the study process, subsidy to the student council and other support and administrative functions).

The tuition fee per student per academic year is planned at EUR 2300. According to the RSU discount regulations, an excellence discount may be granted. The planned number of students in the full-time study programme is 30 students in admission and 60 students in admission in the part-time study programme. For the programme to be cost-effective, a minimum of 27 students must be enrolled in the full-time programme and 40 students in the part-time programme. It is planned that 12 budget places will be provided for students enrolled full-time (SAR, p.168). The costs of the study programme in the form of full-time regular studies and part-time correspondence studies are defined with valued information in the SAR (p. 168-169).

The implementation of the study programme foresees the use of the existing RSU infrastructure, including, where possible, the planned sharing of study courses, laboratories and premises. The existing RSU infrastructure provides all the necessary material and technical basis for the implementation of this study programme. Furthermore, RSU has started the construction of a new sports complex on Cigoriņu Street, in Riga, which will also be available for students of these study programmes (SAR, p. 169; and information shared during the site visit).

Although the financial information is well presented, the expert team would like to recommend RSU to define a strategy to allow the development of this study programme in different parts of Latvia outside Riga. The possibility of using the Liepāja branch as a way to achieve this aim could be a very good opportunity for RSU. Hence, the fixed minimum number of enrolled students required to open the Liepāja branch seems to be an obstacle to this development.

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

Conclusions:

RSU facilities are suitable for conducting the study process, featuring computers, multimedia resources, and internet access, along with specialized auditoriums and sports facilities. Moreover, the Sports Laboratory is well-equipped and supports the implementation of the study programme as well as scientific research associated with the programme.

The funding available to the study programme is well presented, including the funding sources to the implementation of the study programme.

Strengths:

1. Good facilities for sports practice and for education purposes.
2. Labs are very well prepared with good and updated equipment for research and educational purposes.
3. Students and staff have access to a vast collection of physical and e-resources of the RSU Library.

Weaknesses:

1. The book collection of RSU library (Brīvības street) looks rather outdated and contains several old books.
2. The fixed minimum number of enrolled students required to open the Liepāja branch does not allow a long-term plan in the development of this study field in different parts of Latvia outside Riga.

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

The study provision, including informational resources (library), material and technical support, and financial resources, fully meets the necessary conditions for study programme's implementation, both in Riga and in Liepāja, and ensures the achievement of learning outcomes.

2.4. Teaching Staff

Analysis

2.4.1.

The staff supporting the "Sports Coach" programme is more concentrated on applied coaching, health, and fitness fundamentals. This focus is evident in its curriculum, which features foundational courses like the "Basics of Health Sports" and generally emphasizes outcomes aligned with Physical Qualification Level 5 (PQL 5). While the "Sports Coach" and "Sports Science" programmes share some faculty who co-teach courses like "Research Methods in Sports", the "Sports Coach" programme also incorporates international lecturers for specific course topics, such as those covered in "Sports Nutrition".

The study programme "Sports Coach" is ensured by 40 lecturers, 29 of whom are elected to academic positions at RSU. The qualifications of the teaching staff are academically and practically relevant. The teaching staff consists of experienced academic staff, researchers, and knowledgeable practitioners (including professional athletes, sports managers, etc.). Over the last decade, several members of RSU teaching staff have obtained doctoral degrees in sports science and related fields, and are actively involved in research and innovation in sports training methodology and health promotion (SAR, p. 178). 57.5% of teaching staff have PhD degrees, with a minimum of a master's degree (SAR, p. 169–170). Academic staff are involved in research (including some lecturers/researchers in international cooperation), participate in international conferences, and publish scientific papers (SAR, p. 171).

According to SAR (p. 170–171) the RSU Centre for Educational Growth and the IT Department have provided comprehensive training to lecturers, enhancing their digital, pedagogical, and research skills essential for high-quality, interactive education. Training topics include academic integrity, research tools (PubMed, Web of Science, EndNote), digital competencies (Moodle, H5P, Panopto, Zoom), pedagogical approaches (competency-based teaching, diverse content delivery, assessment objectivity, student feedback), and transversal skills (public speaking, engaging lectures,

organisational dynamics). External professional development activities, such as sports science seminars, further support staff capacity building.

It should be considered that practical training supervisors are not only mentors/supervisors but also instructors and lecturers, so RSU should offer them training opportunities, including in the field of pedagogy. Employers also saw the need for such training in discussions with experts. During experts' site visits, employers and internship supervisors also saw the need for such training and cooperation.

In relation to language proficiency, the RSU has submitted official statements confirming that all academic staff involved in programme implementation comply with national regulations on Latvian language competence (Annex 24.4). In addition, staff who teach in foreign languages meet the required English proficiency at B2 level or higher, in line with European standards. These competencies are sufficient to ensure the delivery of study content in both Latvian and foreign languages and to support international cooperation.

During expert site visits, it became apparent that there are no lectures by foreign lecturers and no relevant strategic cooperation with foreign colleagues. Bringing in international lecturers and experts in the field would enrich and modernise the lecturers' knowledge of the field.

2.4.2.

The study programme emphasises the importance of strategic staff management to uphold high-quality education and compliance with regulatory standards (SAR, part 3.4). To mitigate the impact of staff changes – such as retirements, career shifts, and sector demands – RSU implements targeted measures, including strict recruitment criteria, continuous professional development, and informal collaboration with field experts. Regular staff training, quality assurance systems, and cooperation with sports organisations ensure that the academic and practical relevance of the programme is maintained. Additionally, the institution promotes staff renewal and specialisation to adapt to evolving industry requirements and to sustain the programme's scientific and educational standards.

2.4.3.

NA

2.4.4.

According to Annex 6.4, between 2017 and 2024, 221 publications were authored by 46 specialised course lecturers, with the most productive years in 2024, 2022, and 2023. Most publications (48%) appeared in journals indexed in Web of Science and Scopus, indicating high quality, while 22% were international collaborations. Around 41% of publications are not indexed, and most are full-length articles, books, or reviews. Key topics include “physical activity,” “health,” “combat sports,” and “Covid-19.”

According to Annex 6.4, between 2017 and 2024, 166 publications were recorded for 17 general course lecturers, with the most productive in 2023, 2021, and 2024. Thirteen lecturers have published at least once. Nearly one-fifth (19%) of the publications are international. Over half (56%) appeared in journals indexed in Web of Science and Scopus, reflecting high quality, while 6% were in ERIH-indexed journals for humanities and social sciences. About 38% of publications are not indexed. The majority (78%) are full-length works such as articles and books, with the remaining 22% being shorter formats like conference abstracts. Key topics include “smart textile,” “Latvia,” “shoulder,” and “business,” with 76 keywords used multiple times across the publications.

Young lecturers write under the guidance of more experienced lecturers/researchers, which is important for ensuring academic continuity. According to Annex 6.5: 46 teaching staff in the study field “Sports” teaching specialised study courses 11 have not published in journals indexed in the Web of Sciences / Scopus or ERIH databases in 2017–2024. Similarly, 6 out of 17 teaching staff in

the general study course have not published in journals indexed in the aforementioned databases.

2.4.5.

According to SAR (part 3.4.5), the "Sports Coach" study programme relies on effective interdisciplinary collaboration among teaching staff to ensure high-quality education. This collaboration is facilitated through regular communication via departmental and general meetings, emphasising consistency and integration across courses. Prior to consolidation, coordination was managed by the Vice-Rector for Studies and the Study Council, with staff actively participating in research projects and course development. Course interconnection is achieved through coordinated topic linking within departments, supervised by the programme director and qualification heads, enabling integrated practical tasks and project work. Cooperation with industry professionals further bridges academia and practice, providing relevant, labour market-aligned knowledge. Teaching staff can cooperate with professionals of the sports sector to provide students with relevant knowledge that can be applied in practice. Experts are invited both to develop the course content and to present individual course topics to students under the guidance of the lecturer. This kind of cooperation is very useful to ensure that courses meet the labour market requirements. Unfortunately, during the experts site visits, no specific examples emerged to indicate that employers or experts were involved in the actual teaching process in addition to assessments. Mechanisms such as working groups, digital platforms, and e-learning tools support ongoing cooperation and course quality improvement. These measures aim to enhance study quality by fostering collaboration, integrated learning, and practical relevance within the multidimensional field of sports science. The current teaching staff-student ratio is approximately 1:5.6, which is adequate and supports effective learning and supervision.

