

Expert group joint opinion

Evaluation Procedure: Assessment of Study Field

Higher Education Institution: Rīga Stradiņš University

Study field: Information and Communication Sciences

Experts:

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Summary Assessment of the Study Field

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The Riga Stradins University (RSU) study field “Information and Communication Sciences” has clearly defined attainable goals, which well-suit the study field’s vision, mission, and long term goals. The experts noted that RSU is rightly focused on growing its offer in the field of communication, which is, in fact, one of the fastest growing social science fields in higher education. The management of the study field is successful. Employees are clearly aware of their roles and duties, and overlap of similar responsibilities seems to be minimal.

Based on the information that has been gathered by the experts during the on-site visit and provided within the self-assessment report, experts conclude that RSU has developed a system to determine the financial resources required for the implementation of the study field and the relevant study programmes. There is a system for financing scientific research and/ or artistic creation activities in place, and this system is efficient.

Although, when it comes to the aspect of state-funded places for students in the study programmes, the issue is still not being resolved. State-funded study places have been a challenge for the past seven years, and RSU is trying to improve the situation by asking for more support from the ministries and the government. Also, the funding issues caused by the unclear position of the RSU - being under double governance of the Ministry of Health and Ministry of Education and Science - should be dealt on the governmental level. With the aim of maintaining and expanding the student body, experts support the RSU’s efforts to lobby the Latvian government to secure funding particularly for social sciences at RSU. Additionally, the experts would like to emphasize that RSU could show more flexibility in the allocation of scholarships.

According to interviews with the students and academic staff during the on-site visit, and to the Annex 4.2 to the self-assessment report, RSU implements a student-centred learning environment, where the leaders of study programmes cooperate not only with the student self-government but in each course, there is a group senior who represents colleagues in issues that affect the study process.

The efficiency of the internal quality assurance system within the study field is aimed at ensuring continuous improvement, development, and efficient performance of the study field and the relevant study programmes. It can be stated that there is compliance with all procedures described in the quality assurance system that are used for the achievement of the aims and learning outcomes of the study field and the study programmes.

According to interviews with the students and academic staff during the on-site visit, and to the Annex 4.2 to the self-assessment report, RSU implements a student-centred learning environment where the leaders of study programmes cooperate not only with the student self-government, but in each course, there is a group senior who represents colleagues in issues that affect the study process.

Mutual respect and understanding exist between students and lecturers. In case of complaints that may sometimes arise, students feel free to communicate about them in the feedback or addressing the issue to the university responsible persons directly.

RSU teaching staff and students highly value the available resources (both printed and digital) in the library. There are a common system and procedures for the improvement and purchase of the material, technical, methodological, and informative provision in place and it is seen as efficient and well-established. Librarians provide the necessary training and opportunity to take books home. The teaching staff also mentioned the availability of resources to order required books from other

libraries. Subscribed databases and scientific sources meet the requirements of the program. In case something cannot be found in the library it is mostly accessible in the databases. In situations it is not possible, one can easily communicate with the library staff and the book can be ordered.

When it comes to other necessary improvements, experts question the accessibility of the necessary materials needed for the study process in Liepāja, as the library there currently does not provide literature satisfying the needs of implementation of study field's programmes. The reasoning provided by RSU that if needed books can be transferred and provided from the RSU library located in Riga as well as all of the students would have the same resources accessible in online libraries is an appropriate yet insufficient solution in the long run. Experts still doubt the plan to implement the study process in Liepāja since in its current state it is more like an idea without a robust plan and necessary pre-investigation. RSU's representatives are well-aware of the problem of attracting lecturers to Liepāja which is one of the main arguments against expanding the offer of the communication programmes at Liepāja branch.

According to the self-assessment report in research, RSU acts in accordance with approved strategies. The current strategy, which was developed in 2015, is the Development Strategy of RSU Scientific Institution for 2015-2020. The strategy is based on all three of the RSU's key directions of action - internationally competitive education, excellent research, and technology transfer to strengthen innovation as the foundation for RSU's sustainable development. It was stated that the direction of social sciences has great untapped potential, especially in close collaboration with leading research and development sectors, providing a critical assessment and alternative views, making a significant contribution in addressing societal challenges. Synergy with health sciences is focused on public health promotion. From the study field Information and Communication Science, the Master's programme in Health Communications is the closest to the medical field of the university.

The university has taken a number of important steps to enhance the competencies of its academic staff including language courses. These efforts could be built upon through further choice of courses including on what journals and grants to apply for and the language specificities of these undertakings.

In terms of the PhD programme, experts praise the university's plans for restructuring the programme and streamline it with other PhD programmes at the university. That should improve the experience of students in the years to come. Particularly experts note that the programme could be diversified and further integrated with other programmes in the department. Experts noticed that PhD students would benefit from having a stronger idea of what their degree offers them in terms of job prospects. In order to increase the quality of studies, several innovative solutions have been already introduced (mapping, for example, Annex 18.1), and new targets were set for the future.

RSU academic staff is involved in national and international scientific research. 36 Erasmus+ agreements with foreign HEI (Annex Nr. 7) and open-ended agreements with seven organisations for the provision of places of practice for RSU communication students (Annex 9.2) are signed. The list contains a variety of companies, both agencies and associations.

Experts recognize the constraints of expanding international student intake. These include stiff competition from institutions in other European countries and the restrictions in Latvia on employing international lecturers who do not speak Latvian, a policy that caps growth potential for RSU. Experts encourage the university to think creatively about raising its international profile. This can be achieved by providing further specialised English-language courses and considering a branding that plays to the university's strengths and to the uniqueness of student experience in Latvia. It is

important to design and develop a system and procedures for the attraction of the teaching staff and students from abroad within the study field. One way of possible improvement here could be designing a new robust system and procedure to cooperate with international institutions, attract international talent and students, and also in communicating those procedures within RSU and with stakeholders abroad.

In terms of cooperation with the Latvian media industry and labour market, experts found that it is working well. RSU and the academic staff assist students with obtaining internship opportunities. Employers reported that they look favorably towards the RSU's image and reputation and commended the contribution of students to their businesses and organizations.

Interviews with employers highlighted the prestige of the RSU diploma - that graduates of this university are a sign of quality because they are equipped with strong theoretical knowledge. In addition, graduates of RSU are more motivated to work, self-motivated (due to the difficult learning process). There is particularly good feedback on the graduates of multimedia programmes who have already entered the labour market with good digital skills.

The academic Master's study programme "Health Communication" (code 45321) is a unique programme in the Baltic states. The programme reflects the interdisciplinary orientation and the essence of the programme, providing potential applicants with a clear message of the expected content of their studies, and potential partners - with an internationally recognized title of such a study programme. Considering the faculty's future aim to establish this programme also in the region at Liepāja branch, the market for potential students and employees must be carefully studied before taking the final decision. During the meeting with the representatives of the Liepāja branch as well as academic personnel interested in developing the programme at Liepāja, it became clear that there is a strong academic interest and network available while the knowledge about the market is rather fragmented and based on popular notions about, for instance, the prospects for regional development and attracting emigrated Latvians as oppose to in-depth market research.

Regarding the academic bachelor study programme "Journalism" (code 43321), experts are convinced that the aims, objectives, learning outcomes and admission requirements of the study programme are interrelated. The study programme is well-structured; it contains and balances the academic and critical studies of the field with the practical skills and training on creative and technical means of expression in general and specialisation subjects. However, it should be mentioned that the list of mandatory literature for several courses needs to be updated constantly. Some of the examples, for instance, for the Journalism program: for the course "Introduction to the World Film History and Theory I" the newest book is from 1996; for the course "Introduction to Sociology" the newest required reading is from 2002; for the course "Intro to Journalism"--from 2002. Experts are aware that the course specifics can demand historical sources and sources from various periods. However, the readings should also include the latest sources. The student work platform Skalak (Skaļāk in Latvian) is a very good initiative and gives good motivation for the studies for students in different study programmes, for example, "Journalism", "Photography", "Multimedia" and "Public Relations". Such a solution will certainly contribute to the promotion of the curriculum outside RSU.

The academic bachelor study programme "Public Relations" (code 43342) aims to prepare academically educated and professionally qualified, competitive public relations specialists who would be able to foster reinforcement of research traditions and promote sustainable development in the field of public relations in Latvia. This academic bachelor study programme is focused on eight objectives from which four are concentrated on acquiring skills of conducting various forms of

research and providing good analysis of the specific topic. The other three pay attention to the theoretical basis of gaining an understanding of the field in general while the last one is devoted to language skills.

The aim of the academic bachelor study programme "Photography" (43321) is to prepare specialists in communication science with professional skills in the implementation of different photography related projects. Programme's aims, objectives, learning outcomes, and admission requirements are interrelated. The study programme "Photography" offers a wide range of expertise related to the field of photography, while at the same time it is important to pay attention to the demands of the labour market and the opportunities for graduates to find access to their knowledge. The programme "Photography" is unique for communication science, but at the same time the number of programme graduates is very small.

The academic bachelor study programme "Multimedia Communication" (code 43321) is a study programme which prepares future specialists providing them with the necessary theoretical and practical knowledge for the entrance in the labour market. The graduates of this programme have the opportunities to work in any company of multimedia industry such as cinema, television, Internet and music advertising, media management and public relations.

The combination of management and communication fields is clearly understandable from the title of the programme and defined learning outcomes, thus, making this programme's content and promises understandable across potential groups of applicants with respective interests, experience, and educational backgrounds.

The academic master's study programme's "Strategic Management and Public Relations" (code 45321) aims, objectives, learning outcomes and admission requirements are interrelated. Considering the variety of previous education that potential applicants might have, the organization of the programme, which allows for balancing the prior knowledge of the students is an appropriate move to compensate for nuances that admission requirements as such are not always able to ensure.

The main aim of the master's study programme "Communication and Media Studies" (code 45321) is to prepare communication and media specialists compliant with the international communication science standards who would be ready for independent academic and scientific research and practical activities in the field. The strategic aim of the programme is to ensure an in-depth acquisition of theoretical knowledge in the information and communication science, at the same time developing the mastering of work and research methods and skills for using them in the analysis and research of communication problems and media environment.

The PhD study programme "Communication Culture and Multimedia" (code 51321) aims to prepare highly qualified specialists meeting international requirements in the field of communication science - teaching staff, scientific staff, and professionals in the field of communication, as well as public communicators and opinion leaders. The aim of the programme is to enable multimedia research in Latvia and to take part in international academic and applied research in this field, as well as to develop a methodologically sound basis for research of Latvian and wider East European communication assuming that culture-centred intellectual thought in these communities lays serious emphasis on national culture in the analysis of social processes, which also affects special types of implementation of communication practices. The programme contributes to a wider understanding of the concept of culture, analysing the practice of developing, disseminating, and interpreting communication messages.

1. Management of the Study Field

Analysis

Experts were generally impressed with the offer of the variety of programmes in the field of communication at RSU. The experts noted that RSU is rightly focused on growing its offer in the field of communication, which is in fact one of the fastest growing social science fields in higher education. The study field "Information and Communication Sciences" (hereinafter - study field) of RSU is focused on the development of study field, since according to the RSU Development Strategy 2017-2021, one of the indicators is to develop locally and internationally competitive study programmes in line with the requirements of labour markets in Latvia and Europe. The self-assessment report and interviews with academic staff and cooperating employers show that content of the programmes of this study field is created in cooperation with graduates and employers. The study programmes are relevant to the labour market needs.

The university provides higher education studies at all three levels in the field of communication - from the bachelor's to the doctoral level, which is one of the success factors why those students who are interested in research activities could choose RSU studies. In addition, the doctoral studies are one of the success factors that could promote the attraction of new teaching staff to the improvement and harnessing of the study process.

Responses from the interviews assured experts that the structure of the management of the study field as described in Annex 4.2 is well supporting the development of the study field. The clear roles and responsibilities are defined; processes between different management and decision making levels are in place. Employees are clearly aware about their roles and duties, overlap of similar responsibilities seems to be minimal.

The support provided by the administrative and technical staff contributes to meeting all needs with regard to the relevant study programmes of the study field.

As it was emphasized during face-to-face conversations with managers, administrators and faculty, the university has been promoting social sciences to foreign students for two years already, particularly through the Health Communication master's programme.

One of the main challenges for RSU is how to increase the number of state-funded study places for social science disciplines. State-funded study places have been a big challenge for the past seven years, and RSU is trying to improve the situation by asking for more support from the ministries and the government. Also the funding issues caused by the unclear position of the RSU - being under double governance of the Ministry of Health and Ministry of Education and Science - should be dealt on the governmental level. With the aim of maintaining and expanding the student body, experts support the university's efforts to lobby the Latvian government to secure funding (in the RSU case especially for social sciences). Additionally, the experts would like to emphasize that RSU could show more flexibility in the allocation of scholarships.

As to the connection of the studies with a labour market, experts note that RSU is following the forecasts of employment trends in the European Union and Latvia, and is looking for ways to improve the study programmes' content with new skills. For instance, in the study course "Methods and Genres of Journalism" (academic bachelor study programme "Journalism") several classes of "Critical Thinking in Journalism" have been introduced, whereas in the Master's level studies the study course "Analysis of Communication Situations" has been created.

RSU supports students not only with academic knowledge but also with practical skills, offering different creative activities, for example, the opportunity to take part in student media <https://skalak.rsu.lv/>, which provides opportunities to develop practical skills and creative ideas during studies.

According to interviews with the students and academic staff during the on-site visit, and to the Annex 4.2 to the Self-Assessment Report, RSU implements a student-centred learning environment, where the leaders of study programmes cooperate not only with the student self-government, but in

each course there is a group senior who represents colleagues in issues that affect the study process.

The interviews with the students highlighted the problem that not everyone understands the differences in the formation of tuition fees, what full-time studies, part-time studies and what distance learning process includes. At a time when most lectures are delivered remotely, these differences should be further explained.

Technical support from the university administration is also provided to the academic staff. Referring to the face-to-face meetings, it must be concluded that the heads of the study field listen to the students' criticism and address these issues at the faculty level.

Annex 4.3 of the self-assessment report provides the composition of the Study quality board, which includes not only the academic staff of the higher education institution, but also students and representatives of employers and alumni.

The main challenge is the need for better quality support for academic staff to manage well their demanding workloads and wellbeing. Currently employment contracts state the possibility of taking a sabbatical year every six years, but in reality this is not put into practice and is not supported.

It is positive that the university is thinking about the development of academic staff by offering and providing professional training courses. Experts learnt that 102 lecturers have already taken advantage of this opportunity last year. The teachers specifically stressed that a very good course, which has helped particularly at the time of switching to online training, was about improvisation skills. Because it helps to improve the performance of the teacher as a whole, and develops creativity and gives confidence in presenting oneself. Several teachers pointed out that an additional course on public speaking would be helpful.

According to the requirements of the labour market and the desire of higher education to export study field courses, academic staff are provided with English courses according to their pre-knowledge level. It should be considered here how to ensure the continuity of this course, so that this is provided to staff throughout the study year, since the meetings during the on-site visit showed that there are academic staff/ study programme managers who still need to develop these skills.

Experts recognized that in COVID-19 crisis, RSU administration and faculty have adapted fast to difficult circumstances. Experts think this effort can be expanded in the coming years by providing support for academic staff to enhance their skills in distance and online teaching. Academic staff acknowledged that IT resources and support to create online content was on a good level, but they would appreciate continued training on how to make the distance studies more attractive and have higher student engagement during the lectures.

Experts encourage the university's idea of offering an online degree and experts see a potential to expand their international student intake. This would perhaps require further English language support to faculty. Moreover, academic staff highlighted the need for training in the English language of scientific articles, which should be considered as an opportunity to promote the visibility of staff in various international scientific magazines.

It is also desirable for an institution of higher education to review the possibility of reimbursement for the process of developing new study programmes and courses, as pointed out by academic staff members during the experts' visit.

During the staff interviews, it was noted that there is also a question about the quality of the future of RSU, when advertisements for available vacancies are made public only internally. While this might be an opinion of a particular person and not necessarily reflect the good employment practices that are in place, the experts are concerned that these kinds of views may reflect on the Faculty of Communication's reputation.

RSU has developed quality conditions for the admission of students for a specific academic year, based on both the requirements of the RSU Senate and the legislation of the Republic of Latvia in the field of higher education. All admission conditions are available on the university's website - both

total for all university programmes and individual for each study programme. The website also publishes questions and answers to those who are interested in these programmes.

The RSU shall also ensure the recognition of previous education and professional experience, so that students or potential students can qualify for studies at later stages. Everyone has the opportunity to apply for the recognition of competences acquired outside formal education or acquired in professional experience. It should be acknowledged that there are currently only 3 to 5 cases per year in the RSU, which appeals to such a request in the communication department.

In order to recognize previous experience, a joint commission has been established at the university level for all thematic areas of education, which allows for a uniform interpretation of the evaluation process and conditions, while at each time an expert in the field concerned is involved.

Both students and academic staff have access to conditions explaining the principles and conditions for using other study papers. The RSU has also joined the joint plagiarism testing system of Latvian universities, as well as purchased a licence for the originality control tool "Turnitin", which is also integrated into the RSU e-studies site.

The RSU website provides all the information relevant to prospective students. In addition, it also indicates how many places of study are in each of the programmes - both fee-paying and university funded free places for excellent students. Given that there are no State-sponsored grants available for the study field, these university funded free places for excellent students in each of the programmes shall be subsidised by natural or legal persons. During the interviews, students stressed that they would like more than two RSU funded places in each of the study programmes, which, for example, would be divided into smaller amounts accessible to larger numbers of students. By submitting comments on factual errors RSU informed the experts that in the end of 2020, the Student Union submitted a proposal to divide study places in small parts. There were 5 meetings on this matter. Amendments to the regulations on study discounts were developed. The RSU shall continue to review the procedures for allocating university funded free places for excellent students and the amount for each of the courses of study in proportion to the number of students in each study field.

Conclusions. Strengths and weaknesses

All in all, experts find that though the management of the study field is constrained by lack of state funding, it is working well in the way RSU is investing in these study programmes and recognizing the growth potential of teaching and research in this field. Experts commend the variety of programmes at offer and the quality of teaching, as well as the technological infrastructure at the university. They also note the university's positive reputation on the labour market and the favourable relations it has with employers in Latvia within the communications and journalism sectors.

Strengths:

1. Well-qualified and highly competent staff in key positions, both managerial and support. Close relations with Latvian employers in the communications and journalism sectors. High quality of teaching and good communication with students.
2. Provision of successive studies in undergraduate's, master's and PhD Programmes.
3. Promotion of study programmes for potential foreign students, especially the "Health Communication" program.
4. Good offer of courses for academic staff for professional development, which is evaluated well by lecturers.

Weaknesses:

1. Because of the unclear relationship of subordination between the two ministries - Ministry of Health and Ministry of Education and Science, the field of study is facing the unfair competitive disadvantages in the context of other study fields at the RSU as well as in comparison with other higher education institutions in Latvia.
2. High workload of the staff without a sufficient and clear-cut support for wellbeing and use of the sabbatical leave.
3. Lack of state funding - study programmes in the study field are financed only from private funds, it contributes to the dependency of the study programmes on the number of students, as well as to instability about the future prospects of the programmes.