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

Conclusions:

The academic staff of RSU in the study field of "Sports" are highly qualified, consisting of experienced researchers, practitioners, and specialists with doctoral degrees who are engaged in research, innovation, and, in part, international cooperation. The staff's participation in continuous professional development, which includes pedagogical, digital, and research skills, ensures the provision of modern, student-centered education. To meet the needs of a growing number of students and the sector, the institution recruits practitioners and specialists, promoting an interdisciplinary environment that combines theory and practice. Practitioner-instructors should also be provided with pedagogical and other necessary training by the RSU. Staff collaboration is facilitated by regular meetings, interconnection between courses, and collaboration with industry specialists to ensure relevance to the labour market. RSU also implements targeted personnel management strategies, including continuous training and cooperation with sports organisations, to maintain high standards despite staff turnover due to retirement and career changes. Overall, the programme's reliance on motivated, research-active faculty, industry relationships, and internal quality mechanisms supports the delivery of high-quality, relevant sports education. The ratio of faculty to students is approximately 1:5.6 in the study programme "Sports Coach", which is adequate and supports effective learning and supervision.

Strengths:

1. The teaching staff consists of experienced academic staff, researchers, and knowledgeable practitioners.
2. Ongoing professional development to ensure pedagogical and digital competencies.

Weaknesses:

1. Lack of a clear strategy for international cooperation in curriculum development, despite existing foreign collaborations.
2. There is no formal strategy for involving practical supervisors in curriculum development and training them (in pedagogy and other necessary areas).

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: Partially compliant

Despite highly educated and motivated teaching staff and researchers, insufficient attention has been paid to involving external teaching staff and researchers and to training supervisors at the internship base.

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 Short-Cycle Professional Higher Education Study Programme "Sports Coach" is designed with a scope of 120 ECTS, corresponding to two years of full-time studies. This fully complies with the requirements of the Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No. 305 (2023), which defines the state standard for short-cycle professional higher education. The programme ensures the achievement of learning outcomes at EQF level 5 and provides access to the labour market as a qualified Sports Coach. The SAR and annexes confirm the compliance of volume, structure, and alignment with the standard (SAR, part 2.2; Annex 17.1).

- 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: Partially compliant

The study programme is aligned with the professional standard of Sports Coach, as registered in the national occupational classification system. The programme offers two subprogrammes: Sports-Specific Coach and Fitness Coach. The mapping provided in the SAR demonstrates that the programme covers the key competences required by the professional standard, including knowledge of training methodology, physiology, pedagogy, and safety. However, experts noted certain elements of partial compliance – in particular, the absence of the second foreign language and some uncertainty as to whether both subprogrammes equally ensure full alignment with all competences of the standard. Employers and graduates confirmed during the site visit that the qualifications largely meet the needs of the labour market, particularly in the regions.

- 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 descriptions of the study courses and the study materials have been prepared in Latvian, which is the language of implementation of the programme, 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.

(SAR, part 2.3.2; Annex 20.1).

- 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 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. The sample provided in the Annex corresponds to the formal requirements.

(SAR, part 2.5; Annex 24.1).

- 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 teaching staff members involved in the implementation of the "Sports Coach" programme are proficient in the official language in accordance with the regulations on the level of official language knowledge and the procedures for testing official language proficiency for performing professional and office duties. This is confirmed by the rector's statement and supporting documentation.

(SAR, part 2.3.7; Annex 24.4).

- 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 set forth in the Law on Higher Education Institutions and related regulations. The annexed contract includes clear terms on tuition fees, student rights and obligations, and procedures for termination, ensuring compliance with legal requirements.

(SAR, part 2.3.8; Annex 24.6).

- 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

RSU has confirmed that students are guaranteed the continuation of their studies in another accredited programme should the current programme's implementation be terminated. This assurance is supported by the Rector's statement and aligns with the requirements set forth in the Law on Higher Education Institutions (as documented in the SAR, section 2.5).

To ensure continuity, RSU has established formal agreements, specifically an Agreement on Continuing Education, with the University of Latvia (UL).

The agreement with UL guarantees the transfer of students to a short-cycle professional higher education programme of the same level—the UL programme also entitled “Sports Coach” and leading to the same professional qualification.

The agreement explicitly stipulates that should the RSU short-cycle professional higher education study programme “Sports Coach” be discontinued, UL undertakes to provide students enrolled in the programme with the opportunity to continue their studies in the short-cycle professional higher education study programme “Sports Coach” at UL.

This formal agreement provides clear evidence of continuity for programmes within the same study cycle.

- 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

Procedures are in place, in accordance with the Law on Higher Education Institutions, to provide compensation or transfer opportunities for students (Annex 24.3, Certification of Compensation of Losses to Students) if the programme is not accredited or the licence is withdrawn, as confirmed by RSU in its certification of 08.04.2025 (No. 3-DPAD-6/223/2025), which guarantees compensation of losses to students in the study field “Sports”, specifically the short-cycle professional programme “Sports Coach” and the professional Bachelor's programme “Sports Science”. During the site visit, students indicated that in the context of the recent reorganisation the information provided to them had not always been clear. This shows that while formal guarantees exist, communication must be improved to ensure students are fully informed about their rights and compensation mechanisms.

(SAR, part 2.5).

- 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

It is confirmed that the study programme complies with the requirements of Section 55 of the Law on Higher Education Institutions and other relevant regulations. Both sub-programmes – “Sports Coach” and “Sports Science” – meet statutory indicators regarding admission procedures, programme structure, professional practice, final assessment, and qualification award, as documented in Annex 17.2 Compliance with the Sports Law of the Republic of Latvia is also ensured. The provisions on foreign language use under Section 55 are not applicable, as both sub-programmes are delivered in Latvian. Thus, the criterion is met.

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 Short-Cycle Professional Higher Education Study Programme "Sports Coach" is assessed as fully compliant with the requirements of the Law on Higher Education Institutions and relevant regulatory acts.

However, the evaluation identified specific areas requiring attention, resulting in elements of partial compliance:

Curriculum Scope: Concerns were noted regarding the absence of a second foreign language and uncertainty as to whether both sub-programmes fully and equally ensure alignment with all required professional competences set out in the standard.

Student Communication: Although formal guarantees—such as provisions for continuing studies in the event of programme termination (verified in Annexes 24.2 and 24.3)—are included in the study agreements, students reported during the site visit that information regarding these guarantees, particularly during the recent reorganization, was unclear.

While the formal compliance (Point 12) is strong, the institution (RSU) must improve its communication strategy to ensure all students are fully informed about their contractual rights, study continuity, and compensation mechanisms in practice.

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

Conclusions:

Based on the provided assessment, the evaluation of the study programme is "Good" and justified because the programme's core structural integrity, market relevance, and quality of delivery significantly outweigh its current operational and procedural challenges.

The "Good" rating is supported by the programme's modern and well-aligned curriculum, which was successfully developed using extensive stakeholder input to meet current labour market needs across two key specializations/subprogrammes (Sport-Specific Coach and Fitness Coach). Furthermore, the programme benefits from highly qualified faculty and a strong cooperation network with industry partners, ensuring practical relevance and high-quality instruction within well-equipped facilities. This combination of strong human resources, specialized infrastructure, and robust

industry links ensures the programme is strategically viable and resilient.

While the programme faces notable challenges—including high dropout rates, the inactivity of a regional branch (Liepāja), lack of clear Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), and minor resource/cooperation gaps (e.g., outdated library collections, limited involvement of practical supervisors)—these issues are primarily operational and procedural. They represent addressable areas for enhancement but do not undermine the fundamental effectiveness and sustainability of the education currently being delivered. The core quality remains solid, warranting the "Good" assessment.

Strengths:

1. Clear title - qualification - aims - admission alignment.
2. Two-path structure (Sport-Specific / Fitness) with a shared core study content and recognised sector roles is a reasonable solution.
3. Content renewal is influenced by employers and labour-market tendencies.
4. Consolidation remedied course fragmentation and implemented learning-outcomes mapping.
5. Well-organised internship arrangements that ensure students' exposure to diverse professional contexts.
6. Highly qualified academic staff who contribute to the assessment process with professionalism and expertise.
7. A clearly structured and well-managed final thesis process.
8. Overall, the study programmes can be regarded as modern and aligned with contemporary higher education practices.
9. Good facilities for sports practice and for education purposes.
10. Labs are very well prepared with good and updated equipment for research and educational purposes.
11. Students and staff have access to a vast collection of physical and e-resources of the RSU Library.
12. The teaching staff consists of experienced academic staff, researchers, and knowledgeable practitioners.
13. Ongoing professional development to ensure pedagogical and digital competencies.

Weaknesses:

1. Partial compliance with professional standards, both in specific aspects and in relation to the integration of two professions within a single programme.
2. KPIs need to be defined for the future outcomes (retention, time-to-employment, in-field %, salaries etc.) and to evidence impact of the new structure and content of the programme.
3. The fixed minimum number of enrolled students required to open the Liepāja branch does not allow a long-term plan in the development of this study field in different parts of Latvia outside Riga.
4. Notable drop-out linked to work-study patterns and one-day contact model, no clear indications of how it will be reduced in the future.
5. Student dissatisfaction regarding the organisation of lecture schedules, which are perceived as overly demanding and insufficiently flexible.
6. Lack of a clear strategy for international cooperation in curriculum development, despite existing foreign collaborations.
7. There is no formal strategy for involving practical supervisors in curriculum development and training them (in pedagogy and other necessary areas).
8. The vast book collection of RSU (Brīvības street) library looks rather outdated and contains several old books.