2. Efficiency of the Internal Quality Assurance System

Analysis

The efficiency of the internal quality assurance system within the study field is aimed at ensuring continuous improvement, development, and efficient performance of the study field and the relevant study programmes. It can be stated that there is a compliance with all procedures described in the quality assurance system that are used for the achievement of the aims and learning outcomes of the study field and the study programmes.

The system ensures continuous improvement and development, which is evident from such processes as implementation of supervision of the study quality which includes SWOT analysis that is carried out once a year and analysis of quality criteria performance of processes is performed once a year. In order to maintain the quality there are certain measures that are taken into consideration and analyzed and in case of shortcomings improved. That is being done throughout the year (analysis of student performance, analysis of study course surveys which are done twice a year, analysis of complaints, shortcomings, self-assessment of study programmes and the study field).

There is an effective study quality monitoring assessment in place which uses specific quality indicators as employer survey and implementation of recommendations; admission results, drop-out of the graduates and reasons for drop-outs; questionnaires and assessment of their results; previously mentioned SWOT analysis; implementation of recommendations indicated by the experts including Involvement of new lecturers, qualification improvement of the lecturers, attraction of guest lecturers. There has been a noticeable work devoted to these recommendation systems made but still there is a room for development.

What refers to a feedback system, that has been one of the main questions to be discussed during the visits as it seemingly has some shortcomings and through the assessment process indeed found out to exist. Even though, in the self-assessment report has shown and described specifically how the feedback mechanism works for students and graduates both obtaining and providing the feedback the participation activity by students is seen as rather low but it can be easily improved with minor changes made within the existing feedback mechanism. The procedures for the development and review of the study programmes of the study field and the feedback mechanisms (including feedback to students, employers, and graduates) have been defined and they are logical and available for all stakeholders but can be more efficient in the field of student participation as in September 2019, feedback was given on 43% of the courses completed in the spring semester of 2019 which is less than a half.

Although, the students did agree that they are not paying enough attention to the course

evaluations but due various reasons, for example, not enough reminders by the Student Council or RSU administration. In addition, they did indicate that filling in the surveys is time consuming and usually students are asked to fill in too many questionnaires at the same period. In fact, the RSU has improved its feedback system in the previous academic year of 2019/20 ensuring that the students who start the study course have access to the results of the study course questionnaire and the feedback provided by the lecturer, which will enable the students to evaluate how the planned changes in the study course are implemented which is seen as good improvement. The feedback system is seen as logical and available for all stakeholders but the efficiency is to be improved. One of the options may be with providing reminder emails to students consistently before the end of the particular course.

Addressing the question of "Mechanism of obtaining and providing feedback from/ to employers" experts see that it is being done but some of the recommendations by the lecturers and staff are harder to deal with and resolve than others as the overload of work. What refers to the improvement of the study process, such feedback is in place from - to employers in order to improve the quality of studies. For the diversity of opinions, deeper and detailed feedback from employers as well as regular employer's surveys are suggested. Currently many employers hold several roles in connection to RSU both as lecturers and employers. To get a wider perspective, there is a need to strategically include the view from the placement providers and employers who are not directly connected with RSU in any other role.

The administration outlines the questions which are needed to address in the nearest future to improve the quality of the study process.

Experts outlined that the regularity and variety of guest lectures is advised not only for assuring larger outside RSU experience by field specialists but as well as to deal with the existing high workload by the staff that exists within the university which would from experts opinion help to improve the quality of studies as the lecturers will be less stressed with the amount of work that has to be managed. Experts team recommends inviting visiting lectures for part of studies and as the list of CV shows that there are quite a lot of professionals who are willing to contribute for future employees.

What being related to collection and analysis of the information (statistics) it can be stated that the university is doing well with the system established concerning this question. RSU has developed a system for centralised collection and analysis of key data related to the study process. The system has a clear division of responsibilities for data analysis at various levels and concerning specific questions to be examined and analyzed - "Analysis of study programme quality criteria"; "Analysis of Academic Performance of Students"; "Student feedback analysis".

Mutual respect and understanding exist between students and lecturers. In case of complaints that may sometimes arise students feel free to communicate about them in the feedback or addressing the issue to the university responsible persons directly. Although, some students did indicate that they still hope that their complaints will be taken into notice because the changes have not yet been seen about a particular lecturer and the style/manner of teaching.

Evaluating the compliance with the standards set forth in Part 1 of the ESG in relation to the functioning and work of RSU, the description of RSU's internal quality assurance system is freely accessible on the webpage of RSU in both languages - Latvian and English. It is possible to get acquainted with not only the students but also the lecturers and administration of RSU. This procedure is described also in the self-assessment report in 1.3 section.

In the approval of the study courses there has been established a specific order of procedure which is available in the Process Description No 34 "Updating and development of Study Courses, Study Programmes and Study Directions" (self-assessment report, Annex 1, p. 19-51). Development of the descriptions of the study courses, topicalization and use is taking place in cooperation with lecturers and the chair of the university.

According to the ESG standards, RSU pays special attention to the student - centered learning system, which has been evaluated by the experts through the available documentation as well as through the conversations and interviews with students and study forces and accessing the existing study process evaluation systems that exist within the RSU.

According to the ESG standards, RSU is paying significant attention to the establishment of close relations and cooperation with the specialists and employers of the field. In fact, RSU has managed to attract some of these employers as visiting lecturers or lecturers in certain courses of their speciality and in accordance with their academic qualifications and competences. The largest part of the lecturers represent the field of employer's institutions which support cohesion between theory and practice in that way promoting successful implementation and achievement of the aims and results of the study programmes (Annex 6.1 and 6.2).

In accordance with the accreditation deadline, cyclical assurance of external quality is implemented by submitting an accreditation application to the Academic Information Centre (AIC) for assessment by accreditation experts and the Study Accreditation Commission.

The university admits that (self-assessment report, p. 42), it faces certain challenges when it comes to compliance with these existing standards: Sciences and innovations; lack of financing and other resources (personnel, IT software, technologies, patents, etc.) in the research of the social sciences encumbers compliance with these standards and assurance of the working environment for the teaching staff is problematic due to constant lack of resources (premises, ability to spend a longer time on research) because the financial basis of the study programmes in the study field are formed only by contributions made by natural persons.

Conclusions. Strengths and weaknesses

The university has taken into consideration the previous recommendations made and has made significant improvements to develop a better and more efficient quality assurance system. The system ensures continuous improvement, development, and efficient performance of the study field and the relevant study programmes.

Strengths:

1. Mostly if not always there is a productive reaction to immediate student complaints (although the scale of complaints is unknown to experts).
2. There is an effective study quality monitoring assessment in place.
3. Good communication between students and lecturers despite the lack of communication when it comes to the formal procedure of providing formal feedback.

Weaknesses:

1. Surveys are too many at the same time which causes dissatisfaction from the students' side to fill in many course surveys at the same time.
2. Not enough students participate in the feedback system (less than half of the students) which is necessary to be increased.

3. Resources and Provision of the Study Field

Analysis

Based on the information that has been gathered by the experts during the on-site visit and provided in the self-assessment report experts conclude that RSU has developed a system to determine the financial resources required for the implementation of the study field and the relevant study programmes. There is a system for financing the scientific research and/ or artistic creation activities in place, and this system is efficient. Although, when it comes to the aspect of state-funded places for students in the study programmes, the issue is still not being resolved. In fact, the amount of places for students that are covered by the state funding are none or only few which means that most of the students cover their studies by their own private funding. Of course, the study fee is necessary. The experts noted that at this stage study fees are used for personnel remuneration, attraction of visiting lecturers, paying taxes, maintenance of IT infrastructure, purchase of equipment and machinery in addition to direct costs for implementation of lectures and classes. Eventually, though, it is advised to find a solution to find financial support in order to ensure more budget places for students but as understood during the on site this issue is already being solved.

RSU has identified the infrastructure resources and the material and technical provision required for the implementation of the study field, and they are available. The improvement of the informative and technical provision is in accordance with the development needs of the study programmes. The students and the teaching staff have access almost to all of the necessary resources with some specific remarks concerning what can be improved for better quality of work and study process.

Overall, students are satisfied with accessibility of the necessary materials. Students have no complaints about the lack of resources, in particular the materials needed for gaining theoretical knowledge or implementing study works. During the experts' visit, some of the students pointed out that in some cases the cameras or technical equipment is lacking if practical work has to be done and they have to wait for being able to use it. Representatives of the academic staff on the other hand pointed out that it would be nice that Microsoft Office would be accessible and covered for lecturers as well as it is being provided for the students.

RSU teaching staff and students highly value the available resources (both printed and digital) in the library. There is a common system and procedures for the improvement and purchase of the material, technical, methodological, and informative provision in place and it is seen as efficient and well-established. Librarians provide the necessary training and opportunity to take books home. Representatives of the academic staff also mentioned the availability of resources to order required books from other libraries. Subscribed databases and scientific sources meet the requirements of the study programme. In case something cannot be found in the library it is mostly accessible in the databases. In situations when it is not possible, one can easily communicate with the library staff and the book can be ordered. One of the students pointed out that specifically for the Photography study programme they are happy to have Photoshop programme which is provided to them for free. RSU staff and students have access to EBSCO and other databases.

The experts team is rather concerned with the availability of the individual (isolated) work stations for the academic staff members. RSU premises are large enough taking into consideration that there is more than one building that can be used for teaching but there are no separate rooms for the academic staff to work individually, except the possibility to work in the library or study tables located at some places within the premises. It is of importance to find a solution as establishing the lecturers' room in the future which would be particularly of more importance for those lecturers who are spending extra hours for research work.

Photo studio in Riga is overall well equipped, RSU investments in photo equipment and programmes to work with visual materials are very impressive. At the same time it would require additional investment to provide the same conditions (studio, equipment) for students in Liepāja.

The meeting with the manager of the Multimedia Lab was beneficial in terms of gaining an in-depth

insight into the principles of operation of the Lab as well as the tasks assigned to the students that aim at developing a practical skill set essential for producing the multimedia content. The Lab is well equipped and serves as a quality resource for strengthening the multimedia production skills of any student of the study field. The only challenge is the size of the Lab as well as the number of equipment units here since the skills the Lab work provides is of high demand and necessity across most of the programmes at the study field.

RSU has developed and implemented the procedures for attracting highly skilled teaching staff for the study field and the relevant study programmes. As indicated in the self - assessment report the requirements for applicants to RSU academic positions are set higher scientific, educational qualification requirements, organizational and professional competences than required by the requirements of external laws and regulations; thus, the best possible specialists are recruited for the work. Qualification and competences of the academic staff are constantly improved by ensuring growth of educational skills, improvement of English, and professional training related to the particular field.

As it has been indicated during the assessment meetings with the academic staff the academic and research workload of the teaching staff is not exactly balanced as it has been stated in the self - assessment report. The academic staff is overloaded with tasks - combining their duties in both giving lectures, preparing for them and devoting time for research which takes a lot of it. As the research has to be done in certain identified deadlines the staff does not have enough time to properly prepare for the lectures. Balancing of the work takes a lot of effort and risk for a burnout for the academic staff. Experts team recommends to invite more guest lecturers as one of the solutions for establishing a balanced research and academic workload, and also reducing the overload of the work for the lecturers and staff.

Members of the teaching staff take part both in outgoing and incoming mobility, which brings added value to the implementation of the study process and the study quality. Outgoing mobility of the teaching staff of RSU is implemented within the framework of Erasmus+ programme as well as most of the incoming mobility of the teaching staff. As indicated within the self -assessment report and been confirmed during the visit, RSU has welcomed guest lecturers from USA, Austria, Iceland, Finland. Also other lecturers from Latvian universities.

RSU has identified the support necessary for the students and established a well-functioning support system, based on the needs of the students. As stated in the self - assessment report, since 2012 all RSU students have access to psycho-emotional support. The service was introduced with the aim of helping students to overcome adaptation problems when starting their studies, reducing the emotional manifestations of stress, stress-related health disorders, psychosomatic disorders or illnesses, overcoming relationship-building difficulties, and crisis situations. Experts see it as a valuable and absolutely necessary cornerstone of the support for students in problem situations typical for their context and situation.

Overall, RSU is well-equipped with resources, which help to adapt easier for the distance learning process during the Covid-19 (for example, special room for video lectures and working with distance students; electronic databases and e-books). It is believed by the experts that such good conditions for the current situation during distance learning during Covid- 9 times is not being a coincidence but rather a proof that RSU has established a well - equipped resource system already before, allowing the university this wonderful opportunity to adapt easier during pandemic. When it comes to the administrative team students have noted that it is always ready to answer questions and support distance learning students if needed when it comes to adapting to this new type of study process and accessibility of the resources.

Students stated that the quality of the online studies has not changed in comparison to face-to-face studies, although they do mention that at some point they feel as the study fee should have been reduced as they do not use some of the premises and equipment at the faculty. Respondus is a great innovation for the online examination process plus those ones who prefer to take an exam in

the RSU premises can do that.

In order to introduce distance-learning as an official form of implementation it is necessary to update all course descriptions so that they would reflect the specific aspects of distance-learning (independent work of students, contact hours etc.)

In the Liepāja branch there is a need for more technical equipment and other improvements. Currently there is a rather limited amount of computers provided in the study rooms that can be used by students. Experts believe that the Liepāja branch is not prepared to ensure the necessary tools for a successful study process. It is being stated by the RSU staff that if approved to implement the specific study programmes, they will prepare the necessary equipment in need as they are aware that the current conditions are not sufficient. As there are limited amounts of premises as such experts question where the computers are going to be located as well as what kind of funding will cover the amount of the necessary extra computers in order to provide a successful study process.

Experts see the ability to implement the intended programs at Liepāja branch. However, based on the information provided during the visit at Liepāja branch, experts are not able to assess the long-term viability of programs there.

It is also relevant to note that a certain amount of lecturers, specialists have to be provided for a successful study process. As was pointed out, currently it is beneficial that there are online lectures that can be provided from Riga and after the end of Covid - 19 it can be continued but it can not fully compensate for the practical experience and set of knowledge given in face to face lectures. There have to be lecturers coming to Liepāja eventually and interacting with students. The sustainability of the teaching staff's engagement with the implementation of the programme has to be ensured by providing incentives that would make such a regular travel appealing to them in the long term.

Market research for opening new study programmes should be conducted (needs for local labour market, trends in the society etc.) as currently experts do not see a clear need for programmes in this specific field in Liepāja branch. Moreover, there is no clear vision of how the expansion of the offer of communication programmes is exactly cooperation and not competition over a rather limited number of students with related studies in the University of Liepāja.

Conclusions. Strengths and weaknesses

All in all, RSU has a good resource base and the students and the teaching staff have access to the necessary resources to ensure the quality of teaching and learning process.

Strengths: 1.RSU is well equipped in the study process. Well-equipped study field is one of the motivators for students and academic staff. 2.Advanced library equipment and possibility to order the necessary study materials. 3.Good level of investment in technological infrastructure, including the Wi-Fi coverage. 4.The resources - books, journals, databases are easily accessible to students and the necessary materials for a successful study process are provided. 5.Good support in strengthening students' multimedia skills, providing an opportunity to work in students' media via Multimedia Lab and <https://skalak.rsu.lv/>. 6.The study materials, resources are constantly updated providing students with the recent academic publications of the particular field of studies. 7.Student proposals concerning certain materials being accessible are being taken into consideration.

The suggestion from the previous accreditation regarding separate full time employee as student media editor-in-chief was implemented.

Weaknesses: 1.The necessary amount of equipment needed for all the student's individual work is not always accessible. 2.There is no clear vision of how the expansion of the offer of communication programmes in Liepāja branch can be introduced. 3.No market research for opening new study programmes has been conducted. 4.The accessibility of the necessary materials needed for the study process in Liepāja. 5.Lack of private lecturer rooms to stay in after the lectures. 6.Course-

descriptions are not adjusted for distance-learning as a form of implementation.

4. Scientific Research and Artistic Creation

Analysis

According to the self-assessment report, in research RSU acts in accordance with approved strategies. The current strategy, which was developed in 2015, is the Development Strategy of RSU Scientific Institution for 2015-2020. The strategy is based on all three of the RSU's key directions of action - internationally competitive education, excellent research, and technology transfer to strengthen innovation as the foundation for RSU's sustainable development. It was stated that the direction of social sciences has a great untapped potential, especially in close collaboration with leading research and development sectors, providing a critical assessment and alternative views, making a significant contribution to addressing societal challenges. Synergy with health sciences is focused on public health promotion. From the study field "Information and Communication Science" the master programme "Health Communication" is the closest to the medical profile of RSU.

New strategy is under development and details have not been presented to the experts yet, but the members of the Rectorate confirmed that scientific research in the field of social sciences is a high priority for the university and interdisciplinary research activities are strongly supported. In overall the directions of scientific research are in line with the development aims of the RSU and relevant to the study field. Little attention has been paid to artistic creation so far, although a photography curriculum, for example, would allow success here as well.

Research is supported through the Social Sciences Platform. Scientific research and use of its outcomes are integrated in the study process in the study programmes of all levels - inclusion of research articles and research data in the study courses; compulsory research assignments and opportunities for students to join research projects; collaboration with institutions and companies on the development of research, etc.

According to the self-assessment report the international cooperation in the field of scientific research in the study field and the relevant study programmes is conducted through cooperation agreements with foreign scientific institutions and participation in joint scientific projects for ex. EU funded programmes (there are at least 12 examples mentioned in the self-assessment report). Future plans for the development of international cooperation in scientific research include tangible and relevant measures such as 3-5 annual project applications, participation as partners in preparation of the current international projects, involving postdoctoral researchers, presentation of 2-3 doctoral theses, involvement of international researchers in university research projects.

Conducted interviews and the self-assessment report underlined the importance of the motivation of the teaching staff to engage in research. Several activities and relevant measures on that matter were described. These actions are also supported by the above-mentioned RSU Social Science Platform and the research staff development strategy. According to the self-assessment report, the results of the implementation of the strategy have led to positive results. However, the experts encourage members of the academic staff (in particular elected lecturers) to pay more attention to research and publish more - especially in reviewed editions and international editions.

Academics and lecturers are clearly experts in their fields. Some are managing to apply for grants and to publish their research. Both the self-assessment report and the interviews conducted indicated that due to the high teaching and administrative loads, academic staff have little time to dedicate for research. In order to enhance research output, it is the experts recommendation that

academic staff should be supported by allowing them to dedicate time for research activities. It also came to the experts attention that most staff were not able to take sabbaticals which they are entitled to by contract. Due to these obstacles, the number of published high-level research papers during the reporting period is not very high (Annex 6.4).

RSU has taken a number of important steps to enhance the competencies of its academic staff including language courses. These efforts could be built upon through further choice of courses including on what journals and grants to apply for and the language specificities of these undertakings.

In terms of the PhD program, experts were happy to hear of RSU's plans for restructuring the programme and streamline it with other PhD programmes at the university. That should improve the experience of students in the years to come, particularly as experts noted that the programme could be diversified and further integrated with other programmes. Experts noticed that PhD students would benefit from having a stronger idea of what their degree offers them in terms of job prospects. In order to increase the quality of studies several innovative solutions have been already introduced (mapping for example, Annex 18.1), and new targets were set for the future.