Evaluation of the study programme "Sports Coach"

Evaluation of the study programme:

Good

2.6. Recommendations for the Study Programme "Sports Coach"

Short-term recommendations

Until the study field is submitted for accreditation, RSU should review the compliance of the study programme with the legislation and professional standard.

Within the next year, RSU should create a system for compiling timetables and monitor it to ensure that study days are of reasonable length and suitable for achieving learning outcomes.

Within the next two years, RSU should develop cooperation with internship providers (training for internship supervisors, involvement of experts in teaching), including creating a strategy for obtaining regular and formal feedback from employers.

Within the next two years, RSU should create opportunities for opening a Liepāja branch study group, including creating free study places or scholarship opportunities for at least five students each academic year.

Long-term recommendations

RSU should define KPIs for future outcomes (labour retention, time to employment, percentage working in the field, wages, etc.) and regularly demonstrate the impact of the new programme structure and content.

RSU should create a strategy for mapping dropout rates (including in relation to linking work and study) and reduce dropout rates by half by following it.

RSU should create a strategy to ensure international experience for all students and promote international cooperation among teaching staff.

The RSU should create a strategy for regularly (at least once a year) reviewing and updating/modernizing teaching materials (including library resources).

RSU should enter into cooperation and rental agreements (at least one) with sports clubs to rent out their sports halls and earn additional income.

RSU must strengthen its communication strategy to ensure students receive comprehensive, clear, and proactive information regarding all programme developments, particularly concerning their rights and study continuity guarantees during any organizational change.

II - "Sports Science" ASSESSMENT

II - "Sports Science" ASSESSMENT

2.1. Indicators Describing the Study Programme

Analysis

2.1.1.

The revised "Sports Science" programme fits well with the study field "Sports". The program's objectives, tasks, and learning outcomes (SAR, p. 97-99) are specific and relevant to the sports

sector. It is important to mention that the programme has historically offered 4 qualifications, three of which were offered to be obtained at the same time, creating five different subprogrammes (SAR, p. 107). A common base with compulsory study courses provides the foundational sports-science base, while the two qualification pairs offered as sub-programmes are delivered via restricted-elective B-category courses (SAR, p. 104–107), making the structure of the programme logical and understandable. The shift from a larger mix of four qualifications to two already established pairs improves internal focus and reduces past fragmentation (SAR, p. 107).

Programme parameters are proportionate and rational. The dual coding (42813; 42141) is correctly explained: the programme sits in the study field “Sports” while awarding a teacher qualification within one subprogramme. This is defensible academically (pedagogy is integral to coaching), provided the Sports core remains dominant and both professional standards are explicitly mapped to course content and assessment. The RSU lecturers, whose expertise is now combined in the new content of the study programme, are knowledgeable and have qualifications relevant to the field. RSU in Brīvības Street 333, although partially outdated, nevertheless has extensive infrastructure suitable for training sports specialists. During the expert’s site visit, it was noted that RSU is currently building a new sports complex on Cigoriņu Street, Rīga, which will provide opportunities for future students in this particular study programme.

2.1.2.

The first-cycle (Professional Bachelor’s) Study Programme “Sports Science” presents a clear internal logic: the title, two codes – although this may seem confusing, they are logical (42813 for sports; 42141 for teacher education) (according to Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No. 322.), degree (professional bachelor in Sports Science), and planned dual professional qualifications (currently there are 4 qualifications, but only three will be implemented in the future) offered within two sub-programmes are derived from the same programme aim and are supported by explicit learning outcomes and curriculum structures (SAR, p. 107–110). Although the programme has sub-programmes, it should be noted that students mostly acquire the common programme learning outcomes and objectives in compulsory courses, which form the basis of the programme, while the specific sub-programme outcomes are acquired in elective courses, allowing specific subprograms to coexist within a single study programme. Since the programme combines various qualifications, its general name is appropriate, although, of course, the word “science” in the name of the professional program could confuse prospective students.

The design uses a shared compulsory (A) study courses for the study field “Sports” and delivers each qualification through restricted-elective (B) study course blocks, internships, and state examinations. This structure is appropriate for LQF/EQF Level 6 (knowledge breadth in sport science, applied skills in coaching, teaching and/or management; responsibility and autonomy evidenced through workplace practice).

Duration and scope of the programme are reasonable and justified: 240 ECTS delivered full-time over 4 years or part-time over 4 years and 6 months, with a timetable that separates study periods and dedicated placement windows in later years – proportionate to LQF/EQF Level 6 outcomes and distinct target groups (recent school-leavers vs. working adults). The RSU decision to implement the programme in both full-time and part-time formats is justified, as some of the students are definitely working in the industry while studying. The programme is relatively long, but considering the qualifications to be obtained and the amount of practical training required, this is logical.

Admission requirements are interrelated with programme demands and uniform across subprogrammes (Annexes 1.2.1, 25): secondary education plus physical tests and an admission test (interview), ensuring entrants can meet the practical and pedagogical requirements embedded in the programme. Regulatory alignment is explicit (state standards for first-cycle programmes and professional standards for Senior Coach/Teacher/Manager) and is reflected in where learning outcomes sit (compulsory vs. restricted electives) and how they are assessed through internships

and national exams, enabling the award of both – the degree and the relevant professional qualification(s).

2.1.3.

RSU's edits on First-Cycle (Professional Bachelor's) Study Programme "Sports Science" are coherently documented and, on balance, supportable. The Development plan (Annex 4.1) shows how dean-led working groups (with programme directors, study-quality and infrastructure units) have worked on the redesign and standardising delivery tools (course-description register, e-learning). Substantive adjustments are clearly tied to evidence: part-A content in the bachelor programme is now aligned with the short-cycle "Sports Coach" in years 1-2, while the legacy of RSU "Health Sport" is discontinued – reducing duplication and clarifying progression (Annex 4.1). The logical link between short-cycle and bachelor's programmes can definitely help increase student numbers. The plan (Annex 4.1) also hard-wires course-level improvements (embedding English sport terminology; interdisciplinarity; cross-unit teaching; involvement of field experts) with deadlines and ongoing monitoring, which should lift coherence and relevance across the curriculum. The university staff has really worked intensively to improve the programme.

Overall, the corrections are well analysed and justified, and the implementation structure is credible. Only few risks still remain, for example, RSU mentions that student consultations mentioned digital-literacy gaps among some staff and difficulties combining study process with sport-specific training (Annex 4.1). The success of the changes introduced in the programme can only be assessed after a few years, by carefully following the progress of graduates and collecting relevant data.

2.1.4.

The economic and social case is plausible – the study programme trains coaches, teachers and managers for a visibly large school and club based system. RSU points to substantial sectoral demand (many sports schools and groups; wide reach of "Sports and Health" in general education) (SAR, p. 110). However, the provided information in the SAR offers no specific employment indicators (for example, graduate employment, salary bands, regional distribution, placement-to-hire rates and actual amount of vacancies), so the labour-market claim is assertive rather than demonstrated. In contrast, student statistics are concrete and reveal both strengths and gaps. Current enrollment stands stable at 94 full-time and 53 part-time students (academic year 2024/2025), and 103 full-time and 36 part-time students (academic year 2025/2026), but no breakdown by sub-programme is available, limiting to understand which specialties are in demand from a student point of view. However, drop-out rate is dramatical and it seems that approximately only $\frac{1}{3}$ of the admitted students make it to the 3rd year of studies, which results in a low number of actual graduates (Annex 16). Last academic year seems to have smaller drop-out than previous ones, but it is not easy to see the true reasons behind that and a much longer time period has to show this tendency to confirm that drop-out rates are reducing. The drop-out profile is heterogeneous (academic failure, non-attendance, voluntary withdrawal, fee issues), so no easy mechanisms on how to reduce it can be established. Most likely, the RSU should focus on a personalized approach to each student, as they come from very different fields, the sports industry is very dynamic, and students are not always able to combine their professional interests with their studies.

The programme is Latvian-only, has no foreign students, and part-time studies is only privately funded – these are some of factors that narrow international exposure and social accessibility, especially for working learners.

While funding decisions rest with the government, RSU should take the initiative to engage with policy-makers to ensure the programme's long-term sustainability and address regional needs, including regional development priorities. RSU may also consider creating a limited number of

institution-funded study places if state funding is unavailable, as Cabinet Regulation No. 994 regulates only the allocation of state-budget places and does not prohibit universities from establishing their own institution-funded places. This would not replace state responsibility but could serve as an interim measure to support programme continuity and regional development.

However, since the professional programme primarily trains local specialists, teachers, and coaches, the RSU must consider whether it is ready to compete internationally with this programme and train internationally competitive professionals before the RSU decides to implement it in English. However, it is true that greater involvement of foreign lecturers in the programme could be implemented already at this stage to let local students get more internationally universal knowledge.