Conclusions. Strengths and weaknesses

To summarize, the experts have assessed the scientific research in the study field of communications complies with the development aims of RSU. However, experts found that, while links with the labour market are strong in the undergraduate and master programmes, they are not developed for the PhD programme. Furthermore, the relation between scientific research in communication science is not sufficiently integrated in the study process of the PhD programme. Experts found international cooperation in the field of scientific research to be another area that could be improved through more institutionalised links with international partners. Experts also recommend that research staff get further support from the RSU administration to conduct their research, whether in terms of applying for grants or publishing. This is to be done through providing further relevant training and also through allowing time for research sabbaticals. This would also enhance the experience of PhD students who then be able to support their mentors' research activities.

Strengths

1. The scientific research in communications complies with the development aims of RSU.
2. The relation between scientific research in communications and the study process has been defined and ensured. Scientific research and the outcomes thereof are integrated in the study process in the study programmes of all levels, and work especially well on the undergraduate and master levels.
3. RSU is aware of the importance of international cooperation in the field of scientific research and/or artistic creation within the study field and the relevant study programmes and is keen to further develop this in the future.

Weaknesses

1. Mechanisms for the involvement of the teaching staff in scientific research and/or artistic creation could be further developed through additional training, exchanges and giving faculty time to conduct research.
2. Mechanisms to promote the involvement of the students in scientific research and/or artistic creation could be further developed at the PhD level.
3. Integrating the PhD programme in research projects at RSU could be developed, as well the

training of PhD students on how to navigate the labour market.
4. Participation in international research projects should be enhanced.

5. Cooperation and Internationalisation

Analysis

Students and graduates reported that one of their most rewarding experiences were gained through international experiences, particularly guest international lecturers. So experts recommend continuing in the efforts to internationalise through diversifying the curriculum, providing opportunities for exchanges at the level of students (ERASMUS+) and at the level of academic exchanges (including providing funding for faculty and PhD students to participate in international conferences).

Experts recognize the constraints of expanding the international student intake. These include stiff competition from institutions in other European countries and the restrictions in Latvia on employing international lecturers who do not speak Latvian, a policy that caps growth potential for RSU. Experts encourage RSU to think creatively about raising its international profile. This can be achieved through providing further specialised English-language courses and considering a branding that plays to RSU's strengths and to the uniqueness of student experience in Latvia. It is important to design and develop a system and procedures for the attraction of the teaching staff and students from abroad within the study field. Experts think that that could be improved on, in terms of designing a new robust system and procedure to cooperate with international institutions, attract international talent and students, and also in communicating those procedures within RSU and with stakeholders abroad.

Students are well informed about mobility opportunities and are willing to participate in them as seeing those opportunities as a valuable way of gaining new experience and knowledge. As RSU Communication Faculty has indicated recently, 36 (Annex Nr. 7) Erasmus cooperation agreements have been signed in Europe and beyond. It is believed that such an opportunity provides students to achieve the learning outcome of students choosing the courses to study in accordance with learning outcomes the student wishes to achieve as going abroad.

In interviews with experts, students mentioned the international environment of the university as a successful operating model, for example, the Latvian Student Self-Government has established good cooperation with the International Student Board. Therefore, many events at the university take place in two languages, in addition, there is an opportunity to get to know each other, to promote opportunities for cooperation in the Study process. As a good example of cooperation, students who participated in face-to-face interviews highlighted cooperation with the Council of International Students, which allows better familiarity and cooperation between local and foreign students.

In terms of cooperation with the Latvian media industry and labour market, experts found that it is working well. The university and the academic staff assist students with obtaining internship opportunities. Employers reported that they look favorably towards the university name and commended the contribution of students to their businesses and organizations.

Interviews with employers highlighted the prestige of the RSU diploma - that graduates of this university are a sign of quality because they are coming with a strong theoretical knowledge. In addition, graduates of this university will be more motivated to work, self-motivated (due to the difficult learning process). There is particularly good feedback on the graduates of multimedia programmes who have already entered the labour market with good digital skills. About 35% of the

teaching staff of this study field also represent employers.

There are companies, such as Latvenergo, which work more closely with the university, for example by offering topics for bachelor's and master's thesis, and also by providing scholarships to the best authors of the works. In cooperation with professionals of the industry, the Communications Faculty also organised open lectures, such as lecture about crisis management, which was also attended by many professionals in the industry and assessed the possibility provided by the university. RSU has also developed a good relationship with professional organisations of the sector, such as the Association of Journalists, the Association of Latvia's public relations professionals, etc., which provides opportunities for the students to improve practical skills and the implementation of practice tasks.

The good cooperation between the study field's management and academic staff with employers has led to employers not only contributing to the process of developing study programmes, but also to sharing experience in lectures and providing places of internship for students in the entire communication programme. Information on places of practice and vacancies for students is sent to emails and published on university's social media sites. Also in face-to-face interviews students stressed that they were valuing the possibilities of practice/internships provided by the university.

Annexes 9.1 and 9.2 of the self-assessment report documentation contain information on both the tasks and conditions of the internship for each form of studies, as well as a sample of the internship agreement, which is concluded between the internship provider and the university.

Annex 7 (Annex 9.2) contains information on seven organisations with open-ended contracts for the provision of places of practice for RSU communication students. The list contains a variety of companies, both agencies and associations.

Annex 12 provides feedback from different employers on the programmes implemented by the study field (at least 4 times Rita Ruduša's review of the Multimedia Programme), where the Health Communication Programme and its role in ensuring the sustainability of the various Latvian organisations are most appreciated. These employers' feedback also highlights the bachelor programme "Public Relations" and the master's "Strategic and Public Relations Leadership" programme, which is also highly valued by graduates and existing students active in the sector.

Since one of the cornerstones for internationalisation also is the ability to offer internationally appealing programmes in English and all study programmes under the study field express such intentions, experts reviewed the evidence of English proficiency. A document provided in Annex 24-5 and Annex 6.2 containing the biographies of the academic staff along with Annex 6.1 containing the information about the levels of English according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages indicates the proficiency of the official language indicate that overall about the one third of the study field's academic staff have a documental proof (RSU language test or a degree obtained from a university abroad) of the English language level corresponding to B2 or higher. Experts emphasize the urgency to support English learning and testing for all academic staff members that are intended to be involved in teaching in English as well as reaching the B2 level for those who do not have it.

Conclusions. Strengths and weaknesses

In conclusion, experts find that there is a very good level of cooperation with the Latvian media industry, from news media to public relations firms and to smaller specialised employers in the arts

field. Bachelor and master study programmes benefit from strong connections with Latvian labour market and employers that offer students excellent training and employment opportunities. RSU has a strong reputation and its communications graduates and alumni showed enthusiasm in sustaining and growing that connection between the university and industry. When it comes to international links, students expressed their appreciation for existing international links and measures, including visiting lecturers and class curricula. Experts think that these successes could be built through further institutionalisation of links with international universities and providing more incentives for international academics to spend time at RSU to offer classes and exchange knowledge with faculty members.

Strengths:

1. RSU study field has established good relations with employers in the industry, who cooperate in securing the study process both by offering internships and topics for course works, as well as the opportunity to organize open guest lectures.
2. Employers' feedback on communication study field programmes particularly positively assessed the study programme "Health Communication", which has sustainability opportunities for the needs of the labour market.
3. The best feedback from employers is about the graduates of the study programme "Multimedia Communication" who enter the labour market with very good practical skills.

Weaknesses:

1. Internationalisation efforts could be further institutionalised through additional formal links with international universities and more incentives and outreach for international academics to visit and contribute to RSU teaching and research.
2. As Master's students most often already have permanent jobs, it is rare for them to use mobility opportunities to go on exchange studies abroad and to enrich their learning experience and be more competitive on the labour market after graduation.
3. Considering the conversations with academic staff, the level of English language skills for teaching staff could be higher, which might be an obstacle in case the programmes will be more international. Moreover, the knowledge of English for writing academic articles should be developed more.
4. The number of international students is rather low.

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

Analysis

The experts, when getting acquainted with the recommendations to improve the study process made in the previous study field assessment procedures, evaluated the achievements of RSU over the years.

Analysing the ten recommendations that were given to the entire study field "Information and Communication Sciences", the experts conclude that most of the recommendations have been taken into account and implemented. For example, the previous group of experts had expressed concerns about the level of professional skills at the bachelor's level and the lack of technical resources for multimedia and journalism training, which have been completely eliminated over the years. RSU has introduced practical study courses, with great emphasis on student media <https://skalak.rsu.lv/>, which is included as a compulsory Study course for all bachelor's level students. The students themselves have appreciated work in this media, emphasising the experience they have gained in creating content not only for the student media website and social

media, but also for the university magazine “Inquisito”.

The suggestion from the previous accreditation regarding separate full time employees as student media editor-in-chief was implemented. Student involvement in practical tasks, providing the content for student media is a solution that both helps students to prepare for the job market and provides interesting content for existing and future students.

One of the shortcomings identified by the previous expert group is the dissatisfaction of students, graduates and employers with the professional skills that students acquire during their studies. Here, the non-immersion of future students in the content of the study programme during the enrolment process was mentioned as a disturbing factor. The experts recommended to explain the differences more and, taking into account the fact that RSU implements academic study programmes, provide more practical skills that are essential for the needs of the labour market. RSU has taken these recommendations into account, both by improving the tasks of student internships, and by introducing student media as a compulsory course, as well as by creating an even closer connection with potential employers. In addition, RSU communicates in all possible channels the fact that it provides academic study programmes.

Experts admit that there is still the same challenge - more of the bachelor's students or those who have recently graduated from the bachelor's study programme would like to have even more practical experience in their study process. This could be explained by the fact that not all young people understand the difference between academic and professional study programmes when choosing a place for acquiring higher education.

Based on the recommendations of the expert group, since 2013 RSU has introduced a couple of university-funded study places in each programme, providing the opportunity for the best students to study free of charge. However, the students still would like to have more opportunities to study for free or at reduced tuition fee for more students than it is currently provided, for example, not by covering someone's 100% tuition fee, but by giving three students the opportunity to study at a 30% discount.

The recommendation to involve students in the management of the programme and a more careful dialogue with the professional community that could help to improve the shortcomings of the programme has been fully implemented, as mentioned in this evaluation above. Students have the opportunity to express their opinion, evaluate the work of the academic staff, participate in the Faculty Council and the University Quality Supervision Council, as well as to cooperate with the heads of study fields.

One of the recommendations was a call to help the students to find internships, which is fully implemented. RSU has not only concluded cooperation agreements with various organizations, but also regularly informs students about internship opportunities, as well as invites guest lecturers, also attracting graduates of the study programmes. The management of the Faculty of Communication has agreed with RSU that students of this field are given opportunities to do internships in various structural units of RSU.

Implementation of recommendations for the bachelor's programme in Photography provided by previous experts could be evaluated as good and now the objectives, tasks and learning outcomes are in line with the main vision of the RSU strategy.

Implementation of recommendations for the master's programme in Health Communication is done

very well. The study course descriptions contain specifications for assessment criteria and independent work; the representation of both fields of study is ensured in the management of the programme; involvement of the employers from both fields of science in the Council of the Faculty of Public Health and Social Welfare is ensured; the system of surveying the students and graduates has been developed; the course descriptions contain recent sources in both Latvian and English; the link between study course and learning outcomes is clear; the emphasis on current gaps in communication of the field is planned to ensure by student research.

The implementations of recommendations for the PhD programme in Communication Culture and Multimedia are in the process of development with some improvements finalized and some ongoing. Thus, the number and the quality of publications relevant for the position of an associate professor and a professor is established as well as the new study course in Media Systems is created to ensure the necessary emphasis on the theoretical aspects of communication cultures of post-Soviet/post-communist societies. The implementations of recommendations that are still in the process or just implemented at the moment of accreditation visit are rather long-term in their nature considering, for instance, the amount of the time necessary to gather and analyse a representative amount of culture-specific communication data necessary for update the theoretical search paradigm of implementers of the programme in the field of information, knowledge and network society theories (see Annex 11, activity proposed for the recommendation 4) or developing a new course based on an unique research data (recommendation 3). These relatively early-stage implementations demonstrate quality steps that are taken towards ensuring the development of the doctoral programme.

Conclusions. Strengths and weaknesses

Overall, the implementation of recommendations received during the previous accreditation procedure has taken place with most of the activities finalized and some still ongoing.

Strength:

1. The recommendations are implemented by taking essential steps and employing practices that provide a valuable contribution to the development of the study field and respective programmes.

Weaknesses:

1. The activities derived from the previous recommendations in relation to providing students with practical experience do it only to a certain extent - more explanatory work needs to be done in order to provide prospective and current students with the necessary understanding of the aims and functions of the academic education beyond satisfying the needs of the job market.

7. Assessment of the Requirements for the Study Field

1 Pursuant to Section 5, Paragraph 21 of the Law on Institutions of Higher Education, the higher education institution/ college shall ensure continuous improvement, development, and efficient performance of the study direction whilst implementing their internal quality assurance systems:

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Justification: The Deming cycle is used for the implementation and application of the internal quality system. The system ensures continuous improvement, development, and efficient performance of the study field and the relevant study programmes.

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

Justification: Requirements for planning, supervision, and quality control of the study process in RSU are determined by Process Description No. 35 "Study Process Organisation".

- 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

Justification: RSU has a set procedure for development, internal approval of study programmes, supervision, and periodic inspection of the operation thereof. These requirements are determined in the Regulations for Development and Approval of New Study Programmes at Rīga Stradiņš University and in detail - in Process Description No. 34 "Updating and Development of Study Courses, Study Programmes, Study Directions" (see Annex 1) in accordance with the requirements of external laws and regulations.

- 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 made public.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Justification: The criteria are indicated in the course descriptions and made available to the students on RSU online learning platform.

Student performance is analysed twice per academic year after the end of the autumn and spring semesters. Data on final student assessments are collected and analysed by the Study Quality Analysis Division of the RSU Centre for Educational Growth by faculty and study field, providing information to the RSU management and data collections to the deans of the faculties.

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Justification: The quality of academic staff work is ensured by the annual student questionnaires after each study course.

- 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

Justification: Student survey of the course conclusion is organised in accordance with the procedure defined by RSU - Process Description No. 22 "Surveys" (see Annex 1): for each study course in e-studies, students complete the course evaluation questionnaire, where they can express their opinion and proposals both regarding the content of the study course and its implementation methods, competences and work style of lecturers; upon completion of studies, they evaluate the study programme in general by completing the survey regarding the study programme.

Views of RSU alumni are identified and implemented primarily by the heads of StPs. In 2017, in order to improve the obtaining of graduate feedback, RSU Alumni Association in cooperation with RSU Department of Studies and RSU Centre for Educational Growth developed a unified questionnaire for graduates, and plans were made to develop an electronic version of the questionnaire and create a database.

- 7 1.6. The higher education institution/ college shall ensure continuous improvement, development, and efficient performance of the study direction whilst implementing their quality assurance systems.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Justification: The RSU quality management system includes a regular quality audit procedure, as well as a related corrective action procedure to address non-conformities identified.

- 8 R2 - The cooperation with different organisations from Latvia and abroad implemented within the study direction ensures the achievement of the aims of the study direction.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Justification: 36 Erasmus+ agreements with foreign HEI (Annex 7) and open-ended agreements with seven organisations for the provision of places of practice for RSU communication students (Annex 9.2). The list contains a variety of companies, both agencies, and associations.

- 9 R3 - Compliance of scientific research and artistic creation with the development level thereof (if applicable).

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Justification: While the number of international peer-reviewed publications could be higher for some of the elected academic staff members as well as the main focus of the current research projects is predominantly devoted to local issues, overall, the research is topical and corresponds with national and global research trends as illustrated by Annexes 6.4 and 14.

- 10 R4 - Elimination of the shortcomings and deficiencies identified during the previous assessment of the study direction, if it has been conducted, or the implementation of the provided recommendations.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Justification: Analysing the ten recommendations that were desirable to improve for the entire study field "Information and Communication Sciences", the experts conclude that most of the recommendations have been taken into account and implemented (Annex 11 and on-site interviews).

8. Recommendations for the Study Field

Short-term recommendations

What is related to the quality assurance system experts recommend to have evaluation after every particular course so that students do not have a large amount of evaluations to fill at the same time. In order to ensure that the evaluations are filled by a larger number of students experts advise to remind students of the evaluation/ feedback procedure that has to be done in a certain limited amount of time. It can be done by administration and/or Student Council representatives. General recommendation from experts is to come up with a certain feedback system update that would motivate the students to fill the feedback as the percentage stated in the assessment is 43% which is less than a half.

For making better decisions regarding the opening of the programmes at Liepāja branch, the management of the study field is advised to implement the market research for potential students along with a systematic study of career prospects for the future graduates and development of clear cooperation principles with the Liepaja University as well as establishing a sustainable way for ensuring academic staff. Only then the resources for developing the range of necessary Lab equipment and other resources essential for the respective study programmes can be estimated.

In the light of the good feedback from employers on students and graduates from the university, experts encourage the management of the study field to work towards more agreements on possible places of practice also with companies, not only communications agencies and associations, by offering opportunities to apply theoretical knowledge to larger companies, where communication is a small part that supports the achievement of the organisation's business objectives.

In the light of actions taken during the previous period of accreditation with the aim to ensure the development of the practical skills of students and due to still existing sense of insufficiency of these skills among the students, the experts recommend implementing explanatory work regarding the other functions of academic study programmes that reach beyond the needs of labour market.

It is necessary to continue investing into developing the academic staff by providing further opportunities to acquire English speaking and writing skills.

Long-term recommendations

During the experts' meeting with students, it was brought to the experts attention that when it comes to technical equipment for practical purposes, it is necessary to pay closer attention to the amount of resources provided as sometimes students have to wait to gain access to cameras. Plus, in some curriculum there might be a need to take new technologies on board faster (360 cameras, virtual and augmented reality solutions, drone photography etc) to improve the study quality.

When it comes to Liepāja branch, it is a crucial aspect that in the longer period of time, if study programmes like Multimedia (including Photography) were provided for students in Liepāja branch, there would be a need to make additional investments in equipment (cameras, studio etc.) as none of it is accessible currently in Liepāja.

Considering the changes enabled by Covid-19 pandemic and the following acceptance of online activities as well as student employment situation that often restricts the international travel for longer periods of time, it is recommended to emphasize the internationalisation-at-home via attracting more international guest lectures (e.g. for online lecturing) as well as create international mixed groups of learners across already existing partner networks that would provide students with international experience online. These activities need to be institutionalized.

It is recommended for the management of RSU to continue lobbying for the State financed budget study places as well as working towards establishing a clear-cut subordination with the Ministry of Health and/or the Ministry of Education and Science favorable for the development of the study field and advocate for more favorable policies allowing for employing academic staff internationally.

Provide sufficient support for academic staff members to be interested and motivated to develop further their respective fields of research and engaging in international research projects by using sabbatical leave and balancing their teaching workload.