2.1.5.

NA.

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

Conclusions:

The first-cycle (Professional Bachelor's) Study Programme "Sports Science" is coherently aligned with the study field "Sports". Programme parameters are well-justified, admission requirements are profession-aligned (interview and physical tests). The consolidation process has seemingly reduced past fragmentation and strengthened vertical links with the short-cycle programme, and the development plan hard-wires course-level improvements (English sport terminology, interdisciplinarity, expert input). However, acquiring two professional qualifications within one programme is demanding in practice. Student dynamics show steady intake but high drop-out rates, which is a great risk. Also, international exposure is currently limited due to the fact that the programme is in Latvian only.

Strengths:

1. Logical specialisations pairs with a shared field core, division of specialisations through internships and state examinations.
2. Reduced fragmentation through consolidation process and a strong linkage to the short-cycle programme.
3. Profession-aligned admission requirements (interview and fitness tests).
4. The development plan specifies curricular improvements and monitoring mechanisms.

Weaknesses:

1. The pursuit of dual professional qualifications (two professions) within a single programme risks diluting the achievable competence depth for students.
2. Labour-market substantiation lacks hard indicators (graduate employment, salaries, regional demand, placement-to-hire).
3. High drop-out rate and heterogeneous causes; limited evidence yet of the impact of recent curricular fixes.
4. Only privately funded part-time studies constrain social accessibility.

2.2. The Content of Studies and Implementation Thereof

Analysis

2.2.1.

The study course modules are logically structured and aligned with labour market trends (SAR, p.

115). The overall study plan (annex 19) demonstrates coherence with the professional profiles that graduates are expected to pursue.

Based on feedback from graduates and current students, an evaluation should be conducted to determine whether the content of the study programme should be supplemented with additional practice-oriented courses. The study programmes prepares sports specialists for a variety of professional domains, it is essential to ensure that students obtain an adequate level of specifically practical knowledge, a need that was also emphasised by the students consulted.

This recommendation is also supported by student feedback, as such practical components would provide deeper insights and stronger preparedness for their future professional roles. A positive aspect is that the modules can be logically combined, allowing students first to complete one study programme and then to continue with the other. This provides flexibility and a clearer progression pathway for those aiming to acquire both qualifications that students obtain upon completing the study programme.

In the teacher model, it is particularly commendable that prospective teachers are prepared to work with children of different age groups, including preschool-aged children. This broad pedagogical scope not only enhances the professional competence of graduates but also increases their adaptability and relevance in the labour market. By equipping future teachers with the skills to address the needs of learners at various developmental stages, the programme strengthens both their employability and their ability to contribute meaningfully to the education system (SAR, p. 115).

It is a positive aspect of the first-cycle (Professional Bachelor's) study programme "Sports Science" that students have the opportunity to obtain qualifications:

1. Senior Sports Coach and Sports Manager;
2. Senior Sports Coach and Recreation Specialist;
3. Senior Sports Coach and Teacher;
4. Teacher and Sports Manager;
5. Teacher and Recreation Specialist;

in two professions through its sub-programmes:

"Senior Coach and Sports Manager" (code: 42813),

"Senior Coach and Sports and Health Teacher" (code: 42813),

"Senior Coach and Recreation Specialist" (code: 42813),

"Sports and Health Teacher and Sports Manager" (code: 42141),

and "Sports and Health Teacher and Recreation Specialist" (code: 42141).

However, when analysing the professional standards (Annex 17.1), certain questions arise regarding the feasibility of mastering two related, yet distinct, professions within the given timeframe – for instance, that of a coach and that of a teacher. Each of these is subject to a separate professional standard with distinct requirements. In this context, the question arises as to whether it is realistically feasible to acquire all the skills and competences necessary for two related but nevertheless distinct professions within a four-year period (Annex 17.1), unless additional academic resources and extended study time are allocated to ensure that all legally prescribed requirements for both qualifications are met. For example, in the profession of a "Health and Physical Activity" teacher, the main emphasis is placed on understanding the pedagogical field and on the practical implementation of the requirements of the "School2030" project within the school. In contrast, in the profession of a sports coach, the primary focus lies on the theoretical and practical training of a specific sport. Similar comparisons can also be drawn with other sub-programmes.

The experts confirm that the curriculum is generally well-structured and comprehensive, effectively integrating foundational knowledge in anatomy, physiology, pedagogy, and psychology. However,

the consistent and central structural weakness identified across all five professional pairings is the inherent challenge of ensuring students acquire the full depth and breadth of competencies mandated by two distinct professional standards within the four-year (240 ECTS) timeframe.

While the professional knowledge, skills, and competences are covered through specific restricted elective (B-category) courses, the feasibility of dual mastery remains the primary concern.

The experts assessment of the dual-qualification sub-programmes centres on the inherent structural challenge of ensuring students acquire the full depth and breadth of competencies mandated by two distinct professional standards within the four-year (240 ECTS) framework. While the curriculum is generally well-structured and the professional knowledge is covered through specific restricted elective courses, the feasibility of achieving genuine dual mastery remains the core concern across the entire programme.

The pairing of qualification “Senior Sports Coach and Sports Manager” successfully integrates advanced, sport-specific methodology, such as Physical Fitness Control Methodology, with essential organizational and entrepreneurial courses, including Human Resource Management and Management of the Sports Organisation. This prepares graduates for both high-level training execution and organizational management. However, the primary structural concern is the overall difficulty of fully mastering the intensive, specific training demands of the Coach standard and the comprehensive organizational requirements of the Manager standard simultaneously within the allotted time.

The combination of qualification “Senior Sports Coach and Teacher”, while highly valued in the labour market, presents the most significant structural conflict. Experts explicitly question the realistic feasibility of fully mastering a specialized sports coach standard (focused on performance and specific sport training) and a general subject teacher standard (focused on broad pedagogy, curriculum development, and classroom management) within a single four-year cycle. The consensus is that successful acquisition of two such demanding, standard-driven qualifications would likely necessitate additional academic resources and potentially an extended study duration to ensure full compliance with both professions.

The qualifications “Senior Sports Coach and Recreation Specialist” and “Teacher and Recreation Specialist” —effectively link core pedagogical or training expertise with knowledge of recreational resource utilization, outdoor activities, and event modelling. Graduates from these pairings acquire flexibility for the active leisure sector, competent to design and organize non-traditional sports events for physical and mental restoration. Despite these advantages, the general structural concern regarding the acquisition of two distinct qualifications within the four-year scope persists.

The qualification “Teacher and Sports Manager” pairing strategically combines the full pedagogical track required for school environments (encompassing courses like Pre-School and School Sport Didactics and Classroom Management) with essential business modules (Introduction to Project Management, Fundamentals of Finance). This equips graduates to implement school curriculum while also managing sports organisations and handling financial planning. The outcomes ensure competence in both school curriculum delivery and organizational leadership. However, this combination is still subjected to the fundamental feasibility challenge of complying with the full scope of two separate professional standards within the stipulated 240 ECTS.

The programme’s overall learning outcomes (LOs 1–7) cover scientific knowledge, business competence, training/recreation design, teaching ability, preparation methods, data use, and professional ethics. The sub-programme outcomes specify how these seven general LOs are applied in the context of the dual qualification:

The sub-programme Senior Sports Coach and Sports Manager outcomes demonstrate alignment with the overall LOs by combining scientific methodology (LO 1) with business and management theory (LO 2), for example:

sub-programme LO 1 (understanding human functioning, training impact, injury prevention) directly aligns with Overall LO 1 (sports-specific basis of anatomy, physiology, biochemistry).

sub-programme LO 9 (acquiring knowledge to define strategy and manage a sports organization) directly aligns with Overall LO 2 (professional business competences, sports management, economics, and business).

The emphasis on strategic planning and management (Sub-programme LO 7 and 9) requires applying the scientific approach and professional ethics covered in Overall LO 6 and 7.

The sub-programme “Senior Sports Coach and Recreation Specialist”

This sub-programme aligns by ensuring training control outcomes are complemented by recreation management skills:

- Outcomes related to planning and control of the training process, and organization of competitions (Sub-programme LO 4), align with Overall LO 3 and 5 (training content development and application of preparation methods).
- Outcomes related to using recreation resources, modelling, and marketing in recreation (Sub-programme LO 5 and 6) align directly with Overall LO 3 (designing different forms of recreational activities and choosing appropriate methods).

The sub-programme “Senior Sports Coach and Sports and Health Teacher”

This pairing ensures alignment by linking specialized training methods with pedagogical skills relevant to school curriculum:

- Outcomes concerning the implementation and control of various types of sports preparation (Sub-programme LO 4) align with Overall LO 5 (selecting and applying sports-specific preparation methods).
- Outcomes regarding the ability to create and implement pre-school and school sports content based on curriculum and transversal skills (Sub-programme LO 6) align directly with Overall LO 4 (competence to organise health-promoting physical activities and develop content of sports classes in school and pre-school).

The sub-programme “Sports and Health Teacher and Sports Manager”:

This structure aligns educational content with administrative and business competence:

- Pedagogical outcomes (creating curriculum content, managing classroom work, adapting movements to different needs—Sub-programme LO 5 and 6) align with Overall LO 4 (organizing health-promoting physical activities and developing school/pre-school content).
- Management outcomes (defining goals, strategy, managing resources—Sub-programme LO 8) align with Overall LO 2 (professional business competences and sports management).

The sub-programme “Sports and Health Teacher and Recreation Specialist”:

This pairing integrates pedagogical ability with health promotion and outdoor activity skills:

- Outcomes related to justifying the use of physical activities in school and recreational settings to strengthen health and improve physical work capacity (Sub-programme LO 4) align with Overall LO 4 and 5.
- Outcomes related to using recreational resources, modelling, and planning recreational activities (Sub-programme LO 7) align with the training design and resource planning elements of Overall LO 3 and 5.

Despite the formal mapping and content alignment, the major deficiency noted by experts is the risk associated with the practical feasibility of fully achieving the competence depth of two distinct professional qualifications (both LQF Level 6) within a single 240 ECTS programme

2.2.2.

NA.

2.2.3.

Overall, the methods chosen for the study courses can be considered appropriate, as evidenced by the course descriptions. Feedback from academic staff also indicates that the assessment methods are logical and well thought out, ensuring a reasonable balance between theoretical knowledge and practical application (SAR, p.120; Annex 20.1). RSU systematically applies a variety of modern and interactive teaching methods in the implementation of the “Sports Science” study programme. These include group projects, discussions, case studies, and simulations, all of which support the development of both theoretical knowledge and practical skills. For example, debates play a significant role, as noted on page 120 of the SAR. Students are actively encouraged to participate in discussions on current topics in sports science, thereby fostering the development of critical thinking and the ability to support their opinions. These methods are widely used in the study courses “Sports Theory” and “Basics of Training Theory,” as well as in the “Sports Medicine” colloquia and EIROFIT tests in the course “Sports Medicine II,” where students learn how to assess working capacity. The methods used align well with the established goals of the programme, as they encourage students to engage deeply and think practically about areas related to sports science.

Although RSU asserted in the Self-Assessment Report (SAR 2.2.4) and reiterated in the Factual Error Document (13.11.2025) that a systematic mechanism for obtaining student feedback is now in place—acknowledging that historical data from LASE prior to consolidation was incomparable—the expert panel observes that a fundamental lack of systematic collection and centralisation of this feedback persists. Specifically, despite the documented procedures for reviewing assessment methods (SAR 2.1.5), the collected data, particularly regarding assessment criteria (SAR, p. 121), remains insufficient, indicating that the formal system is not yet fully implemented or operationalized as required.

While some individual opinions are heard during the site visit, it is not evident that these perspectives are consistently analysed or used to improve the study process. This raises concerns about student involvement in shaping the quality of their learning experience. It is not clearly demonstrated how this feedback is systematically collected, centralised, and analysed at the study field level. To ensure compliance with the requirements of the quality assurance system, it would be necessary not only to implement feedback mechanisms at the course level, but also to establish a centralised process for collecting and analysing student feedback across the entire study field.

A specific issue of concern is the regulation that prevents students from progressing to the next semester if they have even a single academic debt. Such a strict approach may unnecessarily hinder students’ academic trajectory and cause additional stress, rather than fostering motivation and continuous improvement. It would therefore be advisable to review these regulations to ensure a balance between maintaining academic standards and supporting student progression.

It is important to note that the expert panel is not unilaterally mandating RSU to amend its regulations. Rather, this finding serves to highlight an area that warrants further consideration. The recommendation does not preclude the University Administration from initiating amendments through its appropriate internal governance and regulation-approval procedures, should RSU determine that such changes would be beneficial for student support and overall programme development.

2.2.4.

The organisation of internships within the “Sports Science” programme can be regarded as being at

a good level. It is a positive aspect that RSU provides students with internship placements, thereby ensuring that practical experience is available to all (Annex 9.1). In the "Sports Science" programme, students have access to a wide range of internship placements, as described in Annex 9.2. These placements vary in size and level (e.g., fitness gyms), allowing students to choose the most suitable option for their needs. For the qualification "Recreation Specialist," there are 84 internship placements available; for "Sports and Health Teacher," 219 placements; for "Senior Sports Coach," 226 placements; and for "Sports Manager," 40 placements. However, a significant number of the agreements are outdated, raising the question of whether these placements can still be considered official. In essence, without a valid agreement in place, they cannot.

The tasks assigned (Annex 9.1) during the internships are clearly and logically defined, and the feedback loop between students and academic staff is well coordinated, which contributes to the achievement of learning outcomes (SAR, p. 123). At the same time, particular attention should be given to the preparation and training of mentors. This was evident from the interviewed mentors, as it became clear that they had not fully understood the internship system and were guiding students based on their own interpretations. Establishing a structured mentor development system would help ensure that all mentors are equally familiar with the assessment criteria and apply them consistently. This would not only strengthen the quality and transparency of the evaluation process but also enhance the overall effectiveness of internships as a core component of the programme.

Attention should be paid to information regarding the internship opportunities within the qualifications that include "Sports Manager". In particular, it is important to understand whether RSU is able to ensure a sufficient number of internship providers whose profile and capacity correspond to the requirements outlined in the study programme (SAR, p. 125). This includes not only the availability of placements in relevant sports organisations and businesses but also the ability of these institutions to provide students with meaningful tasks that align with the intended learning outcomes. Analysing Annex 9.2, there are 40 internship placements listed, but none of the agreements have a valid contract term.

Furthermore, it would be useful to clarify how RSU evaluates and selects its internship partners, and whether there are established quality assurance mechanisms to guarantee that the practical training students receive fully supports the development of professional competences in sports management. For example, the qualification that includes "Senior Sports Coach" offers 226 internship placements (Annex 9.2). However, it is quite challenging for RSU to provide systematic training for such a large number of sites to ensure that all mentors work with students according to unified guidelines. It might be necessary to review this list, but the question remains how this could be effectively done.

2.2.5.

NA.

2.2.6.

Overall, the organisation of final theses can be considered well-structured and effective. The process is divided into several clearly defined stages, which helps students to gradually acquire the necessary research and practical skills (Annex 22). An important strength of the system is the opportunity for students to choose their own supervisor, allowing them to align their research interests with the expertise of academic staff. This not only increases student motivation and responsibility but also enhances the quality and relevance of the final projects. Within the programme, topics for final projects are offered either as part of lecturers' research fields (e.g., aerobic capacity, competition analysis, recreational opportunities) or as components of qualification courses (e.g., development of physical qualities, balance of general and specific preparedness, design of sports lessons) (SAR, p. 127).

Each student completes two final projects, formally approved. Bachelor projects focus on data

analysis, interpretation, and discussion, while the diploma thesis demonstrates professional qualification through practical research, often linked to internships (e.g., improving functional abilities, sports preparation, lesson design, organisational analysis and development planning). It is not entirely clear whether, and in what ways, students are encouraged or motivated to continue their research at a more scientific or academic level (SAR, p. 127).

Considering that many schools themselves often lack the material resources necessary to fully implement the Skola2030 curriculum, questions arise as to how RSU is able to support students in conducting research related to these competencies. While the programme emphasises the development of transversal competences and innovative teaching practices, the actual school environment may not always provide sufficient infrastructure, teaching materials, or methodological support to facilitate such research. This aspect is of particular importance, as the final theses projects of students in the teacher qualification track are carried out specifically within the framework of Skola2030.

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

Conclusions:

The study programme offers students the opportunity to obtain two professions through its sub-programmes, providing a modern and practice-oriented curriculum. The study programme effectively combines theoretical knowledge with practical experience; however, challenges remain regarding valid internship agreements, mentor preparation, and the collection of student feedback. It is also necessary to assess whether acquiring two distinct professions within the given timeframe is realistic, as well as how research activities are supported within the teacher qualification. Overall, the study programme is flexible and practice-based, but greater attention is needed to ensure quality assurance and student support.

Strengths:

1. Well-organised internships in Riga and its surrounding area.
2. Well-organised final thesis process.
3. High-quality study courses with logical assessment criteria.
4. The content of the courses corresponds to current market trends.

Weaknesses:

1. Many internship agreements have expired.
2. There could be more practical courses in the course content.
2. Academic debts are not permitted, which is not a positive aspect.

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.

The study programme is implemented in Riga, with no branches outside Riga. RSU facilities are suitable for conducting the study process, featuring computers, multimedia resources, and internet

access, along with specialised auditoriums and sports facilities. In expert opinion, the Sports Laboratory is well-equipped (SAR, p. 127-128, site visits) and supports the implementation of the study programme as well as scientific research associated with the programme. The expert team was impressed with the equipment that is available. The laboratory equipment at Brīvības street is up to date in the different significant areas of sports science research. The materials allow RSU members to conduct innovative research, namely in the field of Biomechanics, Physiology and Psychology (force platforms, EMG, kinematic analysis apparatus, balance analysis equipment, ergometers of different types, cardiorespiratory assessment equipment, reaction time facilities, among others from daily basis work) (site visits).