Further integration of PhD programme into research projects at RSU is needed.

II. "Photography" ASSESSMENT

II. "Photography" ASSESSMENT

1. Indicators Describing the Study Programme

Analysis

The aim of the academic bachelor study programme "Photography" (43321) is to prepare specialists in communication science with professional skills in the implementation of different photography related projects. After graduating university students will receive the bachelor's degree of social

sciences in communication science. The program offers the necessary theoretical and practical knowledge needed for academically educated, creative and professional highly qualified professionals who will be able to work in different media and organizations covering commercial and non-commercial areas of Latvia.

The bachelor study programme "Photography" is focused on nine objectives from which seven are concentrated on acquiring skills of conducting various forms of research and providing good analysis of the specific topic. The other two are dedicated to develop digital and analogue technologies in photography and competence of public speaking and presentation.

Learning outcomes of the study programme "Photography" are defined as understanding of the area, knowledge, skills and competences needed for the labour market or next level continuing studies. In total the programme has nine learning outcomes.

The programme "Photography" is unique for communication science, but at the same time the number of programme graduates is very small - 12 people (together in full time and part-time) during the 4 years. The bachelor study programme "Photography" has been accredited both on a full-time and part-time basis in Latvian, and studies are up and running.

The admission requirements are relevant and help to assess the knowledge and motivation of future students.

The importance of photography during last years has increased and it is worth researching it also from an academic perspective, but the description of the programme is quite blurry as it several times describes photography media what turned out to mean - photography in media.

Graduates highly value studies and mentioned that the programme helped them to develop the skills and get deeper knowledge in the area. At the same time during the discussions with employers, there are practical skills that were valued higher and needed more for media or other organizations.

As it is stated in the programme description, this is currently the only study programme in Latvia which combines understanding of communication processes, knowledge and competence on professional use of photography-related media, there are several other higher education institutions providing graduates with similar theoretical skills (knowledge of visual arts-related areas) like Academy of Culture or Academy of Arts.

Implementation of recommendations provided by previous experts could be evaluated as good and now the objectives, tasks and learning outcomes are in line with the main vision of the RSU strategy.

The academic bachelor study programme "Photography" has been accredited on a full-time and part-time basis in Latvian. The study programme is also submitted for implementation in English, however, the management of the study programme does not have any specific plan for the next two years on how to work on it because that would be significant in order to attract foreign students for their studies permanently as well as for the ERASMUS exchange. As stated in the self-assessment report, RSU is planning in the future to extend the possibilities for the implementation of the study programme and also attracting part-time and foreign students which is seen as necessary.

The development plan contains a possibility to integrate this programme as a specialization into the Multimedia communication programme that could be highly recommended as many courses in the

programme already are similar to that program.

However, as this is an academic bachelor study programme, the degree has to comply with Cabinet Regulations No 322 "Regulations on the Latvian Education Classification", Annex 2. According to these regulations, the degree should be "Bachelor of Social Science in Journalism and Communication".

Conclusions by specifying the strengths and weaknesses

Programme's aims, objectives, learning outcomes, and admission requirements are interrelated. The study programme "Photography" offers a wide range of expertise related to the field of photography, while at the same time it is important to pay attention to the demands of the labour market and the opportunities for graduates to find access to their knowledge.

Strengths:

1. The programme offers a broad spectrum of knowledge and skills related to the field of photography, both theoretical and practical.

Weaknesses:

1. The representatives from employers' sides pointed out practical skills (multimedia content creation) as more important than analytics skills of photography.
2. The degree awarded as a result of the study programme does not fully comply with the Latvian Education Classification.

2. The Content of Studies and Implementation Thereof

Analysis

In the study programme "Photography" course descriptions demonstrate compliance with study programme objectives and provide general courses in the social sciences including both basic courses of communication science and specialised knowledge of photography related areas.

The study courses are focused on theoretical knowledge about visual communication, role of photography in media and society, and analyses of different visual communication. Additionally to that there are several courses about psychology, sociology, anthropology, connection to film and other related industries.

During their studies, students learn a variety of techniques that are useful for a diverse exploration of the field of photography.

The study process is being implemented mostly as interactive lectures, practical interactive classes or seminars and individual work of students. Learning outcomes of the study programme are formulated in a student-centred way.

Different activities ensure interaction with experts of the photography related area and communication industry, including visiting lectures and site visits to companies, individual consultations, visual communication related events, participation in the RSU Research Week etc. The students' practical competence to produce visual and verbal stories in the mass media environment is trained in student media (<https://skalak.rsu.lv/>).

According to RSU data, the majority of employers assess students' readiness to cope with their

duties and real working situations, being able to complete tasks related to communication, photography, project management and the development of visual media content.

The bachelor's thesis could be completed in 2 ways: a high-level theoretical part and an empirical study and as a creative project in photography. The majority of the final thesis (90%) have been graded over 8.

As RSU indicates, they implement Erasmus+ programme mobility and in total 36 bilateral cooperation agreements have been signed in the study field. Although students from the study programme "Photography" have not yet participated in this mobility, 5 students participated in the Young Professionals project in Zingst, Germany (in 2018).

The experts approve the intentions to implement the programme in the form of distance learning while indicating that the course descriptions have to be adjusted for distance learning to comply with the legal requirements. The experts recognise the readiness of the field of study and particular programmes to implement the distance learning mode. However, it does not free one from the necessity to adjust the course descriptions since the pace and methods of studies for the distance learning mode has its specifics. All study courses in study programmes "Photography" and "Multimedia Communication" are described only for full-time studies or part-time studies, not distance learning (in AIKA platform or Annexes 20 for each separate programme). The study field possesses the necessary resources and support in a form of essential online platforms as well as methodological assistance to the teaching faculty. The experts also approve the idea to execute the implementation of the study programme in English while encouraging the management of the program to facilitate the necessary English learning and testing support (see more detailed analysis in Chapter 3).

Regarding the plans to implement the programme at RSU's Liepāja branch, experts do not approve these endeavors at the moment since the information to be able to properly assess such plans is missing. Alternatively, as well as considering the possibilities brought about in the sphere of higher education by the Covid-19 pandemic, experts encourage considering the development of the distance learning version of the programme.

Conclusions by specifying the strengths and weaknesses

Bachelor degree programme "Photography" provides the content of high-quality courses, including a variety of teaching methods. It is generally highly evaluated among both students and employers, but a more detailed analysis of the reasons needs to be carried out to understand how more students can successfully graduate the program.

Strengths:

1. A diverse opportunity to acquire both the knowledge needed for future studies and the skills needed for industry.
2. Possibility to choose how to make a bachelor's thesis empirical part - as either analysis or a creative project.

Weaknesses:

1. Number of students who graduate from the programme is very small.
2. Course descriptions currently are not adjusted for distance learning.

3. Resources and Provision of the Study Programme

Analysis

Students have access to both resources for learning theoretical courses and for carrying out practical tasks. They are provided with a well-developed IT infrastructure and virtual study environment, library with digital and printed materials, access to books (mostly in English, but also in Latvian), journals, databases. The photo studio and sets of different photo and video equipment available for students are valuable resources to practice and learn by doing.

Several practical courses as well as projects contribute to student knowledge regarding the practical skills of photo and video production. In order to enable students to exercise the necessary skills in practice, RSU ensure: multimedia computer room (specially adapted for work with visual materials), student media "Skaļāk" and photo studio. RSU have invested more than EUR 60 000 into contemporary equipment.

The photo studio and sets of different photo and video equipment available for students are valuable resources to practice and learn by doing both individually and work in groups. A highly valuable resource is a multimedia computer room with workstations, suitable for visual post-processing tasks - available both for independent work and during the study courses.

The programme has very good resources including material and technical provision, that is an essential prerequisite for the successful use of photo techniques and use of an image-processing program, and other practical skills needed in the labour market.

When it comes to the Liepaja branch, the experts learned that currently there is no specific equipment provided, nor a clear action plan on when and how it will be provided therefore at this point the study programme is not ready to be implemented there. The experts also consider that it is difficult to carry out the programme geographically in a different location because it is necessary to either move a technique that is risky and difficult to organize or purchase additional equipment. It is also necessary to invest in the creation of a new photo studio in order to ensure the same conditions for the programme elsewhere.

Conclusions by specifying the strengths and weaknesses

Strengths:

1. Students have access to a well-equipped photo studio and photo and video equipment.
2. The resources dedicated to this programme (studio, equipment, Adobe, etc. programs) fully provides the necessary tools for handling visual material.

Weaknesses:

1. The resources at the Liepaja branch are currently not sufficient for implementing the study programme as there is neither specific equipment necessary for programme implementation, nor a clear plan when and how it will be provided.

4. Teaching Staff

Analysis

The implementation of the study programme involves both highly qualified academics who are experts in the communication field and experienced professionals (mostly - as visiting lecturers) who have solid background and experience in industry. 31 lecturers are involved in the implementation of the study programme, among them 3 professors, 3 associate professors, 6 assistant professors, 3 lecturers and 16 invited lecturers. 15 (48%) lecturers are regular full-time lecturers. 6 experts

approved by the Latvian Council of Science (4 in social sciences – media and communication, 1 in social sciences – psychology and 1 in social sciences – sociology and social work) are involved in the implementation of the study programme (self-assessment report, p. 185). Lecturers or visiting lecturers hold at least a master's degree in a related field of sciences.

As indicated by the students, they are satisfied with teaching staff and professionals meeting in the training process as well as internship experience. The list of lecturers and invited professionals is highly valuable, several of them are professional photographers, some others are connected to museums and exhibition management.

The teaching staff regularly improves their qualification by participating in scientific and artistic projects and conferences, as well as publishing articles.

Several international projects have simultaneously been implemented at the study field. These projects involve scientific research and discoveries thereof enriches the content of the study course, for example, 2017 – 2020 Erasmus+ Strategic partnership project: "Media literacy and information literacy. Laboratory of innovative teaching methods", partners: University of Tartu; Vilniaus Universitetas; Uniwersytet Wrocławski; Göteborgs universitet; National News Agency LETA SIA and National Library of Latvia.

Study courses which include scientific findings gained during the project: Media Audiences, Photography as Communication, Creative Photography, Advertising Photography, Visual Anthropology, Media Critics and Analysis, Cultural Journalism, History of Communication, Introduction to Communication Theories, Mass Communication Theories (self-assessment report, p. 187).

RSU ensures regular observation of the work of the teaching staff and the visiting lecturers. The lecturers attend one another's lectures and practical classes, evaluating colleague's class and making recommendations for improving the work of the respective member of academic staff. The results of the student survey are also regularly assessed, taking into account recommendations, suggestions and comments. Taking into account the results of the student survey, adjustments were made to the content of study courses and teaching methods. The observation results and current issues regarding the content of the study courses and the interconnection of the content are regularly discussed at the meetings of RSU Department of Communication Studies, which take place every month, except the summer months.

The entire academic staff is regularly informed about the changes in the study programme planning, new study courses and new visiting lecturers, which allows to coordinate the content of study courses in time and ensure the sustainability of the programme (self-assessment report, p. 189).

The self-assessment report stated that in order to make sure of the foreign language skills of the teaching staff implementing study programmes in English, RSU periodically organizes a detailed English language proficiency test and, if necessary, additional training. If the study programme is implemented in English, lecturers with at least B2 English knowledge will be involved.

Regarding the academic staff's ability to implement the program in English in future, it has to be noted that currently the one third of the staff members involved in the implementation of the programme has met requirements regarding the assessment of their English skills as being on level B2 or higher or has a degree from a foreign university in a manner that allows for experts to familiarize themselves with a documental proof besides the self assessment (Annex 6.1 information about the RSU language examination, Annex 6.2 Biographies of teaching staff members). However, more staff members indicate their English to correspond to B2 or higher. During the visit, experts observed various levels of English being used for interaction with most academic staff members

being able to interact very well. In the absence of the information allowing to determine which academic staff members are intended to be involved in the programme's implementation in English, experts see the necessity to continue providing possibility for RSU-based language testing along with the intensive language courses or those in need for improving English language skills.

Conclusions by specifying the strengths and weaknesses

The qualifications and experience of the teaching staff of the programme fully meet the content requirements.

Strengths:

1. The programme is led by competent staff who have either good academic and research skills or practical experience and knowledge in the photograph industry.

5. Assessment of the Compliance of the Study Programme "Photography"

Requirements

1. The sample of the diploma to be issued for the acquisition of the study programme complies with the procedure by which state-recognised documents of higher education are issued.
Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant
Justification: Annex 24-1. However, the degree awarded as a result of the study programme does not fully comply with the Latvian Education Classification.
2. Documents confirming that the higher education institution/ college will provide the students with the options to continue the acquisition of education in another study programme or at another higher education institution/ college (a contract with another accredited higher education institution/ college), in case the implementation of the study programme is discontinued.
Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant
Justification: Annex 24-2. RSU provides the possibility to continue studies in:
 1. RSU's academic bachelor's study programme "Journalism";
 2. RSU's academic bachelor's study programme "Public Relations";
 3. RSU's academic bachelor's study programme "Multimedia Communication".
3. Document confirming that the higher education institution/ college guarantees to the students a compensation for losses if the study programme is not accredited or the licence of the study programme is revoked due to the actions of the higher education institution/ college (actions or failure to act) and the student does not wish to continue the studies in another study programme.
Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant
Justification: Document provided in the Annex 24-3
4. 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
Justification: Document provided in Annex 24-4 and CV of the teaching staff indicates the proficiency of the official language.
5. 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.
Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Justification: Document provided in Annexes 24.5, 6.1 and 6.2 indicates the proficiency of the English language. However, from Annex 6.1 and 6.2 can be concluded that, in fact, about the one-third of academic staff members involved in the implementation of the programme have a documented proof of having B2 or higher English proficiency (RSU language test or a degree obtained from a university abroad).

- 6 6. 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.

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

Justification: Not relevant

- 7 7. 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 Institutions of Higher Education.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Justification: Annex 24-7

27 academics are involved in the implementation of the compulsory and restricted elective part of the academic bachelor's study programme "Photography", twelve of whom have been elected to academic positions at RSU. Out of twelve academic staff representatives, three are professors and three are associate professors.

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Justification: Annex 24-8

- 9 9. 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 56.1, Paragraph two and Section 56.2, Paragraph two of the Law on Institutions of Higher Education.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Justification: Annexes 19 and 20. The course descriptions are prepared in Latvian and English and they meet most of the requirements regarding course descriptions. Despite the additional information received on 11 February 2021 about the existence of a clear mechanism and methodological guidelines for providing study programmes online, also the formal course descriptions have to be adjusted.

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

Justification: Not relevant

- 11 11. 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 Institutions of Higher Education.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Justification: Annex 24-9

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

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

Justification: Compliance of Study Programme “Photography” with the National Educational Standard - Annex 17-1. However, the degree awarded as a result of the study programme does not fully comply with Latvian Education Classification.

13 13. The joint study programmes comply with the requirements prescribed in Section 551, Paragraphs one, two, and seven of the Law on Institutions of Higher Education (if applicable).

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

Justification: Not relevant

14 14. Each member of the academic staff has either publications published in reviewed editions within the last six years, including international editions (if they have worked for a shorter period of time, the number of publications shall be in proportion to the work period), or artistic creation achievements (for instance, exhibitions, films, theatre performances, and concert activity), or a five-year practical work experience (except for the experience in the implementation of the study programme) in accordance with the Law on Institutions of Higher Education.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Justification: Annexes 6.2 and 6.4. While the majority of the academic staff members comply with this requirement, there are some elected members, who should be encouraged to publish more. The way data is presented does not allow experts to fully judge the impact of research.

15 P5 - Overall rating

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

Justification: All legal requirements have been met except that the degree does not fully comply with the Latvian Education Classification;

It does not affect the compliance assessment but it has to be noted that the self-evaluation documentation contains conflicting information on the English proficiency of the academic staff and the formal course descriptions are not aligned for distance learning mode.

Requirements (R6-R8)

1 R6 - The compliance of the study provision, scientific support (if applicable), informative provision (including libraries), material and technical provision, and financial provision with the conditions for the implementation of the study programme and ensuring the achievement of the learning outcomes.

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

Justification: The programme generally has a good resource base, the students and the teaching staff have access to the necessary resources to ensure the quality of teaching and learning process, although, some aspects need improvements as the staff preferred to have access to Microsoft Office and the study course descriptions have to be adjusted for distance learning mode. However, in the Liepāja branch the specific resources necessary for programme implementation are missing and there is no clear plan on when and how they will be provided.

2 R7 - The compliance of the qualification of the academic staff members, visiting professors, visiting associate professors, visiting docents, visiting lecturers, and visiting assistants with the conditions for the implementation of the study programme and the provisions set out in the respective regulatory enactments.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Justification: Annexes 6.1 and 6.2

3 R8 - The study programme leading to the master or doctoral degree is based on the advances and findings in the relevant field of science or artistic creation.

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

Justification: Not relevant

Conclusions by specifying the strengths and weaknesses

On February 11th 2021 the expert group received additional information about programme implementation in distance learning mode and actual English proficiency of staff members, thus eliminating some of the previous remarks of the expert team.

The main issue is the fact that the degree awarded as a result of the study programme does not comply with the legal requirements. The experts consider that the most appropriate degree for this study programme would be "Bachelor of Social Science in Media and Communication (Science)" and suggest that the legislation should allow for such a degree.

There are also some additional remarks which currently do not affect the compliance assessment but still remain:

- 1) the self-evaluation documentation contains some conflicting information on the English proficiency of the academic staff;
- 3) the formal course descriptions are not adjusted for distance learning.

Overall, the programme complies with the legal requirements of the state but adjustments are needed in regard to the degree awarded, course descriptions for distance learning, ensuring the proficiency of English for the academic staff members involved in the study programs offered in English in the future along with the rise of peer-reviewed international academic publications is obtained.

Strengths:

1. The overall compliance with the legal requirements of the state is mostly achieved.

Weaknesses:

1. The degree awarded as a result of the study programme does not fully comply with the Latvian Education Classification.
2. The documented proof for assessment of the English proficiency is episodically missing.
3. The number of international peer-reviewed publications is low.
4. The formal study course descriptions are not adjusted for distance learning mode
5. The RSU Liepāja branch is currently not ready for programme implementation due to the lack of market analysis and lack of resources and/or clear action plan on how to provide them .

Based on the currently available information and the analysis provided above, the experts would like to express concerns about programme implementation in RSU Liepāja branch due to the lack of market analysis and relevant resources for the Liepāja branch.

Evaluation of the study programme "Photography"

Evaluation of the study programme:

Good

6. Recommendations for the Study Programme "Photography"

Short-term recommendations

1. More emphasis on practical skills associated with creating multimedia content is needed in the curricula.
2. As the technical requirements from the market are changing, in some curriculum there might be a need to take new technologies on board faster (360 cameras, virtual and augmented reality solutions, drone photography etc).