Both students and staff can use specialised lecture halls and sport halls, suited for both theoretical and practical classes in a variety of sport games, gyms and soft-surface halls. The equipment required for the sub-programmes can be tailored to specific sports fields. Unfortunately, however, the training halls were empty during the experts' visit, and, to the best of experts' knowledge, there are no rental agreements with sports clubs to earn additional income. Based on student interviews during expert`s site visit, many students do not make full use of the available resources (e.g. laboratories, sports halls, library holdings). RSU should therefore take a more active role in motivating and encouraging students to use these resources for independent and practical learning. In addition, students have access to computers and internet access in the study rooms and reading room, where they can study the required literature and complete assignments, as well as to use e-resources, which is very positive. The common room has a comfortable leisure area equipped with a microwave and vending machines, supporting students' transition periods between classes during the day (SAR, p. 127-128).

Students and teaching staff can use the e-learning platform, where all study materials, course descriptions, tasks and tests are available. E-resources allow students to work independently using modern technologies, having access to different e-books and e-journals, and conduct research using online resources. The RSU library provides 24/7 access for students and its free-access subscription offers a wide range of books relevant to the study programme. RSU offers access to more than 30 online databases relevant to the fields of the study programme, which is very positive. These databases provide students with access to high-quality study materials and research related to physiology, biomedicine, psychology and sports pedagogy. Subscription databases such as ClinicalKey and AccessMedicine offer access to handbooks and textbooks on medical sciences and sports medicine. The EBSCO and ProQuest databases also provide access to scientific studies that are important for sports science research. (SAR, p. 127-128; Annex 23.2). However, the book collection of RSU (Brīvības street) library looks rather outdated and contains several old books (site visit), namely regarding some fundamental contents of the study programmes (e.g., sports terminology, motor learning, biology).

Moreover, all study activities are available in the e-environment, which facilitates students' independence and self-directed learning. Students can access all study materials from their digital devices, allowing full mobility and access to the study process at any time. The relevance and accessibility of these resources were highlighted during the site visit (Presentation of learning platform).

2.3.2.

NA.

2.3.3.

According to the SAR (p. 129), for the study programme, funding is used for staff remuneration, guest lecturers, licences and research activities. In addition to the direct costs of lectures and classes, the study programme must cover the costs of infrastructure maintenance (premises, IT solutions) and other common RSU resources used in the study programme (Student Services,

Library, organisation of the study process, subsidy to the student council and other support and administrative functions). Unfortunately, to the best of experts' knowledge, there are also no rental agreements with sports clubs for renting their premises in Brīvības Street and earning additional income.

The tuition fee per student per academic year is planned at EUR 2300 for full-time studies and EUR 2100 for part-time studies. According to the RSU discount regulations, an excellence discount may be granted. The planned number of students in the full-time study programme is 120 students in the enrolment and 90 students in the part-time study programme. For the programme to be cost-effective, a minimum of 90 students must be enrolled in the full-time programme and 78 students in the part-time programme. It is planned that 90 budget places will be provided for students enrolled full-time (SAR, p. 129). The costs of the study programme in the form of Full-Time regular studies and Part-Time correspondence studies are defined with valued information in the SAR (p. 129-130). The implementation of the study programme foresees the use of the existing RSU infrastructure, including, where possible, the planned sharing of study courses, laboratories and premises. The existing RSU infrastructure provides all the necessary material and technical basis for the implementation of this study programme. Furthermore, RSU has started the construction of a new sports complex in Cigoriņu Street, which will also be available for students of these study programmes (SAR, p. 130; and information shared during the site visit).

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

Conclusions:

RSU facilities are suitable for conducting the study process, featuring computers, multimedia resources, and internet access, along with specialised auditoriums and sports facilities. Moreover, the Sports Laboratory is well-equipped and supports the implementation of the study programme as well as scientific research associated with the programme. The funding available to the study programme is well presented, including the funding sources to the implementation of the study programme.

Strengths:

1. Good facilities for sports practice and for education purposes.
2. Labs are very well prepared with good and updated equipment for research and educational purposes.
3. Students and staff have access to a vast collection of physical and e-resources of the RSU Library.

Weaknesses:

1. The book collection of RSU (Brīvības street) library looks rather outdated and contains several old books.
2. Classrooms/sports halls in Brivibas Street stand empty and, to the best of experts' knowledge, there are no rental agreements with sports clubs to rent them out and earn extra income.

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

The study provision, including informational resources (library), material and technical support,

and financial resources, fully meets the necessary conditions for study programme's implementation and ensures the achievement of learning outcomes.

2.4. Teaching Staff

Analysis

2.4.1.

The "Sports Science" study programme is specifically designed to prepare highly qualified specialists for multiple complex roles, such as Senior Coach, Teacher, Manager, and Recreation Specialist. This comprehensive programme achieves its aim by offering a significantly broader and deeper scope of academic expertise, placing particular emphasis on the interdisciplinary and management fields required for these diverse qualifications. To ensure graduates possess the necessary advanced business and legal competencies, the staff includes specialized experts who lecture on critical subjects like the "Fundamentals of Finance" and "International Sports Law". Furthermore, the programme utilizes high-level scientific and medical experts for courses such as "Sports Medicine" and "Biochemistry", thus supporting its research-intensive curriculum. By regularly engaging international lecturers for specialized qualification modules, the "Sports Science" programme ensures students benefit from diverse global expertise.

According to SAR (p. 131), teaching staff involved in the implementation of the study programme must hold at least a Master's degree. The implementation of the study programme is ensured by 57 lecturers, 40 of whom are elected to academic positions at RSU. Of the 40 elected academic staff members, five are professors and twelve are associate professors. Of the 57 lecturers involved in the implementation of the study programme, 35 hold doctoral degrees.

The qualifications of the teaching staff are academically and practically relevant. The teaching staff consists of experienced academic staff, researchers, and knowledgeable practitioners (including professional athletes, sports managers, etc.). Academic staff are involved in research (including some lecturers/researchers in international cooperation), participate in international conferences, and publish scientific papers.

As teaching staff play an important role in ensuring that students acquire not only theoretical knowledge but also the practical skills necessary for a successful career in the sports sector, they are regularly trained in modern pedagogical approaches and technologies, in line with the principles of student-centered teaching (SAR, p. 131).

According to SAR (p. 170–171) the RSU Centre for Educational Growth and the IT Department have provided comprehensive training to lecturers, enhancing their digital, pedagogical, and research skills essential for high-quality, interactive education. Training topics include academic integrity, research tools (PubMed, Web of Science, EndNote), digital competencies (Moodle, H5P, Panopto, Zoom), pedagogical approaches (competency-based teaching, diverse content delivery, assessment objectivity, student feedback), and transversal skills (public speaking, engaging lectures, organisational dynamics). External professional development activities, such as sports science seminars, further support staff capacity building.

During the site visits, it became apparent that employer representatives and practical training supervisors are involved in the assessment committees for some subjects, but not in teaching in the school environment. It should be considered that practical training supervisors are not only mentors but also instructors and lecturers, so HEIs should offer them training opportunities, including in the field of pedagogy. Employers also saw the need for such training in discussions with experts.

In relation to language proficiency, the RSU has submitted official statements confirming that all academic staff involved in programme implementation comply with national regulations on Latvian language competence (Annex 24.4). In addition, staff who teach in foreign languages meet the required English proficiency at B2 level or higher, in line with European standards. These

competencies are sufficient to ensure the delivery of study content in both Latvian and foreign languages and to support international cooperation.

2.4.2.

RSU actively develops its academic staff for the “Sports Science” study programme to meet increasing student numbers and sector demands. New lecturers, including practitioners and recognised sports specialists, have been recruited to enhance practical training and ensure relevance. The staff comprises academically qualified educators, industry professionals, and visiting lecturers, fostering an interdisciplinary approach that links theory and practice. Positive student feedback and academic success indicate the effectiveness of staffing developments, which aim to strengthen the programme’s academic and professional capacity, promote innovation, and maintain strong ties with Latvia’s sports sector both nationally and internationally. However, in conversations with the experts, the researchers acknowledged that they themselves have developed cooperation partners within the framework of their own research work. These partners, as well as new ones, should be sought out and involved in the teaching process in order to enhance the programme and the knowledge and innovative approaches of the HEI's own teaching staff.

2.4.3.

NA.

2.4.4.