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|--|
| 3. To increase a level of English knowledge skills for academic staff. |
| 4. To make a field study in order to find the target audience and level of interest from potential students in Liepaja Branch as well as evaluate all the investments needed for the programme teaching in Liepaja Branch. |
| 5. Change the title of the degree to be obtained until the decision on accreditation is made so that the degree complies with the requirements of regulatory enactments. |
| 6. Update the course descriptions for distance learning mode. |
| 7. Ensure that the academic staff is fully ready for implementation of the study programme in English. |

Long-term recommendations

- | |
|--|
| 1. To follow the interest from potential students and if the number of students is not growing, to merge the programme "Photography" and "Multimedia Communication" into one study programme with specialisation opportunities, as is mentioned in Study direction "Information and Communication Science" development plan (Annex 4.1). |
| 2. Ensuring the English learning and testing support for academic staff members. |
| 3. Encouraging the members of the academic staff to publish more in peer-reviewed international journals. |

II. "Multimedia Communication" ASSESSMENT

II. "Multimedia Communication" ASSESSMENT

1. Indicators Describing the Study Programme

Analysis

The academic bachelor study programme "Multimedia Communication" (code 43321) aims to ensure students with the necessary background of knowledge needed for successful entering in the labour market after the completion of the study programme and ability to work independently and in a creative way. The knowledge provided within the study process includes theoretical and practical knowledge gained from using cinema, television, Internet and music in advertising, media management and public relations and ability to evaluate the operating principles of other multimedia projects.

The mission of the programme is to educate the new specialists within the field of media communication who are capable and skillful enough to improve the use of multimedia in various fields in Latvia. The study programme has ten objectives. All of them are related to various aspects of particular skills, knowledge as well as students' personal development and international cooperation. All of the mentioned objectives are seen as crucial and necessary for the particular field. Learning outcomes of the study programme "Multimedia Communication" together are nine which are formulated in a form of skills, knowledge, understanding and ability to demonstrate certain competences. The finalization of the academic bachelor degree programme 'Multimedia communication' is awarded with the degree of "Bachelor of Social Sciences in Communication Science". However, as this is an academic bachelor study programme, the degree has to comply with Cabinet Regulations No 322 "Regulations on the Latvian Education Classification", Annex 2.

According to these regulations, the degree should be "Bachelor of Social Science in Journalism and Communication".

Programme's Intended learning outcomes are formulated as knowledge, skills and competences, which are in line with Latvian and European qualification framework.

The bachelor study programme "Multimedia communication" has been accredited and implemented on a full-time and part-time extramural basis in Latvian. During the course of accreditation, it is intended to add English as a language of instruction, although there are currently no specific plans to start offering studies in English.

Poor academic performance and inability to pay the tuition fee are the main factors that determine the number of both - full-time and part-time students. Numbers with regard to the factors leading to the quitting the studies differ significantly each year. There is a positive tendency for the total number of students quitting their studies to decrease. For example, 35% of students quit their studies in the academic year 2014/2015, while in the academic year 2018/2019 - 15%, which is good.

Conclusions by specifying the strengths and weaknesses

Programme's aims, objectives, learning outcomes and admission requirements are interrelated.

Strengths:

1. Programme's aims, objectives, learning outcomes and admission requirements are interrelated.
2. Maintaining the number of students is done quite successfully.

Weaknesses:

1. The degree awarded as a result of the study programme does not fully comply with the Latvian Education Classification.

2. The Content of Studies and Implementation Thereof

Analysis

Course descriptions demonstrate compliance with study programme aims. The academic bachelor's study programme "Multimedia Communication" provides general courses in the social sciences including the guidelines, principles, structure and methodology of the respective field.

The content is relevant and complementary, and it complies with the aims of the study programme, ensures the achievement of the learning outcomes and is regularly updated taking into account the current events in the field of communication science and multimedia, the peculiarities of the media market and contemporary trends of communication services. Student Media (www.skalak.rsu.lv) has been created to bring placement in the media environment closer to the study environment, which functions as a simulation-based learning environment which is seen as a great improvement.

The aims and intended outcomes of the study courses are closely related to the overall aims and intended outcomes of the study programme. The aims to be achieved and outcomes of the study programme are based on the knowledge, skills and competence acquired in the study courses.

Study process is implemented mostly as interactive lectures, practical interactive classes or seminars and independent work of students. All advanced technologies available at RSU are used in

both lectures and classes. Both formative and summative evaluation is used in the studies. Formative evaluation takes place during the everyday study process and summative evaluation takes place at the conclusion of each study course as a test or examination. Student-centered learning and teaching principles are taken into account. Lecturers use different kinds of creative learning methods varying from individual works, group works, discussions which help to gain more in depth perspective and develop deeper understanding of the topic.

During the visit when students were interviewed, they put an emphasis on the mobility opportunities they have experienced during their studies. They rated them as valuable for choosing ERAMUS+ mobility and gaining overall great experiences studying for a semester abroad in countries such as Germany which was specifically mentioned by one of the students.

The outcomes of the surveys conducted among the students, employers, and graduates are used to improve the quality of studies with the use of RSU e-environment, where students can express their opinion and provide proposals both regarding the content of the study course and the methods of implementation thereof, as well as the competence and work style of the lecturers. Although, students do tend to forget and not fill the surveys on a regular basis resulting in a lack of feedback which has to be improved.

The students avail themselves of the incoming and outgoing mobility opportunities, and the learning outcomes achieved during such mobility are recognized. RSU implements Erasmus+ programme mobility activity among the countries participating in the programme. Students have expressed their joy about these opportunities being possible and that they have provided unique experiences.

The experts approve the intentions to implement the programme in the form of distance learning while indicating that the course descriptions have to be adjusted for distance learning to comply with the legal requirements. The experts recognise the readiness of the field of study and particular programmes to implement the distance learning mode. However, it does not free one from the necessity to adjust the course descriptions since the pace and methods of studies for the distance learning mode has its specifics. All study courses in study programmes "Photography" and "Multimedia Communication" are described only for full-time studies or part-time studies, not distance learning (in AIK platform or Annexes 20 for each separate programme)..The study field possesses the necessary resources and the support in a form of essential online platforms as well as methodological assistance to the teaching faculty. The experts also approve the idea to execute the implementation of the study programme in English while encouraging the management of the programme to facilitate the necessary English learning and testing support (see more detailed analysis at the Chapter 3).

Regarding the plans to implement the programme at RSU's Liepāja branch, experts do not approve these endeavors at the moment since the information to be able to properly assess such plans is missing. Alternatively as well as considering the possibilities brought about in the sphere of higher education by Covid-19 pandemic, experts encourage considering the development of the distance learning version of the programme.

Conclusions by specifying the strengths and weaknesses

The bachelor degree programme "Multimedia Communication" has student-centered learning implemented. It has aligned study programme aims and learning outcomes with the courses' learning outcomes. The mobility opportunities offered are seen as highly valuable for a study experience. There is a lack of participation by the students in course evaluations.

Strengths:

1. Innovative and creative learning methods.
2. Valuable mobility opportunities.

Weaknesses:

1. Lack of participation by the students in course evaluations.
2. The course descriptions currently are not adjusted for distance learning.
3. The lack of a clear plan for programme implementation in Liepāja branch

3. Resources and Provision of the Study Programme

Analysis

For the study programme "Multimedia communication" the study provision, informative provision, material and especially technical provision, and financial provision comply with the specific features and the conditions for the implementation of the study programme, create the prerequisites for the achievement of the learning outcomes, and indicate the possibility to ensure a high-quality study process also in the future.

The places of implementation are indicated as Riga (Rīga Stradiņš University) and possibly it is planned to set up a work group to evaluate the possibilities for implementation of study programmes and to model their implementation plan at RSU Liepāja branch. The material and technical facilities of the branch and RSU as a whole are seen by the RSU as adequate for its implementation in Liepāja. During the experts' visit in Liepāja the premises were indeed seen as adequate, although the technical equipment for providing a qualitative study process was lacking.

Students are provided with a well-developed IT infrastructure and virtual study environment including a multimedia computer room, Student media, photo and video equipment. Although, some of the students did indicate that they have to wait in a row to get access to the equipment provided by RSU.

The resources - books, journals, databases are easily accessible to students and the necessary materials for a successful study process are provided. The study materials, resources are constantly updated providing students with the recent academic publications of the particular field of studies. The suggestion from the previous accreditation regarding separate full-time employees as student media editor-in-chief was implemented.

As it is indicated in the self-assessment report there is provided accessibility for students to multimedia projectors in 140 training rooms for use of audiovisual materials for studies; most of these are high-resolution interactive projectors that are connected to a sound system. In this specific programme, the students have a great opportunity to improve their skills not only in the multimedia rooms but as well as in the student media, using cameras and other technical equipment for practical skill development. Although, the students did point out that sometimes they have to wait in a line to gain access to use the technical equipment because it is in a limited amount.

Panopto video recording system is used for the preparation of audiovisual training materials, whereas the video conferencing system is used to provide online lectures. A centralised management system of the multimedia equipment of lecture rooms has also been established. 10 computer rooms with more than 200 workstations that are used both for the implementation of certain study courses, as well as for the provision of electronic examinations and other types of knowledge testing are available for the needs of the study process.

Respondus is a great innovation for the online examination process especially taking into consideration the existing obstacles of the Covid-19. Although, those students who prefer to take an exam in the RSU premises can do that.

Students of this study programme can also now participate in the development and knowledge gaining activity in the students media.

Conclusions by specifying the strengths and weaknesses

The programme has a good resource base including the study provision, scientific support, informative provision (including libraries), material and technical provision, and financial provision that creates the prerequisites for the achievement of the learning outcomes and indicates the possibility to ensure a high-quality study process.

Strengths:

1. Study resources and provision comply with the requirements for the implementation of the study programme, create the prerequisites for the achievement of learning and research outcomes, and can ensure a high-quality study process.
2. The staff members are supporting and giving guidance to the students to keep them up to date with the courses and studies in general.
3. Opportunities for students to use Multimedia computer room, student media, use cameras, and other technical equipment for practical skill development.

Weaknesses:

1. Lack of technical equipment for student practical skill development.
2. Lack of technical equipment at Liepāja branch for the successful provision of the study process.

4. Teaching Staff

Analysis

In the study programme "Multimedia Communication" teaching staff no significant changes have occurred thus there are no negative impacts on the study quality identified. A total of 33 lecturers participate in the implementation of the study programme.

The qualification of the teaching staff members involved in the implementation of the study programme complies with the requirements for the implementation of the study programme. Six professors and associate professors have been elected for academic positions at RSU are involved in the implementation of the study programme. All faculty members who are involved as lecturers or visiting lecturers in the study programme have at least a Master's degree in a related discipline.

The academic staff is involved in scientific research and the obtained information is used in the study process in various of the existing courses as the scientific researches have been for and of various sizes. Academic staff, teaching at this programme, is highly involved in scientific research via participation in the research projects (e.g. 2017 - 2020 Erasmus+ Strategic partnership project: "Media literacy and information literacy. Laboratory of innovative teaching methods"; 2017 - 2018: Project of the EU Asylum and Migration Fund The development of a responsible ,multiform and qualitative journalism in the national and regional mass media of Latvia, facilitating integration of third country nationals in Latvia and others).

The issue with scientific research is that there is a lack of teaching and research workload balance

for academic staff and the competition of scientific research is very high and there is a lack of certainty of winning in projects and receiving the funding even if investing time in participation.

The entire academic staff is regularly informed about the changes in the study programme planning, new study courses and new visiting lecturers, which allows to coordinate the content of study courses in time and ensure the sustainability of the programme.

Regarding the academic staff's ability to implement the programme in English in future, it has to be noted that currently about one-third of the staff members involved in the implementation of the programme has met requirements regarding the assessment of their English skills as being on level B2 or higher or has a degree from a foreign university in a manner that allows for experts to familiarize themselves with a documental proof besides the self-assessment (Annex 6.1 information about the RSU language examination, Annex 6.2 Biographies of teaching staff members). However, more staff members indicate their English to correspond to B2 or higher. During the visit, experts observed various levels of English being used for interaction with most academic staff members being able to interact very well. In the absence of the information allowing to determine which academic staff members are intended to be involved in the programme's implementation in English, experts see the necessity to continue providing the possibility for RSU-based language testing along with the intensive language courses or those in need for improving English language skills.

Conclusions by specifying the strengths and weaknesses

The qualification of the teaching staff members involved in the implementation of the study programme complies with the requirements for the implementation of the study programme. The academic staff is involved in scientific research and/or artistic creation. The higher education institution/ college undertakes measures in a target-oriented manner to avoid negative effects on the quality of the implementation of the study programme.

Strengths:

1. High qualification of the teaching staff.
2. High level of scientific research of the programme faculty.

Weaknesses:

1. Lack of lecture and research balance for academic staff.

5. Assessment of the Compliance of the Study Programme "Multimedia Communication"

Requirements

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

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

Justification: Annex 24-1. The degree awarded as a result of the study programme does not fully comply with the Latvian Education Classification.

2. Documents confirming that the higher education institution/ college will provide the students with the options to continue the acquisition of education in another study programme or at another higher education institution/ college (a contract with another accredited higher education institution/ college), in case the implementation of the study programme is discontinued.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Justification: Annex 24-2. RSU provides the possibility to continue studies in:

1. RSU's academic bachelor's study programme "Journalism";
2. RSU's academic bachelor's study programme "Public Relations";
3. RSU's academic bachelor's study programme "Photography".
4. Academic bachelor's study programme "Communication Science" of the University of Latvia (a cooperation agreement has been concluded).
5. Professional bachelor's study programme "Media Studies and Journalism" of the Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences (cooperation agreement has been concluded).

- 3 3. Document confirming that the higher education institution/ college guarantees to the students a compensation for losses if the study programme is not accredited or the licence of the study programme is revoked due to the actions of the higher education institution/ college (actions or failure to act) and the student does not wish to continue the studies in another study programme.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Justification: Annex 24-3

- 4 4. 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

Justification: Document provided in the Annex 24-4 and CV of the teaching staff indicates the proficiency of the official language.

- 5 5. 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.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Justification: Document provided in the Annex 24.5, 6.1 and 6.2 indicates the proficiency of the English language. However, from Annex 6.1 and 6.2 can be concluded that, in fact, about one third of academic staff members involved in implementation of the programme have a documented proof of having B2 or higher English proficiency (RSU language test or a degree obtained from a university abroad).

- 6 6. 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.

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

Justification: Not relevant

- 7 7. 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 Institutions of Higher Education.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Justification: Annex 24-7

33 academics are involved in the implementation of the compulsory and restricted elective part of the academic bachelor's study programme "Multimedia Communication", fifteen of whom have been elected to academic positions at RSU. Out of fifteen academic staff representatives, three are professors and three are associate professors.

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Justification: Annex 24-8

9 9. 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 56.1, Paragraph two and Section 56.2, Paragraph two of the Law on Institutions of Higher Education.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Justification: Annexes 19 and 20. The course descriptions are prepared in Latvian and English and they meet most of the requirements regarding course descriptions except that they are not adjusted for distance learning mode. Despite the additional information received on 11 February 2011 about the existence of a clear mechanism and methodological guidelines for providing study programmes online, also the formal course descriptions have to be adjusted.

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

Justification: Not relevant

11 11. 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 Institutions of Higher Education.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Justification: Annex 24-9

12 12. The study programme complies with the State Academic Education Standard or the Professional Higher Education Standard.

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

Justification: Compliance of study programme "Multimedia Communication" with the National Educational Standard - Annex 17-1. However, the degree of the study programme does not fully comply with the Latvian Education Classification.

13 13. The joint study programmes comply with the requirements prescribed in Section 551, Paragraphs one, two, and seven of the Law on Institutions of Higher Education (if applicable).

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

Justification: Not relevant

14 14. Each member of the academic staff has either publications published in reviewed editions within the last six years, including international editions (if they have worked for a shorter period of time, the number of publications shall be in proportion to the work period), or artistic creation achievements (for instance, exhibitions, films, theatre performances, and concert activity), or a five-year practical work experience (except for the experience in the implementation of the study programme) in accordance with the Law on Institutions of Higher Education.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Justification: Annexes 6.2 and 6.4. While the majority of the academic staff comply with this requirement, there are some elected members of academic staff, who should be encouraged to publish more. The way data is presented does not allow experts to fully judge on the impact of research.

15 P5 - Overall rating

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

Justification: All legal requirements have been met except that the degree does not fully comply with the Latvian Education Classification;

It does not affect the compliance assessment but it has to be noted that the self-evaluation documentation contains conflicting information on the English proficiency of the academic staff and the formal course descriptions are not aligned for distance learning mode.

Requirements (R6-R8)

- 1 R6 - The compliance of the study provision, scientific support (if applicable), informative provision (including libraries), material and technical provision, and financial provision with the conditions for the implementation of the study programme and ensuring the achievement of the learning outcomes.

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

Justification: The programme has a good resource base, the students and the teaching staff have access to the necessary resources to ensure the quality of teaching and learning process, although, some aspects need improvements as the staff preferred to have access to Microsoft Office and the course descriptions are currently not adjusted for distance learning. However, the resources in the Liepāja branch are currently not sufficient for programme implementation.

- 2 R7 - The compliance of the qualification of the academic staff members, visiting professors, visiting associate professors, visiting docents, visiting lecturers, and visiting assistants with the conditions for the implementation of the study programme and the provisions set out in the respective regulatory enactments.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Justification: Annexes 6.1 and 6.2

- 3 R8 - The study programme leading to the master or doctoral degree is based on the advances and findings in the relevant field of science or artistic creation.

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

Justification: Not relevant

Conclusions by specifying the strengths and weaknesses

On February 11th 2021 the expert group received additional information about programme implementation in distance learning mode and actual English proficiency of staff members, thus eliminating some of the previous remarks of the expert team.

The main issue is the fact that the degree awarded as a result of the study programme does not comply with the legal requirements. The experts consider that the most appropriate degree for this study programme would be "Bachelor of Social Science in Media and Communication (Science)" and suggest that the legislation should allow for such a degree.

There are also some additional remarks which currently do not affect the compliance assessment but still remain:

- 1) the self-evaluation documentation contains some conflicting information on the English proficiency of the academic staff;
- 3) the formal course descriptions are not adjusted for distance learning.

Overall, the programme complies with the legal requirements of the state but adjustments are needed in regard to the degree awarded, course descriptions for distance learning, ensuring the proficiency of English for the academic staff members involved in the study programs offered in English in the future along with the rise of peer-reviewed international academic publications is obtained.

Strengths:

1. The overall compliance with the legal requirements of the state is mostly achieved.

Weaknesses:

1. The degree awarded as a result of the study programme does not fully comply with the Latvian Education Classification.
2. The documented proof for assessment of the English proficiency is episodically missing.

3. The number of international peer-reviewed publications is low.
4. The formal study course descriptions are not adjusted for distance learning mode
5. The RSU Liepāja branch is currently not ready for programme implementation due to the lack of market analysis and lack of resources and/or clear action plan on how to provide them .

Based on the currently available information and the analysis provided above, the experts would like to express concerns about programme implementation in RSU Liepāja branch due to the lack of market analysis and relevant resources for the Liepāja branch.

Evaluation of the study programme "Multimedia Communication"

Evaluation of the study programme:

Good

6. Recommendations for the Study Programme "Multimedia Communication"

Short-term recommendations

- | |
|---|
| 1. Providing students with the necessary amount of multimedia equipment units is needed. |
| 2. Changing the title of the degree should be obtained until the decision is made so that it complies with the requirements of regulatory enactments. |
| 3. Facilitating student participation in course evaluation procedures is necessary. |
| 4. Change the title of the degree to be obtained until the decision on accreditation is made so that the degree complies with the requirements of regulatory enactments. |
| 5. Update the course descriptions for distance learning mode. |
| 6. Ensure that the academic staff is fully ready for implementation of the study programme in English. |
| 7. Ensure that there is a market research for RSU Liepāja branch and that the relevant resources are provided and/or there is a clear plan on when and how it will be done. |

Long-term recommendations

- | |
|---|
| 1. Systematic approach to renewal of multimedia equipment needs to be emphasized. |
| 2. Ensuring of additional equipment for the Liepāja branch. |
| 3. Balancing academic staff's research and lecturing workload. |
| 4. Ensuring the English learning and testing support for academic staff members. |

II. "Journalism" ASSESSMENT

II. "Journalism" ASSESSMENT

1. Indicators Describing the Study Programme

Analysis

Students who successfully complete the academic study programme "Journalism" (code 43321) will

receive a degree of bachelors of Social Sciences in Communication Science. Having examined the documents submitted and conducted interviews, the experts are convinced that the aims, objectives, learning outcomes and admission requirements of the bachelor study programme "Journalism" are interrelated. The programme aims to prepare specialists for the media industry; it is well structured and has a good balance between theoretical and practical courses needed to achieve this goal. Experts agree with the conclusions of the self-assessment that 'the learning outcomes are related to the ability to plan and manage media content creation in shifting labour market circumstances; to independently acquire, select, and analyse information and use it; make decisions and solve problems in the field of communication science and in the daily work of a journalist; understand professional ethics of journalism; participate in the development of journalism and media activity field'.

The indicators describing the study programme are strongly interrelated. However, this is an academic bachelor study programme, therefore the degree has to comply with Cabinet Regulations No 322 "Regulations on the Latvian Education Classification", Annex 2. According to these regulations the degree should be "Bachelor of Social Science in Journalism and Communication". On February 11th 2021 the expert group received additional information from RSU that the degree has been changed to "Bachelor of Social Science in Journalism and Communication" by the RSU Senate decision.

The academic bachelor study programme "Journalism" has been accredited on a full-time and part-time basis in Latvian, but only full-time studies are currently being implemented. The Faculty of Communication will in future consider the possibility to also start a part-time implementation of the study programme. The study programme is also submitted for implementation in English, however, the management of the study programme does not have any specific plan for the next two years on how to work on it because that would be significant in order to attract foreign students for their studies permanently as well as for the ERASMUS exchange. As stated in the self-assessment report, RSU is planning in the future to extend the possibilities for the implementation of the study programme and also attracting part-time and foreign students which is seen as necessary.

Conclusions by specifying the strengths and weaknesses

The content and implementation of the study programme so far has been successful and demonstrates great potential for being developed further.

Strengths:

1. Learning outcomes meet industry expectations.

Weaknesses:

1. The degree does not fully comply with the Latvian Education Classification.
2. High drop-out rate.

2. The Content of Studies and Implementation Thereof

Analysis

The academic bachelor study programme "Journalism" is well-structured; it contains and balances the academic and critical studies of the field with the practical skills and training on creative and technical means of expression in general and specialisation subjects.

The study courses thematically are relevant to the needs of the industry and also reflected by

course descriptions. The descriptions of the study courses comply with the provisions set forth in the regulatory enactments. The content is relevant and complementary, and it complies with the aims of the study programme, ensures the achievement of the learning outcomes, and meets the needs of the media industry. Overall, the selection of courses demonstrates a good balance between theoretical and practical subjects.

The study programme is both original and unique in terms of its structure: it has been continually developed in accordance with the objectives, needs and changes of the field of media. According to the self-assessment report, and from the response from the interviews, the feedback from students and industry representatives has been used for the improvement of specific courses and for the design of the study programme as a whole. Experts largely agree with the conclusion of the self-assessment that the content of the study programme is constantly updated by using the latest studies, communication science findings, and the necessary skills acquired in the field of communication as well. However, it should be mentioned that the list of mandatory literature for several courses needs to be updated constantly.

The student work platform Skalak is a very good initiative and gives good motivation for the studies. Such a solution will certainly contribute to the promotion of the curriculum outside the university.

The interview with employers revealed general satisfaction with the graduates of the study program, who are regarded as fit for the job after graduation (or even during their studies). It was reported that employees have no particular difficulty in finding a job after graduation. Experts also commend the cooperation with the Latvian Association of Journalists and Baltic Centre for Media Excellence.

Despite the fact that students of the study programme have a chance to participate in exchange studies or international placement for one semester abroad, receiving Erasmus+ scholarship only a very few students use this opportunity.

The experts approve the intentions to implement the programme in the form of distance learning while indicating that the course descriptions have to be adjusted for distance learning to comply with the legal requirements. The experts recognise the readiness of the field of study and particular programmes to implement the distance learning mode. However, it does not free one from the necessity to adjust the course descriptions since the pace and methods of studies for the distance learning mode has its specifics. The study field possesses the necessary resources and the support in a form of essential online platforms as well as methodological assistance to the teaching faculty. The experts also approve the idea to execute the implementation of the study programme in English while encouraging the management of the program to facilitate the necessary English learning and testing support (see more detailed analysis at Chapter 3).

Conclusions by specifying the strengths and weaknesses

In conclusion, the body of teaching staff of the program is having the necessary level of education and involvement in national and international research. They cooperate in developing study courses that complement each other as well as provide opportunities for students to participate in research. The suggestions regarding the quality of the teaching reported by the students are heard and the staff is willing to work toward improvement.

Strengths:

1. The Skalak platform gives students the opportunity to develop and test their skills put and what they have learned into practice.

2. The curriculum is of high quality and meets all the requirements.
3. Readiness of students for the labour market. Overall, it is believed that the study programme “Journalism” prepares good specialists for the media industry.

Weaknesses:

1. Few opportunities for staff and students to gain international experience abroad.
2. Limited availability to attract foreign students for the study programme.
3. The list of mandatory literature for several courses needs to be updated constantly.
4. The study course descriptions are not currently adjusted for distance learning.

3. Resources and Provision of the Study Programme

Analysis

The existing resources (learning environment, study materials, learning tools and technical equipment, rooms, financial resources) of the faculty support the achievement of the study programme objectives. The assessment of learning outcomes has generally been appropriate, transparent and objective, and it supports the learner’s development, which is also confirmed by the feedback of students.

The library of RSU has enough resources for ordering the necessary study materials. Students have access to textbooks, e-books and important academic publications in the field of journalism and media. Overall, the implementation of new study programs in Latvia, especially in the field of communication and related fields is accompanied by the lack of relevant literature in Latvian language. The body of literature in Latvian develops slowly but steadily, meanwhile, the students have necessary English skills to be able to follow the latest scholarly work published in English. RSU provides the required literature indicated in the study course descriptions of the programme.

Students have the opportunity to learn and work with modern digital technology that they also encounter during their internship and upon employment in a professional environment.

The expert group welcomes faculty’s initiatives of digitalisation of teaching methods used for evaluations of the submitted works and making broader use of the opportunities offered by e-studies. It allows working with students and lecturers more conveniently. It is highly valued that contact hours are mostly used through interactive lectures and practical interactive classes or seminars, where new technologies available at RSU are used.

Conclusions by specifying the strengths and weaknesses

Experts are satisfied with the state of resources in the programme in relation to study materials and technology.

Strengths:

1. The existing resources (learning environment, study materials, learning tools and technical equipment, rooms, financial resources).

Weaknesses:

1. Infrequent review of the need to advance technical skills and resources.

4. Teaching Staff

Analysis

The general qualification of the lecturers is in full compliance with the requirements. 34 lecturers are involved in the implementation of the study programme: 3 of them are professors, 3 associate professors, 1 acting associate professor, 5 assistant professors, 5 lecturers and 14 visiting lecturers. 15 lecturers are regular full-time lecturers at RSU (45%). 6 experts approved by the Latvian Council of Science (4 in social sciences – media and communication, 1 in social sciences – psychology and 1 in social sciences – sociology and social work) are involved in the implementation of the study programme (self-assessment report, p. 130 and Annex 6.2).

The involvement of external experts and lecturers in teaching is very welcome and could be expanded. Majority of members of the teaching staff are or have been active media professionals, and they have become experienced lecturers at the same time or afterwards. Lecturers have the opportunity to practice their professional development and the development of their teaching skills. Use of PhD students as part of teaching staff is a good initiative - on the one hand, it gives doctoral students a good teaching experience and on the other hand, it makes it possible to reduce the teaching load of full-time staff and give them more time to commit to academic research.

Lecturers constantly conduct individual studies, regularly attend international conferences and develop publications for academic journals. On average, there are two to three publications a year per one lecturer of the study programme who is a permanent employee of RSU (self-assessment report and lecturers CV, Annex 6.2).

Cooperation in studies, research, and projects takes place with the following institutions of higher education: Tallinn University, Aristotle University in Greece, University of Akureyri in Iceland, University of Helsinki, University of Jyväskylä in Finland, Vilnius University, Kaunas University, University of Tartu, Latvian Academy of Culture, Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences, Rezekne Academy of Technologies, Daugavpils University, Södertörn University in Stockholm. Some lecturers of the study programme took an active part in the RSU interdisciplinary social science conference “Places” held in April 2019 (self-assessment report, p. 133).

Many lecturers of the study programme are co-authors to *Pluralism Anxiety, Acting Socially in Latvia* (RSU, 2018).

Management of the study programme continues working towards inviting visiting lecturers. Many foreign lecturers have been invited; for example, from Finland and the USA. The interviews revealed that teachers have few opportunities to work abroad to gain international experience over a longer period of time.

Partner institutions of higher education are informed about Erasmus exchange possibilities at RSU on a regular basis, including the field of exchange of visiting teaching staff. In addition to electronic communication, each year RSU ID organises Erasmus+ International Week, the programme of which includes several professional networking events. Establishing contacts with new Erasmus+ cooperation partners takes place within their framework.

Close attention is devoted to mutual cooperation among the teaching staff and the interconnection of study courses in the organisation of study programme. In many study courses (“Introduction to Journalism”, “Cultural Journalism”, “News Journalism”), academic essays or creative works developed by students are used in the study course “Student Media”, whereas essays that were created as part of Students’ International Conference were evaluated in study course “Social Anthropology”. After the heads of several study programmes came to an agreement, changes were made to the mastering of languages in all study programmes of the study direction. As of the academic year 2019/2020, students are no longer offered a separate English language course,

instead, they will have a language of choice (French, Spanish, or Russian) the basics of which will be mastered in the course of two semesters (self-assessment report, p. 134).

Student representatives reported some issues in regards to the quality of teaching of one faculty member. They said their concerns were taken seriously by RSU. Experts recommend that the channels of communication between the students and RSU should run more smoothly. The proper flow of information helps to identify problems more quickly and to eliminate shortcomings better. In order to avoid such situations in the future, the experts recommend appropriate measures to be taken in support of legitimate student concerns.

Regarding the academic staff's ability to implement the programme in English in future, it has to be noted that currently less than one third of the staff members involved in the implementation of the programme has met requirements regarding the assessment of their English skills as being on level B2 or higher or has a degree from a foreign university in a manner that allows for experts to familiarize themselves with a documental proof besides the self assessment (Annex 6.1 information about the RSU language examination, Annex 6.2 Biographies of teaching staff members). However, more staff members indicate their English to correspond to B2 or higher. During the visit, experts observed various levels of English being used for interaction with most academic staff members being able to interact very well. In the absence of the information allowing to determine which academic staff members are intended to be involved in the programme's implementation in English, experts see the necessity to continue providing possibility for RSU-based language testing along with the intensive language courses or those in need for improving English language skills.

Conclusions by specifying the strengths and weaknesses

In conclusion, the body of teaching staff of the programme is having the necessary level of knowledge. Lecturers constantly conduct individual studies, regularly attend international conferences and develop publications for academic journals. Close attention is devoted to mutual cooperation among the teaching staff and the interconnection of study courses in the organisation of study programme. The suggestions regarding the quality of the teaching reported by the students are heard and the staff is willing to work toward improvement.

Strengths:

1. Involvement of external experts.

Weaknesses:

1. Lack of opportunities for teachers to gain experience abroad during longer exchange visits.

5. Assessment of the Compliance of the Study Programme "Journalism"

Requirements

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Justification: Annex 24-1. However, the degree awarded as a result of the study programme does not fully comply with the Latvian Education Classification. On February 11th 2021 the expert group received additional information from RSU that the degree has been changed to "Bachelor of Social Science in Journalism and Communication" by the RSU Senate decision.

2. Documents confirming that the higher education institution/ college will provide the students with the options to continue the acquisition of education in another study programme or at another higher education institution/ college (a contract with another accredited higher education institution/ college), in case the implementation of the study programme is discontinued.
- Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant
Justification: Annex 24-2. RSU offers the possibility to continue studies in RSU's academic bachelor's study programme "Public Relations", RSU's academic bachelor's study programme "Multimedia Communication", RSU's academic bachelor's study programme "Photography".
3. Document confirming that the higher education institution/ college guarantees to the students a compensation for losses if the study programme is not accredited or the licence of the study programme is revoked due to the actions of the higher education institution/ college (actions or failure to act) and the student does not wish to continue the studies in another study programme.
- Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant
Justification: Document provided in the Annex 24-3
4. 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
Justification: Document provided in the Annex 24-4 and CV of the teaching staff indicates the proficiency of the official language.
5. 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.
- Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant
Justification: Document provided in Annexes 24.5, 6.1 and 6.2 indicates the proficiency of the English language. However, from Annex 6.1 and 6.2 can be concluded that, in fact, less than the one-third of academic staff members involved in the implementation of the programme have a documented proof of having B2 or higher English proficiency (RSU language test or a degree obtained from a university abroad).
6. 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.
- Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant
Justification: Not relevant
7. 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 Institutions of Higher Education.
- Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant
Justification: Annex 24-7
 34 academics are involved in the implementation of the compulsory and restricted elective part of the academic bachelor's study programme "Journalism", sixteen of whom have been elected to academic positions at RSU. Out of sixteen academic staff representatives, three are professors and three are associate professors.
8. The sample of the study agreement complies with the mandatory provisions to be included in the study agreement.
- Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant
Justification: Annex 24-8

9 9. 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 56.1, Paragraph two and Section 56.2, Paragraph two of the Law on Institutions of Higher Education.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Justification: Annex 19 and 20. The course descriptions are prepared in Latvian and English and they meet most of the requirements except that the course descriptions are not adjusted for distance learning. On February 11th 2021 the expert group received additional information that demonstrates how the study courses will be organised in distance learning mode but it still has to be incorporated in the course descriptions.

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

Justification: Not relevant

11 11. 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 Institutions of Higher Education.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Justification: Annex 24-9

12 12. The study programme complies with the State Academic Education Standard or the Professional Higher Education Standard.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Justification: Compliance of Study Programme "Journalism" with the National Educational Standard - Appendix 17-1. However, the degree awarded as a result of the study programme does not fully comply with the Latvian Education Classification. On February 11th 2021 the expert group received additional information from RSU that the degree has been changed to "Bachelor of Social Science in Journalism and Communication" by the RSU Senate decision.

13 13. The joint study programmes comply with the requirements prescribed in Section 551, Paragraphs one, two, and seven of the Law on Institutions of Higher Education (if applicable).

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

Justification: Not relevant

14 14. Each member of the academic staff has either publications published in reviewed editions within the last six years, including international editions (if they have worked for a shorter period of time, the number of publications shall be in proportion to the work period), or artistic creation achievements (for instance, exhibitions, films, theatre performances, and concert activity), or a five-year practical work experience (except for the experience in the implementation of the study programme) in accordance with the Law on Institutions of Higher Education.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Justification: Annexes 6.2 and 6.4. Lecturers constantly conduct individual studies, regularly attend international conferences and develop publications for academic journals. On average, there are two to three publications a year per one lecturer of the study programme who is a permanent employee of RSU (self-assessment report and lecturers CV, Annex 6.2).

15 P5 - Overall rating

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Justification: On February 11th 2021 the expert group received additional information from RSU that the degree has been changed to "Bachelor of Social Science in Journalism and Communication" and additional information about programme implementation in distance learning mode and actual English proficiency of staff members, thus eliminating the previous remarks of the expert team. The experts agreed to change the mark to "Fully compliant", however, some remarks still remain:

- 1) the self-evaluation documentation contains some conflicting information on the English proficiency of the academic staff;
- 3) the formal course descriptions are not adjusted for distance learning.

Requirements (R6-R8)

- 1 R6 - The compliance of the study provision, scientific support (if applicable), informative provision (including libraries), material and technical provision, and financial provision with the conditions for the implementation of the study programme and ensuring the achievement of the learning outcomes.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Justification: The programme has a good resource base, the students and the teaching staff have access to the necessary resources to ensure the quality of teaching and learning process, although, some aspects need improvements as the staff preferred to have access to Microsoft Office. The formal study course descriptions have to be adjusted to distance learning mode.

- 2 R7 - The compliance of the qualification of the academic staff members, visiting professors, visiting associate professors, visiting docents, visiting lecturers, and visiting assistants with the conditions for the implementation of the study programme and the provisions set out in the respective regulatory enactments.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Justification: Annexes 6.1 and 6.2

- 3 R8 - The study programme leading to the master or doctoral degree is based on the advances and findings in the relevant field of science or artistic creation.

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

Justification: Not relevant

Conclusions by specifying the strengths and weaknesses

Overall, the programme complies with the legal requirements of the state but some adjustments are needed in regard to maintaining correct data on the academic staff's proficiency of English along with the rise of peer-reviewed international academic publications is obtained and updating the course descriptions.

Strengths:

1. The overall compliance with the legal requirements of the state is mostly achieved.

Weaknesses:

1. The documented proof for the assessment of English proficiency is episodically missing.
2. The formal study course descriptions have to be adjusted for distance learning.
3. The number of international peer-reviewed publications is low.

Evaluation of the study programme "Journalism"

Evaluation of the study programme:

Good

6. Recommendations for the Study Programme "Journalism"

Short-term recommendations

Explore the possibilities of international cooperation that would offer the students and teaching staff more opportunities for international exchange.

To expand directions for Erasmus+ exchange.

Update the course descriptions for distance learning.

Ensure that the academic staff is fully ready for implementation of the study programme in English.

Long-term recommendations

To ensure that investments in the learning environment keep pace with the development of media technologies.

To analyze opportunities for greater international cooperation with other universities and media houses abroad.

To ensure English learning and testing support for academic staff members.

II. "Public Relations" ASSESSMENT

II. "Public Relations" ASSESSMENT

1. Indicators Describing the Study Programme

Analysis

The academic bachelor study programme "Public Relations" (code 43342) aims to prepare academically educated and professionally qualified, competitive public relations specialists who would be able to foster reinforcement of research traditions and promote sustainable development in the field of public relations in Latvia. RSU aims that this programme can offer the necessary theoretical knowledge that is mandatory for the placement in the public, non-governmental or private sector.