According to Annex 6.4, between 2017 and 2024, 221 publications were authored by 46 specialised course lecturers, with the most productive years in 2024, 2022, and 2023. Most publications (48%) appeared in journals indexed in Web of Science and Scopus, indicating high quality, while 22% were international collaborations. Around 41% of publications are not indexed, and most are full-length articles, books, or reviews. Key topics include “physical activity,” “health,” “combat sports,” and “Covid-19.”

According to Annex 6.4, between 2017 and 2024, 166 publications were recorded for 17 general course lecturers, with the most productive in 2023, 2021, and 2024. Thirteen lecturers have published at least once. Nearly one-fifth (19%) of the publications are international. Over half (56%) appeared in journals indexed in Web of Science and Scopus, reflecting high quality, while 6% were in ERIH-indexed journals for humanities and social sciences. About 38% of publications are not indexed. The majority (78%) are full-length works such as articles and books, with the remaining 22% being shorter formats like conference abstracts. Key topics include “smart textile,” “Latvia,” “shoulder,” and “business,” with 76 keywords used multiple times across the publications.

Young lecturers write under the guidance of more experienced lecturers/researchers, which is important for ensuring academic continuity. Not all academic staff have published articles in peer-reviewed publications, including international publications, in the last six years.

Most of the teaching staff involved in delivering the study programme, which includes sports coaching and business courses, are either professional athletes or experienced sports managers with practical sector experience. This background ensures their ability to effectively apply academic knowledge and offer students real-world practical experience (SAR, p. 131).

2.4.5.

"Sports Science" study programme is a professionally focused offering within the sports field, emphasising practical skill acquisition, current industry integration, and close collaboration with sports sector professionals. The development and continuous improvement of study courses are managed through regular departmental meetings involving the Study Programme Director, Study Quality Council, and lecturers, with input from specialists and the Centre for Educational Growth. Course content is reviewed annually to ensure relevance, continuity, and quality, with updates

informed by evaluations and self-assessments. Frequent meetings among lecturers facilitate the development of new and modern study courses aligned with global, European, and local fitness trends. Although the evaluation visit revealed that study programme directors cooperate with foreign partners and teaching staff actively participate in foreign exchanges, there is no specific strategy or examples of how the curriculum is developed in national and international cooperation. The programme benefits from a highly qualified, research-active academic staff committed to providing a high-quality, development-oriented learning environment. The current staff-student ratio is approximately 1:10, which is adequate and supports effective learning and supervision.

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

Conclusions:

The academic staff of the study programme “Sports Science” is highly qualified, consisting of experienced researchers, practitioners, and specialists with doctoral degrees who are engaged in research, innovation, and, in part, international cooperation. The staff's participation in continuous professional development, which includes pedagogical, digital, and research skills, ensures the provision of modern, student-centered education. To meet the needs of a growing number of students and the sector, the institution recruits practitioners and specialists, promoting an interdisciplinary environment that combines theory and practice. Practitioner-instructors should also be provided with pedagogical and other necessary training by the HEI. Staff collaboration is facilitated by regular meetings, interconnection between courses, and collaboration with industry specialists to ensure relevance to the labour market. RSU also implements targeted personnel management strategies, including continuous training and cooperation with sports organisations, to maintain high standards despite staff turnover due to retirement and career changes. Overall, the programme's reliance on motivated, research-active faculty, industry relationships, and internal quality mechanisms supports the delivery of high-quality, relevant sports education. The ratio of faculty to students is approximately 1:10 in “Sports Science”, which is adequate and supports effective learning and supervision.

Strengths:

1. The teaching staff consists of experienced academic staff, researchers, and knowledgeable practitioners.
2. Ongoing professional development to ensure pedagogical and digital competencies.

Weaknesses:

1. Lack of a clear strategy for international cooperation in curriculum development, despite existing foreign collaborations.
2. There is no formal strategy for involving practical instructors in curriculum development and training them (in pedagogy and other necessary areas).

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: Partially compliant

Despite highly educated and motivated teaching staff and researchers, insufficient attention has been paid to involving visiting lecturers and researchers and to training supervisors at the internship base.

2.5. Assessment of the Compliance

Requirements

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The first-Cycle (Professional Bachelor's) Study Programme "Sports Science" complies with the Latvian state professional bachelor's standard (Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No. 305 of 13.06.2023). The programme scope is 240 ECTS, implemented over 4 years full-time, corresponding to EQF level 6. Compliance is documented in the SAR and confirmed in annexed regulations.

(SAR, part 2.1; Annexes 17.1, 17.2). The programme also includes the mandatory course in civil protection, ensuring that students acquire the minimum knowledge and competences required for employee training in civil protection issues, as specified in national legislation. Thus, the criterion is met.

- 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: Partially compliant

The programme is aligned with the professional standard of Sports Specialist, aligned with the relevant professional standards in the field of sports, namely Senior Sports Coach (approved 07.06.2023), Teacher (approved 12.06.2020), Recreation Specialist (approved 09.08.2023), and Sports Manager (approved 18.09.2019).

Mapping of learning outcomes against these professional standards confirms full compliance with each of the five qualifications linked to the respective standard (e.g. Senior Coach and Sports Manager aligned with Senior Sports Coach and Company Manager; Sports Teacher and Recreation Specialist aligned with Teacher and Recreation Specialist) and ensures graduates obtain the competences required in the labour market.

It should be noted that in some institutional documents, including Annex 18.2 Compliance with Professional Standards, the title "Company Manager" is used instead of "Sports Manager"; however, according to the official state e-platform, the correct qualification is "Sports Manager (Vadītājs sporta jomā)" (SAR, part 2.2; Annex 18.2).

Although the programme formally complies with all five professional standards, it should be underlined that each professional qualification is linked to a defined study volume and set of competences. In this programme, two separate qualifications are foreseen within a single study cycle (Annex 20.1). This issue is analysed under the criterion concerning study content and compliance with regulatory enactments (SAR, Part 2.2).

- 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

Course descriptions are available in Latvian and include aims, learning outcomes, assessment criteria, and literature, in line with the Law on Higher Education Institutions. Descriptions are available in Latvian and English.

(SAR, part 2.3.2; Annex 20.1).

- 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 diploma and diploma supplement samples comply with the requirements of the Law on Higher Education Institutions and Cabinet regulations. They specify the awarded qualification and field of study (SAR, part 2.3.3; Annex 24.1).

- 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

All academic staff involved in the implementation of the programme have certified compliance with the national regulations on Latvian language knowledge and proficiency for professional and official duties.

(SAR, part 2.3.7; Annex 24.4).

- 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 student study contract sample complies with Cabinet of Ministers requirements. It includes all provisions related to tuition fees, rights, and obligations, ensuring legal clarity for students. (SAR, part 2.3.8; Annex 24.6).

- 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: Partially compliant

RSU has provided a formal guarantee that, should the implementation of the RSU first-cycle (professional bachelor's) study programme "Sport Science" (42813) be terminated, students will be ensured the continuation of studies in another accredited programme in partner HEI, an assurance supported by the Rector's confirmation and detailed in Annex 24.2 (Agreement on Continuing Education).

However, the provided agreements, while formally ensuring continuity, present challenges regarding the equivalence and content alignment of the destination programmes: the agreement with the University of Latvia (UL) guarantees transfer to the UL programme "Sports, Technology and Public Health" (43813)—both first-cycle programmes leading to a Bachelor's degree—but the concern is that the UL programme is an academic study programme, whereas the RSU programme is a professional bachelor's programme awarding five professional qualifications; similarly, an agreement with Turība University ensures continuation in its first-cycle programme "Production and Management of Events" (42345), specializing in "Sports Event Management and Communication," but this programme is offered within the study field of Hotel and Restaurant Service, Tourism, and Recreation Organisation, which raises serious doubts about the curricular and thematic compatibility of the destination programme, questioning whether it constitutes a correct and appropriate transfer pathway for students from a dedicated "Sport Science" programme. While RSU has formally concluded transfer agreements, these agreements do not consistently provide equivalent programme options; given that the RSU programme awards five professional qualifications, it is highly recommended that RSU secure transfer opportunities for all five qualifications into programmes of the same study cycle and similar professional nature.

- 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

Procedures are in place to compensate or reallocate students if the programme is not accredited or the licence is withdrawn, in line with the Law on Higher Education Institutions (SAR, Part 2.5). While these guarantees are formally in place, during the site visit students reported that in the context of the recent reorganisation the information provided to them was not always clear. This indicates a need to strengthen communication and ensure students are fully aware of their rights and available compensation mechanisms (Annex 24.3, Certification of Compensation of Losses to Students).

- 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

It is confirmed that the study programme, including all five sub-programmes, complies with Section 55 of the Law on Higher Education Institutions. Each sub-programme fulfils the statutory indicators regarding admission, study structure, professional practice, final examinations, and the awarding of qualifications, as evidenced in Annex 17.2_Anx_Compliance_Specific_Reg.pdf. Compliance with the Sports Law of the Republic of Latvia is also ensured, while the provision on foreign language use under Section 55 is not applicable, since all sub-programmes are delivered in Latvian. Thus, the criterion is met.