RSU academic bachelor study programme "Public Relations" is focused on eight objectives from which four are concentrated on acquiring skills of conducting various forms of research and providing good analysis of the specific topic. The other three pay attention to the theoretical basis of gaining an understanding of the field in general while the last one is devoted to language skills.

Learning outcomes of the study programme "Public relations" are defined as knowledge, skills and competences, which the graduate of the study programme will have mastered and will be able to demonstrate on the labour market or when continuing studies at the next level of studies. In total the programme has 11 learning outcomes.

The finalization of the academic bachelor degree programme "Public relations" is awarded with the degree of "Bachelor of Social Sciences in Communication Science". However, this is an academic

bachelor study programme, therefore the degree has to comply with Cabinet Regulations No 322 "Regulations on the Latvian Education Classification", Annex 2. Currently the code of the study programme is 43342 and it corresponds to a degree - "Bachelor of Social Science in Marketing and Advertising". An alternative would be to change the classification code to 43321 and to award a degree "Bachelor of Social Science in Journalism and Communication". On February 11th 2021 the expert group received additional information from RSU that the programme code has been changed to 43321 by the RSU Senate decision.

Programme's aims, objectives, learning outcomes, and admission requirements are interrelated. The learning outcomes are specified according to the aim and objectives of studies and wording of LQF/EQF. The competence, knowledge and skills acquired in separate study courses contribute to achieving the defined learning outcomes in a logical sequence. Requirements for starting studies - secondary education and knowledge of Latvian and a foreign language are seen as objective and necessary for successful participation in the study programme.

The bachelor study programme "Public Relations" has been accredited on a full-time and part-time basis in Latvian, but only full-time studies are currently being implemented. The Faculty of Communication will in future consider the possibility to also start a part-time implementation of the study programme. The study programme is also submitted for implementation in English, however, the management of the study programme does not have any specific plan for the next two years on how to work on it because that would be significant in order to attract foreign students for their studies permanently as well as for the ERASMUS exchange. As stated in the self-assessment report, RSU is planning in the future to extend the possibilities for the implementation of the study programme and also attracting part-time and foreign students which is seen as necessary.

Although the study programme is an academic bachelor's study programme, there is placement on the 2nd year of studies to ensure the link between knowledge and skills of students and real job which is seen as a great opportunity for students to gain practical knowledge in addition to theoretical background. It also provides the students with a great way of getting to know the labour market before graduating.

It is of importance to point out that the employers have noted that in general the university prepares good specialists for the work market, but they feel that some of them lack the skills of critical thinking, knowledge of digital marketing and how to work with social media and copyright skills. Therefore experts recommend to pay more attention to the diverse practical development of these skills.

Conclusions by specifying the strengths and weaknesses

Programme's aims, objectives, learning outcomes, and admission requirements are interrelated. Overall, it is believed that the study programme "Public Relations" prepares good specialists in the particular field but more attention has to be paid to specific skills that the work market requires them to have.

Strengths:

1. Programme's aims, objectives, learning outcomes and admission requirements are interrelated.
2. Readiness of students for the labour market.

Weaknesses:

1. Limited ability to attract foreign students for the study programme.

2. Alignment issues between the programme code and degree and partial compliance of the currently awarded degree with the Latvian Education Classification.

2. The Content of Studies and Implementation Thereof

Analysis

In the study programme "Public relations" course descriptions demonstrate compliance with study programme aims. The amount of contact hours makes 41 % of the study programme of lectures and seminars. In order to implement the aims, objectives of the study programme RSU has formed implementation of various forms of the study process that include individual consultations, visiting lectures, study visits, participation in RSU Research Week and other wider public scientific and research events - conferences, seminars, discussions which promote various forms of learning.

As indicated by the employers, RSU prepares specialists with good skills concerning working in teams and group work activities, but with some level of problem working individually. It is recommended for students to provide more individual work related activities as tasks which are necessary for the industry and the trends which currently are influenced by the Covid-19, although as indicated in the self-assessment report RSU practices student-centered education providing that student learning independently is at the centre of the study process.

Also course descriptions demonstrate student-centered learning outcomes. Students' evaluation methods are dominated by summative tests, but it is great that RSU practices an opinion sharing and improvement approach which is being used to identify possible shortcomings, issues that have to be solved in order to improve the courses.

Regarding the choice of the final thesis of students they are defined in accordance with development of the industry and market, and topics and specialization directions of lecturers and professors of the department, although students are allowed to choose the topics independently. Overall the quality of the bachelor thesis is quite good and well - guided by the supervisors - lecturers, professors who are the specialists in the field.

The outcomes of the surveys conducted among the students, employers, and graduates are used to improve the quality of studies. Surveys about each study course, as well as surveys of graduates are organized on a regular basis. Students are generally satisfied and see usage of them. Employers appreciate highly qualified and well-trained information and communication professionals, and graduates have shared some valuable necessary improvements.

Students are well informed about mobility opportunities and are willing to participate in them as seeing those opportunities as a valuable way of gaining new experience and knowledge. As RSU has indicated recently, 36 Erasmus+ agreements with foreign HEI (Annex 7) have been signed in Europe in the communication study field. It is believed that such an opportunity provides students to achieve the learning outcome of students choosing the courses to study in accordance with learning outcomes the student wishes to achieve as going abroad.

The experts approve the intentions to implement the programme in the form of distance learning while indicating that the course descriptions have to be adjusted for distance learning to comply with the legal requirements. The experts recognise the readiness of the field of study and particular programmes to implement the distance learning mode. However, it does not free one from the necessity to adjust the course descriptions since the pace and methods of studies for the distance learning mode has its specifics. The study field possesses the necessary resources and the support

in a form of essential online platforms as well as methodological assistance to the teaching faculty. The experts also approve the idea to execute the implementation of the study programme in English while encouraging the management of the program to facilitate the necessary English learning and testing support (see more detailed analysis in Chapter 3).

Conclusions by specifying the strengths and weaknesses

Bachelor degree programme “Public relations” progresses with the implementation of the student-centered learning conception while it has some gaps that has to be eliminated by time. It has aligned study programme aims and learning outcomes with the courses’ learning outcomes.

Strengths:

1. Active and valuable mobility opportunities to provide for students.
2. Innovative and differentiated learning methods.

Weaknesses:

1. More attention has to be paid for individual working skill development.
2. Study course descriptions are not adjusted for distance learning.

3. Resources and Provision of the Study Programme

Analysis

In the bachelor study programme "Public relations" students are provided with a well-developed IT infrastructure and virtual study environment. The resources - books (both in Latvian and English), journals, databases are easily accessible to students and the necessary materials for a successful study process are provided. The study materials, resources are constantly updated providing students with the recent academic publications of the particular field of studies. The suggestion from the previous accreditation regarding separate full time employees as student media editor-in-chief was implemented.

As it is indicated in the self-assessment report there is provided accessibility for students to multimedia projectors in 140 training rooms for use of audiovisual materials for studies; most of these are high-resolution interactive projectors that are connected to a sound system.

Panopto video recording system is used for the preparation of audiovisual training materials, whereas video conferencing system is used to provide online lectures. A centralised management system of the multimedia equipment of lecture rooms has also been established. 10 computer rooms with more than 200 workstations that are used both for the implementation of certain study courses, as well as for provision of electronic examinations and other types of knowledge testing are available for the needs of the study process.

Respondus is a great innovation for the online examination process especially taking into consideration the existing obstacles of the Covid-19. Although, those students who prefer to take an exam in the RSU premises can do that. It clearly shows that the staff members are supportive and helpful during Covid-19 and open to finding an approach for the study process for everyone.

Regarding the accessibility of the resources, student opinions are being taken into consideration and in order there are specific books or materials that are not available or are inaccessible, the university is coming forward to find solutions and provide what is necessary. It also refers to a specific need for certain equipment as previously indicated in the previous paragraphs. Students of

this study programme can also now participate in the development and knowledge gaining activity in the students media.

Conclusions by specifying the strengths and weaknesses

The programme had good resource base including the study provision, scientific support, informative provision (including libraries), material and technical provision, and financial provision that creates the prerequisites for the achievement of the learning outcomes and indicate the possibility to ensure a high-quality study process.

Strengths:

1. The staff members are supporting and giving guidance for the students to keep them up to date with the courses and studies in general.
2. Student proposals concerning certain materials being accessible are being taken into consideration.

4. Teaching Staff

Analysis

The implementation of the study programme involves highly qualified lecturers who are experts in the field and specialize in the respective study course topics. The total number of lecturers involved in the implementation of the programme is 38, while the total number of students was 52 on 3 October 2019, so the ratio of students and lecturers is 1.37. It should be noted that part of the study courses is taught together for students of several bachelor's study programmes, thereby sharing resources. The joint implementation of study courses strengthens the financial cost effectiveness of study programmes and supports interdisciplinary cooperation between students.

As indicated by the students, they are satisfied by the lecturers as they are professionals of their field.

Full-time university lecturers are required to participate in research activities that are regulated by staff job descriptions. Depending on the type of academic position, the following proportion of duties and responsibilities of the employee in scientific and research activities has been determined: assistants carry out scientific and research work 30% of the working time; lecturers carry out scientific and research work 15% of the working time; assistant professors, associate professors, professors carry out scientific and research work 20% of the working time (self-assessment report, p. 157).

All study field lecturers are involved in the implementation of the study programme (except invited lecturers having high qualification, long experience and significant experience in the respective professional field) perform scientific research work in parallel to their pedagogical work. The insights and examples from such work enrich the study course content making it up-to-date and close to practice. Since study methods emphasise the principle of participation, in discussions lecturers tend to use what they have tested in their research and examples as a basis. Lecturers actively involve students in research work also in different projects implemented by the department. Topics of bachelor's theses are often related to the topics of the research projects implemented by lecturers of the study field. An example is the NRP project ECOSOC-LV 5.2.5. "Reflections on values and action resulting from socioeconomic changes", in which several of the study programme participated (self-assessment report, p. 160).

Director of the study programme shall discuss with the lecturers the content of the course and the relationship with other study courses. If necessary, the content of study courses shall be specified. Such negotiations are usually preceding in the beginning of the year/ semester of study or before the start of a new course.

Cooperation between lecturers is also discussed at the meetings of the department and the faculty council. If any shortcomings are identified, they are initially addressed at the level of programme directors and lecturer; if this does not help, then at the level of the head/dean and lecturer. There are very few cases of this kind.

Qualification of academic staff is raised during different seminars and by involving them in international projects as outgoing mobility of the teaching staff and The School of Junior Academics (SJA) was established at RSU in 2019 within the framework of the project Strengthening of the Academic Staff of Rīga Stradiņš University; English language learning project for teaching staff to improve their language skills.

Regarding the academic staff's ability to implement the program in English in future, it has to be noted that currently about one third of the staff members involved in the implementation of the programme has met requirements regarding the assessment of their English skills as being on level B2 or higher or has a degree from a foreign university in a manner that allows for experts to familiarize themselves with a documental proof besides the self assessment (Annex 6.1 information about the RSU language examination, Annex 6.2 Biographies of teaching staff members). However, more staff members indicate their English to correspond to B2 or higher. During the visit, experts observed various levels of English being used for interaction with most academic staff members being able to interact very well. In the absence of the information allowing to determine which academic staff members are intended to be involved in the programme's implementation in English, experts see the necessity to continue providing possibility for RSU-based language testing along with the intensive language courses or those in need for improving English language skills.

Conclusions by specifying the strengths and weaknesses

Educating the academic staff in various fields and taking into consideration their interests and need of acquiring certain skills. There is a strong mutual cooperation among the academic staff and the necessary steps are taken towards continuous development of the body of instructors. Scientific activities of the academic staff contribute to the development of the study field.

Strengths:

1. High qualification of the teaching staff.
2. High range of variety of programmes for academic staff to develop their skills.

5. Assessment of the Compliance of the Study Programme "Public Relations"

Requirements

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

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

Justification: Diploma provided in the Appendix 24-1. The degree awarded as a result of the study programme does not fully comply with the Latvian Education Classification and is not aligned with the programme code.

2. Documents confirming that the higher education institution/ college will provide the students with the options to continue the acquisition of education in another study programme or at another higher education institution/ college (a contract with another accredited higher education institution/ college), in case the implementation of the study programme is discontinued.
- Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant
- Justification:** Annex 24-2. The possibility for continuation of studies is provided in the following study programmes: RSU's academic bachelor's study programme "Journalism", RSU's academic bachelor's study programme "Multimedia Communication" and RSU's academic bachelor's study programme "Photography"; Study programme "Public Relations" of the Turiba University (a cooperation agreement has been concluded).
3. Document confirming that the higher education institution/ college guarantees to the students a compensation for losses if the study programme is not accredited or the licence of the study programme is revoked due to the actions of the higher education institution/ college (actions or failure to act) and the student does not wish to continue the studies in another study programme.
- Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant
- Justification:** Document provided in the Annex 24-3
4. 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
- Justification:** Document provided in the Annex 24-4 and CV of the teaching staff indicates the proficiency of the official language.
5. 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.
- Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant
- Justification:** Document provided in Annexes 24.5, 6.1 and 6.2 indicates the proficiency of the official language. However, from Annex 6.1 and 6.2 can be concluded that, in fact, about the one third of academic staff members involved in implementation of the study programme have a documented proof of having B2 or higher English proficiency (RSU language test or a degree obtained from a university abroad).
6. 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.
- Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant
- Justification:** Not relevant
7. 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 Institutions of Higher Education.
- Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant
- Justification:** Annex 24-7. 38 academics are involved in the implementation of the compulsory and restricted elective part of the academic bachelor's study programme "Public Relations", fifteen of whom have been elected to academic positions at RSU. Out of fifteen academic staff representatives, three are professors, and two are associate professors.
8. The sample of the study agreement complies with the mandatory provisions to be included in the study agreement.
- Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant
- Justification:** Annex 24-8

9 9. 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 56.1, Paragraph two and Section 56.2, Paragraph two of the Law on Institutions of Higher Education.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Justification: Annex 19 and 20. The course descriptions are prepared in Latvian and English and they meet most of the requirements regarding course descriptions, except that the descriptions are not adjusted for distance learning mode. Despite the additional information received on 11 February 2021 about the existence of a clear mechanism and methodological guidelines for providing study programmes online, also the formal course descriptions have to be adjusted.

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

Justification: Not relevant

11 11. 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 Institutions of Higher Education.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Justification: Annex 24-9

12 12. The study programme complies with the State Academic Education Standard or the Professional Higher Education Standard.

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

Justification: Compliance of Study Programme "Public Relations" with the National Educational Standard - Annex 17-1. The degree and the code of the programme are not aligned and the degree does not fully comply with Latvian Education Classification and is not aligned with the programme code.

13 13. The joint study programmes comply with the requirements prescribed in Section 551, Paragraphs one, two, and seven of the Law on Institutions of Higher Education (if applicable).

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

Justification: Not relevant

14 14. Each member of the academic staff has either publications published in reviewed editions within the last six years, including international editions (if they have worked for a shorter period of time, the number of publications shall be in proportion to the work period), or artistic creation achievements (for instance, exhibitions, films, theatre performances, and concert activity), or a five-year practical work experience (except for the experience in the implementation of the study programme) in accordance with the Law on Institutions of Higher Education.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Justification: Annex 6.2 and 6.4. While the majority of the academic staff comply with this requirement, there are some elected members of faculty, who should be encouraged to publish more. The way data is presented does not allow experts to fully judge on the impact of research.

15 P5 - Overall rating

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

Justification: All legal requirements have been met except that the degree does not fully comply with the Latvian Education Classification;

It does not affect the compliance assessment but it has to be noted that the self-evaluation documentation contains conflicting information on the English proficiency of the academic staff and the formal course descriptions are not aligned for distance learning mode.

Requirements (R6-R8)

- 1 R6 - The compliance of the study provision, scientific support (if applicable), informative provision (including libraries), material and technical provision, and financial provision with the conditions for the implementation of the study programme and ensuring the achievement of the learning outcomes.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Justification: The programme has a good resource base, the students and the teaching staff have access to the necessary resources to ensure the quality of teaching and learning process, although, some aspects need improvements as the staff preferred to have access to Microsoft Office. The formal study course descriptions are currently not adjusted for distance learning mode.

- 2 R7 - The compliance of the qualification of the academic staff members, visiting professors, visiting associate professors, visiting docents, visiting lecturers, and visiting assistants with the conditions for the implementation of the study programme and the provisions set out in the respective regulatory enactments.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Justification: Annexes 6.1 and 6.2

- 3 R8 - The study programme leading to the master or doctoral degree is based on the advances and findings in the relevant field of science or artistic creation.

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

Justification: Not relevant

Conclusions by specifying the strengths and weaknesses

On February 11th 2021 the expert group received additional information about programme implementation in distance learning mode and actual English proficiency of staff members, thus eliminating some of the previous remarks of the expert team.

The main issue is the fact that the degree awarded as a result of the study programme does not comply with the legal requirements. The experts consider that the most appropriate degree for this study programme would be "Bachelor of Social Science in Media and Communication (Science)" and suggest that the legislation should allow for such a degree.

There are also some additional remarks which currently do not affect the compliance assessment but still remain:

- 1) the self-evaluation documentation contains some conflicting information on the English proficiency of the academic staff;
- 3) the formal course descriptions are not adjusted for distance learning.

Overall, the programme complies with the legal requirements of the state but adjustments are needed in regard to the degree awarded, course descriptions for distance learning, ensuring the proficiency of English for the academic staff members involved in the study programs offered in English along with the rise of peer-reviewed international academic publications is obtained.

Strengths:

1. The overall compliance with the legal requirements of the state is mostly achieved.

Weaknesses:

1. The degree awarded as a result of the study programme does not fully comply with the Latvian Education Classification.
2. The documented proof for assessment of the English proficiency is episodically missing.
3. The number of international peer-reviewed publications is low.

4. The formal study course descriptions are not adjusted for distance learning mode

Evaluation of the study programme "Public Relations"

Evaluation of the study programme:

Good

6. Recommendations for the Study Programme "Public Relations"

Short-term recommendations

- | |
|--|
| 1. Developing relevant content of the courses by adding/emphasizing critical thinking skills, digital marketing, social marketing and copyright issues. |
| 2. More emphasis needed on developing student's skills relevant for the needs of the labour market. |
| 3. Change the title of the degree to be obtained until the decision on accreditation is made so that the degree complies with the requirements of regulatory enactments. |
| 4. Update the course descriptions so that they would include all intended types and forms of implementation. |
| 5. Ensure that the academic staff is fully ready for implementation of the study programme in English. |

Long-term recommendations

- | |
|--|
| 1. Working towards attracting more international students. |
| 2. Ensuring the English learning and testing support for academic staff members. |

II. "Communication and Media Studies" ASSESSMENT

II. "Communication and Media Studies" ASSESSMENT

1. Indicators Describing the Study Programme

Analysis

The main aim of the master's study programme "Communication and Media Studies" (code 45321) is to prepare communication and media specialists compliant with the international communication science standards who would be ready for independent academic and scientific research and practical activities in the field. Having examined the documents submitted and conducted interviews, the experts are convinced that the aims, objectives, learning outcomes and admission requirements and other indicators of this study programme are strongly interrelated.