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 First-Cycle (Professional Bachelor's) Study Programme "Sports Science" is considered largely compliant with the requirements set forth in the Law on Higher Education Institutions and other applicable regulatory enactments, meaning the criterion is mostly met. However, the evaluation highlights significant areas of concern: the full scope of five professional qualifications raises doubts about whether the associated study volume and competences can be realistically achieved within a single programme structure without allocating additional academic resources and time to ensure full compliance with all professional standards; furthermore, while formal continuity guarantees exist, student feedback (under point 12) indicated that information regarding these provisions during the reorganization process was unclear, highlighting an essential need for RSU to strengthen its communication strategy; finally, formal agreements securing student transfer upon programme closure do not consistently guarantee enrolment in equivalent programmes, as the destination options lack the necessary professional focus or thematic alignment required for all five awarded qualifications.

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

Conclusions:

The programme exhibits coherent alignment with the study field, featuring a well-structured curriculum and a deliberate linkage to a short-cycle programme, which successfully promotes vertical integration. Furthermore, its implementation is strongly supported by good facilities, including very well-prepared laboratories equipped with current, updated research and teaching equipment, as well as access to a vast collection of RSU Library resources. The quality of delivery is ensured by a teaching staff composed of experienced academics, researchers, and practitioners committed to ongoing professional development. The overall design is sound, featuring logically paired qualifications, profession-aligned admission requirements, and effective management of the final thesis process, all of which directly align the programme content with the current market demand for educated sport specialists.

While the challenges (such as the practical complexity of sub-programmes, limited international exposure, and lack of hard labour-market indicators) require significant attention and present risks to long-term compliance with regulatory requirements and competitiveness, the current solidity of the structure, resources, and pedagogical expertise provides a functional and reliable basis for delivering contemporary sports education, thereby warranting the "Good" assessment.

Strengths:

1. The development plan specifies curricular improvements and monitoring mechanisms.
2. Reduced fragmentation through consolidation process and a strong linkage to the short-cycle

programme.

3. Logical specialisations pairs with a shared field core, division of specialisations through internships and state examinations.
4. Good facilities for sports practice and for education purposes.
5. Labs are very well prepared with good and updated equipment for research and educational purposes.
6. Students and staff have access to a vast collection of physical and e-resources of the RSU Library.
7. Profession-aligned admission requirements (interview and fitness tests).
8. High-quality study courses with logical assessment criteria.
9. Well-organised internships in Riga and its surrounding area.
10. The content of the courses corresponds to current market trends.
11. Well-organised final thesis process.
12. The teaching staff consists of experienced academic staff, researchers, and knowledgeable practitioners.
13. Ongoing professional development to ensure pedagogical and digital competencies.

Weaknesses:

1. Pursuit of two professional qualifications within one programme risks over-stretching students' achievable competence depth.
2. Labour-market substantiation lacks hard indicators (graduate employment, salaries, regional demand, placement-to-hire).
3. Only privately funded part-time studies constrain social accessibility.
4. Classrooms/sports halls in Brīvības Street 333 stand empty and there are no rental agreements with sports clubs to rent them out and earn extra income.
5. The book collection of RSU (Brīvības street) library looks rather outdated and contains several old books.
6. Lack of a clear strategy for international cooperation in curriculum development, despite existing foreign collaborations.
7. There is no formal strategy for involving practical instructors in curriculum development and training them (in pedagogy and other necessary areas).
8. High drop-out rate and heterogeneous causes; limited evidence yet of the impact of recent curricular fixes.
9. Academic debts are not permitted, which is not a positive aspect.
10. Many internship contracts have expired.
11. There could be more practical courses in the course content.

Evaluation of the study programme "Sports Science"

Evaluation of the study programme:

Good

2.6. Recommendations for the Study Programme "Sports Science"

Short-term recommendations

Until the decision regarding the accreditation of the study field is made, RSU should assess whether it is realistic to offer two professional qualifications within the framework of a single programme.

Within the next year, RSU should map the balance between theoretical and practical learning and increase the proportion of practical learning to reinforce theoretical knowledge.

Within the next two years, RSU should develop cooperation with internship providers (training of internship supervisors, involvement of experts in teaching), including creating opportunities for finding internships outside the capital in every county,, and develop a strategy for obtaining regular and formal feedback from employers.

Within the next two years, RSU should create a clear and measurable strategy for identifying the reasons for dropouts and supporting students with the aim of reducing dropouts.

Within the next two years, RSU should create a strategy for expanding the library and mapping the need for updating information in certain areas.

RSU should seek and secure transfer agreements with partner institutions that consistently guarantee enrolment in equivalent programmes (same cycle and similar professional focus) for all professional qualifications awarded by the "Sports Science" programme.

The RSU must ensure that all documents, including the compliance analysis (e.g., Annex 18.2), consistently use the official qualification (all) titles in both Latvian and English.

Long-term recommendations

RSU should continuously assess the impact of recent study programme changes with a detailed plan to accomplish this aim.

RSU should create opportunities for free study places for at least a quarter of the members of the study group.

RSU should create a strategy for regularly reviewing and updating/modernising teaching materials (including library resources).

RSU should enter into cooperation and rental agreements with sports clubs to rent them sports halls for at least four to five hours every day and thus earn additional income.

RSU should develop a strategy to ensure that all students have an international learning experience and that all faculty members have an internationalisation experience each year (e.g., a collaborative project, international applied research, a study trip, conference participation).

RSU must strengthen its communication strategy to ensure students receive comprehensive, clear, and proactive information regarding all programme developments, particularly concerning their rights and study continuity guarantees during any organizational change.

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
<p>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:</p>	Fully compliant		<p>RSU has developed the internal quality assurance system defined by internal regulatory documents described in Paragraphs 1.3, 2.1.1, 2.2.1 and 2.2.2 and Paragraph 1.1 of Annex 23.1 (Compliance of RSU study programmes with Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) Part 1) of the SAR (part 1.4). One criterion is partially fulfilled (No. 1.4), but this does not affect the assessment of the requirement, as developing the planning of teaching staff working hours and offering existing training courses to practical training supervisors are activities that can be implemented quickly and easily.</p>
<p>R2 - Compliance of scientific research and artistic creation with the level of development of scientific research and artistic creation (if applicable)</p>		Partially compliant	<p>RSU has developed effective mechanisms and opportunities for the involvement of the academic staff in research activities. Moreover, there are some good projects and publications carried out by the academic staff and researchers involved in the study field, including publications indexed in Web of Science and Scopus. However, the most relevant publications are not directly related to “Sports” and there are some differences among academic staff members in their output research publications and projects.</p>

Requirements	Requirement Evaluation		Comment
<p>R3 - The cooperation implemented within the study field with various Latvian and foreign organizations ensures the achievement of the aims of the study field.</p>	<p>Fully compliant</p>		<p>The cooperation implemented within the study field "Sports" with various Latvian and foreign organizations ensures the achievement of the programme aims and learning outcomes. Locally, cooperation with Latvian employers, employers' federations, municipalities, and public bodies is purposeful and directly tied to the curriculum through internships, assessments, and joint activities. These partners contribute via guest lectures, methodological seminars, participation in state examinations, and co-delivery of sport-specific study blocks, thereby developing essential coaching competences, event organisation, and training design skills. Internationally, cooperation is also purposeful and serves programme aims through mobility, visiting lecturers, joint research, and authentic learning contexts. Key examples include the OSRESS International Summer Schools, which successfully integrate international visiting lectures and staff-student outputs into teaching and assessment, and the Sport-IE project (2025–2027), which is expected to strengthen innovation, entrepreneurship, and employability outcomes through collaboration with leading regional HEIs and industry partners.</p> <p>However, the effectiveness is tempered by notable reservations, specifically the reliance on informal contacts, the low number of formal local cooperation agreements (only five active agreements), and the low volume and uneven distribution of incoming academic staff and student mobility. Overall, the structural framework for cooperation is strong and directly linked to the programme's goals, despite the need to formalise and increase the volume of activity.</p>

Requirements	Requirement Evaluation		Comment
R4 - Elimination of deficiencies and shortcomings identified in the previous assessment of the study field, if any, or implementation of the recommendations provided.		Partially compliant	RSU have acted on the recommendation received in 2011 by using consolidation to implement most changes within the single study field "Sports". A lot has been done regarding learning-outcomes alignment and de-fragmentation systematisation by electronic course descriptions and explicit mapping of learning outcomes, and infrastructure/e-studies has been upgraded through EU funds. However, internationalisation and mobility impacts are weakly evidenced, so while mechanisms exist, systematic results with clear, measurable KPIs are still needed.

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	Sports Coach (41813)	Not relevant	Fully compliant	Partially compliant	Partially compliant	Good
2	Sports Science (42813)	Not relevant	Fully compliant	Partially compliant	Partially compliant	Good

The Dissenting Opinions of the Experts

There are no dissenting opinions.