Students who successfully complete the curriculum will receive a degree Master of Social Sciences in Information and Communication Science. As this is an academic master study programme, the degree has to comply with Cabinet Regulations No 322 "Regulations on the Latvian Education Classification", Annex 2. According to these regulations the degree should be "Master of Social Science in Journalism and Communication".

The strategic aim of the programme is to ensure an in-depth acquisition of theoretical knowledge in the information and communication science, at the same time developing the mastering of work and research methods and skills for using them in the analysis and research of communication problems and media environment.

The master's study programme "Communication and Media Studies" has been accredited on a full-time and part-time basis in Latvian, but only full-time studies are currently being implemented. The Faculty of Communication will in future consider the possibility to also start a part-time implementation of the study programme. The study programme is also submitted for implementation in English, however, the management of the study programme does not have any specific plan for the next two years on how to work on it because that would be significant in order to attract foreign students for their studies permanently as well as for the ERASMUS exchange. As stated in the self-assessment report, RSU is planning in the future to extend the possibilities for the implementation of the study programme and also attracting part-time and foreign students which is seen as necessary.

Conclusions by specifying the strengths and weaknesses

The content and implementation of the study programme so far has been successful and demonstrates a great potential for being developed further.

Strengths:

1. The curriculum is of high quality and meets all the requirements.

Weaknesses:

1. The degree awarded as a result of the study programme does not fully comply with the Latvian Education Classification.

2. The Content of Studies and Implementation Thereof

Analysis

The academic master's study programme is well-structured; it contains and balances the academic and critical studies of the field with the practical skills and training on creative and technical means of expression in general and specialisation subjects.

The study courses thematically are relevant to the needs of the communication and media industry and also reflected by course descriptions. The descriptions of the study courses comply with the provisions set forth in the regulatory enactments. The content is relevant and complementary, and it complies with the aims of the study programme, ensuring the achievement of the learning outcomes. Overall, the selection of courses demonstrates a good balance between theoretical and research oriented subjects.

As stated in the self-assessment report the content of the master's study programme "Communication and Media Studies" consists of the study courses in social and information and communication theories, social research methodology, as well as study courses which allow specialising in certain topical study field, aspects, sub-fields, and of the master's thesis. The Skalak platform gives students the opportunity to develop and test their skills. put and what they have learned into practice. 20 elective courses offered gives students flexibility to design their studies towards specific interests. According to the self-assessment report, and from the response from the interviews, the feedback from students and industry representatives has been used for the improvement of specific courses and for the design of the study programme as a whole. Experts

largely agree with the conclusion of the self-assessment that the content of the study programme is constantly updated by using the latest studies and communication science findings. Still, for some subjects in the curriculum, the list of compulsory literature should be critically reviewed and updated with more up-to-date sources. For example, most of the sources in Social Theories are from the end of the last century and the most recent is from 2009.

One concern experts had is that the drop-out rate seemed quite high. Many dropouts occur for reasons beyond the RSU's control, as for example due to the financial circumstances. At the same time, it should be examined in detail whether a larger number of entrants could complete their studies with greater support from the RSU.

Despite the fact that students of the study programme have a chance to participate in exchange studies or international placement for one semester abroad, receiving Erasmus+ scholarship only a very few students use this opportunity.

The experts approve the intentions to implement the programme in the form of distance learning while indicating that the course descriptions have to be adjusted for distance learning to comply with the legal requirements. The experts recognise the readiness of the field of study and particular programmes to implement the distance learning mode. However, it does not free one from the necessity to adjust the course descriptions since the pace and methods of studies for the distance learning mode has its specifics. The study field possesses the necessary resources and the support in a form of essential online platforms as well as methodological assistance to the teaching faculty. The experts also approve the idea to execute the implementation of the study programme in English while encouraging the management of the programme to facilitate the necessary English learning and testing support (see more detailed analysis at the Chapter 3).

Regarding the plans to implement the programme at RSU's Liepāja branch, experts do not approve these endeavors at the moment since the information to be able to properly assess such plans is missing. Alternatively as well as considering the possibilities brought about in the sphere of higher education by Covid-19 pandemic, experts encourage considering the development of the distance learning version of the programme.

Conclusions by specifying the strengths and weaknesses

The descriptions of the study courses comply with the provisions set forth in the regulatory enactments. The content is relevant and complementary, and it complies with the aims of the study programme, ensures the achievement of the learning outcomes, and meets the needs of the media industry.

Strengths:

1. The Skalak platform gives students the opportunity to develop and test their skills. put and what they have learned into practice.
2. Good balance between theory and academic research.

Weaknesses:

1. Few opportunities to gain international experience abroad.
2. High drop-out rate.
3. Study course descriptions currently are not adjusted for distance learning.
4. The lack of a clear plan for programme implementation in Liepāja branch

3. Resources and Provision of the Study Programme

Analysis

The existing resources (learning environment, study materials, learning tools and technical equipment, rooms, financial resources) of the faculty support the achievement of the study programme objectives. The assessment of learning outcomes has generally been appropriate, transparent and objective, and it supports the learner's development, which is also confirmed by the feedback of students.

The library of RSU has enough resources for ordering the necessary study materials. Students have access to textbooks, e-books, e-journals and important academic publications in the field of journalism and media.

Students have the opportunity to learn and work with modern digital technology that they also encounter during their internship and upon employment in a professional environment.

Experts welcome faculty's initiatives of digitalisation of teaching methods used for evaluations of the submitted works and making broader use of the opportunities offered by e-studies. It allows working with students and lecturers more conveniently. It is highly valued that contact hours are mostly used through interactive lectures and practical interactive classes or seminars, where new technologies available at RSU are used.

The resources in RSU Liepāja branch are currently not fully sufficient for programme implementation. In principle, experts welcome RSU management's idea to expand the offer of media education to Liepāja, but all risks (including possible lack of paying students due to the free offerings from competitor and impact of travelling between Riga and Liepāja to the staff members concerned) should be carefully analysed.

Conclusions by specifying the strengths and weaknesses

The study programme is well ensured with resources necessary for a modern study process.

Strengths:

1. Technical facilities and supportive infrastructure helps to ensure that the objectives of the programme are met.
2. Study resources and provision comply with the requirements for the implementation of the study programme, create the prerequisites for the achievement of learning and research outcomes, and can ensure a high-quality study process.

Weaknesses:

1. As technology is developing very fast there is a continuous need for more opportunities to acquire advanced technical skills.
2. The resources in RSU Liepāja branch are currently not fully sufficient for programme implementation.

4. Teaching Staff

Analysis

The teaching is conducted by highly qualified, motivated and proactive professionals who are receptive to feedback and well versed in the needs of the 'outside world'. Based on the list of the

teaching staff experts can assume that RSU has a suitably qualified teaching staff for achieving the aims and learning outcomes of the study programme, and for ensuring the quality and sustainability of studies. The teaching is conducted by highly qualified, motivated and proactive professionals who are receptive to feedback and well versed in the needs of the media industry.

All professors at the study field are recognised experts in communication science and leading researchers in fields whose related study courses are taught at the master's study programme "Communication and Media Studies". All teaching staff engaged in the study programme as lecturers or visiting lecturers have at least a master's degree in the related science sector.

Lecturers who work on a permanent basis at the university are obliged to participate in research activities which are regulated in the job descriptions of employees. According to the type of academic position, the following proportion of employee's duties and responsibilities in scientific and research activities has been established: 30 % of the working hours the assistant spends doing scientific and research work; 15 % of the working hours the lecturer spends doing scientific and research work; 20 % of the working hours the assistant professor, associate professor, professor spend doing scientific and research work (self-assessment report, p. 285).

For example, already at the beginning of the study course "Analysis of Communication Situations", each lecturer involved presents results of his or her topical research by involving students in co-research with the help of focused tasks (self-assessment report, p. 288).

However, it should be mentioned that the number of high-valued academic publications could be higher. This indicator could be improved if the problem revealed during interviews that actually on levels of academic career there is not enough time for research and academic publishing will be solved.

As confirmed during the interviews, employer representatives confirmed providing feedback on programme design or delivery, as well as their satisfaction with the level of graduate preparations. Some of the respondents particularly praised the interdisciplinary approach and competences among students and graduates.

Lecturers employed in the study programme are invited to participate in constant critically analytical evaluation of study work and in discussions on it. Results of student surveys are mutually discussed and invited independent lecturers are provided with a brief evaluation and recommendations. In accordance with the RSU's strategy, lesson observation takes place regularly. Therefore, changes and improvements in the operation of the study programme are made directly on the basis of collegial discussions, evaluation, and results of discussions. Part of study courses are implemented by means of direct cooperation between several lecturers and also inviting visiting lecturers; the study courses ensure several perspectives and interpretations with regard to content to be acquired. An example for collective work is the study course "Mass Communication and Sociology of Culture" implemented by a local lecturer and visiting assistant professor - where both of them read lectures separately and together and evaluate presentations of students' final papers (self-assessment report, p. 288).

Regarding the academic staff's ability to implement the programme in English in future, it has to be noted that currently almost a half of the staff members involved in the implementation of the programme has met requirements regarding the assessment of their English skills as being on level B2 or higher or has a degree from a foreign university in a manner that allows for experts to familiarize themselves with a documental proof besides the self assessment (Annex 6.1 information

about the RSU language examination, Annex 6.2 Biographies of teaching staff members). However, more staff members indicate their English to correspond to B2 or higher. During the visit, experts observed various levels of English being used for interaction with most academic staff members being able to interact very well. In the absence of the information allowing to determine which academic staff members are intended to be involved in the programme's implementation in English, experts see the necessity to continue providing possibility for RSU-based language testing along with the intensive language courses or those in need for improving English language skills.

Conclusions by specifying the strengths and weaknesses

The qualifications and experience of the teaching staff of the programme fully meet the content requirements. The curriculum is of high quality and meets all the requirements.

Strengths:

1. High qualification of the teaching staff.

Weaknesses:

1. The academic staff have few time slots fully dedicated to research.
2. Few opportunities for staff and students to gain international experience abroad.
3. The foreign mobility of teaching staff is quite low.

5. Assessment of the Compliance of the Study Programme "Communication and Media Studies"

Requirements

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

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

Justification: Annex 24-1. The degree awarded as a result of the study programme does not fully comply with the Latvian Education Classification.

2. Documents confirming that the higher education institution/ college will provide the students with the options to continue the acquisition of education in another study programme or at another higher education institution/ college (a contract with another accredited higher education institution/ college), in case the implementation of the study programme is discontinued.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Justification: Annex 24-2. RSU provides the possibility to continue studies in:

1. Academic master's study programme "Public Relations and Strategic Management";
2. Other RSU's master programmes. Experts have some doubts as to whether a degree obtained in another curriculum always meets the student's initial expectations.

3. Document confirming that the higher education institution/ college guarantees to the students a compensation for losses if the study programme is not accredited or the licence of the study programme is revoked due to the actions of the higher education institution/ college (actions or failure to act) and the student does not wish to continue the studies in another study programme.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Justification: Document provided in the Annex 24-3.

4. 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

Justification: Document provided in the Annex 24-4 and CV of the teaching staff indicates the proficiency of the official language.

- 5 5. 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.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Justification: Document provided in Annexes 24.5, 6.1 and 6.2 indicates the proficiency of the English language. However, from Annex 6.1 and 6.2 can be concluded that, in fact, about half of academic staff members involved in implementation of the programme have a documented proof of having B2 or higher English proficiency (RSU language test or a degree obtained from a university abroad).

- 6 6. 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.

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

Justification: Not relevant

- 7 7. 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 Institutions of Higher Education.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Justification: Annex 24-7

21 academics are involved in the implementation of the compulsory and restricted elective part of the academic master's study programme "Communication and Media Studies", thirteen of whom have been elected to academic positions at RSU. Out of thirteen academic staff representatives, four are professors and two are associate professors.

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Justification: Annex 24-8

- 9 9. 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 56.1, Paragraph two and Section 56.2, Paragraph two of the Law on Institutions of Higher Education.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Justification: Annex 19 and 20. The course descriptions are prepared in Latvian and English and they meet most of the requirements regarding course descriptions except that they are not adjusted for distance learning. Despite the additional information received on 11 February 2021 about the existence of a clear mechanism and methodological guidelines for providing study programmes online, also the formal course descriptions have to be adjusted.

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

Justification: Not relevant

- 11 11. 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 Institutions of Higher Education.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Justification: Annex 24-9

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

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

Justification: Compliance of Study Programme "Communication and Media studies" with the National Educational Standard - Annex 17-1. However, the degree awarded as a result of the study programme does not fully comply with the Latvian Education Classification.

- 13 13. The joint study programmes comply with the requirements prescribed in Section 551, Paragraphs one, two, and seven of the Law on Institutions of Higher Education (if applicable).

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

Justification: Not relevant

- 14 14. Each member of the academic staff has either publications published in reviewed editions within the last six years, including international editions (if they have worked for a shorter period of time, the number of publications shall be in proportion to the work period), or artistic creation achievements (for instance, exhibitions, films, theatre performances, and concert activity), or a five-year practical work experience (except for the experience in the implementation of the study programme) in accordance with the Law on Institutions of Higher Education.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Justification: Annexes 6.2 and 6.4

- 15 P5 - Overall rating

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

Justification: All legal requirements have been met except that the degree does not fully comply with the Latvian Education Classification;

It does not affect the compliance assessment but it has to be noted that the self-evaluation documentation contains conflicting information on the English proficiency of the academic staff and the formal course descriptions are not aligned for distance learning mode.

Requirements (R6-R8)

- 1 R6 - The compliance of the study provision, scientific support (if applicable), informative provision (including libraries), material and technical provision, and financial provision with the conditions for the implementation of the study programme and ensuring the achievement of the learning outcomes.

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

Justification: The programme has a good resource base, the students and the teaching staff have access to the necessary resources to ensure the quality of teaching and learning process, although, some aspects need improvements as the staff preferred to have access to Microsoft Office and the course descriptions are not adjusted for distance learning. Currently the RSU Liepāja branch does not have sufficient resources for programme implementation.

- 2 R7 - The compliance of the qualification of the academic staff members, visiting professors, visiting associate professors, visiting docents, visiting lecturers, and visiting assistants with the conditions for the implementation of the study programme and the provisions set out in the respective regulatory enactments.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Justification: Annexes 6.1 and 6.2

- 3 R8 - The study programme leading to the master or doctoral degree is based on the advances and findings in the relevant field of science or artistic creation.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Justification: Research seems to be a part of the study process with increase of student research skills.

Conclusions by specifying the strengths and weaknesses

On February 11th 2021 the expert group received additional information about programme implementation in distance learning mode and actual English proficiency of staff members, thus eliminating some of the previous remarks of the expert team.

The main issue is the fact that the degree awarded as a result of the study programme does not comply with the legal requirements. The experts consider that the most appropriate degree for this study programme would be "Master of Social Science in Media and Communication (Science)" and suggest that the legislation should allow for such a degree.

There are also some additional remarks which currently do not affect the compliance assessment but still remain:

- 1) the self-evaluation documentation contains some conflicting information on the English proficiency of the academic staff;
- 3) the formal course descriptions are not adjusted for distance learning.

Overall, the programme complies with the legal requirements of the state but adjustments are needed in regard to the degree awarded, course descriptions for distance learning, ensuring the proficiency of English for the academic staff members involved in the study programs offered in English in the future along with the rise of peer-reviewed international academic publications is obtained.

Strengths:

1. The overall compliance with the legal requirements of the state is mostly achieved.

Weaknesses:

1. The degree awarded as a result of the study programme does not fully comply with the Latvian Education Classification.
2. The documented proof for assessment of the English proficiency is episodically missing.
3. The number of international peer-reviewed publications is low.
4. The formal study course descriptions are not adjusted for distance learning mode
5. The RSU Liepāja branch is currently not ready for programme implementation due to the lack of market analysis and lack of resources and/or clear action plan on how to provide them .

Based on the currently available information and the analysis provided above, the experts would like to express concerns about programme implementation in RSU Liepāja branch due to the lack of market analysis and relevant resources for the Liepāja branch.

Evaluation of the study programme "Communication and Media Studies"

Evaluation of the study programme:

Good

6. Recommendations for the Study Programme "Communication and Media Studies"

Short-term recommendations

1. Explore the possibilities of international cooperation that would offer the students and teaching staff more opportunities for international exchange; to expand directions for Erasmus+ exchange.

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| 2. To ensure that academic staff have time slots fully dedicated to research; promote team building; allocate funds or seek more external resources for meaningful mobility of researchers; and promote collaborative research among academic staff and doctoral students. |
| 3. Change the title of the degree to be obtained until the decision on accreditation is made so that the degree complies with the requirements of regulatory enactments. |
| 4. Update the course descriptions for distance learning mode. |
| 5. Ensure that the academic staff is fully ready for implementation of the study programme in English. |
| 6. Ensure that the RSU Liepāja branch has a market analysis and sufficient resources for programme implementation and/or a clear plan on how they will be provided. |

Long-term recommendations

- | |
|--|
| 1. To ensure that investments in the learning environment keep pace with the development of media technologies. |
| 2. To analyze opportunities for greater international cooperation with other universities and media houses abroad. |
| 3. Ensuring the English learning and testing support for academic staff members. |

II. "Strategic Management and Public Relations" ASSESSMENT

II. "Strategic Management and Public Relations" ASSESSMENT

1. Indicators Describing the Study Programme

Analysis

The academic master study programme "Strategic Management and Public Relations" (code 45321) along with the degree offered - master's degree of social sciences in information and communication science. The study programme aims, objectives, learning outcomes and admission requirements are interrelated. Considering the variety of previous education that potential applicants might have, the organization of the programme, which allows for balancing the prior knowledge of the students is an appropriate move to compensate for nuances that admission requirements as such are not always able to ensure.

The combination of management and communication fields is clearly understandable from the title of the programme and defined learning outcomes, thus, making this programme's content and promises understandable across potential groups of applicants with respective interests, experience, and educational backgrounds.

However, as this is an academic master study programme, the degree has to comply with Cabinet Regulations No 322 "Regulations on the Latvian Education Classification", Annex 2. According to these regulations the degree should be "Master of Social Science in Journalism and Communication".

The master study programme "Strategic Management and Public Relations" has been accredited on a full-time and part-time basis in Latvian, but only full-time studies are currently being implemented. The Faculty of Communication will in future consider the possibility to also start a part-time

implementation of the study programme. The study programme is also submitted for implementation in English, however, the management of the study programme does not have any specific plan for the next two years on how to work on it because that would be significant in order to attract foreign students for their studies permanently as well as for the ERASMUS exchange. As stated in the self-assessment report, RSU is planning in the future to extend the possibilities for the implementation of the study programme and also attracting part-time and foreign students which is seen as necessary.

Conclusions by specifying the strengths and weaknesses

The indicators describing the study programme are strongly interrelated.

Strengths:

1. The study programme has the potential to be attractive to professionals and managers in the communication sector for the purpose of raising qualifications.

Weaknesses:

1. The title of the degree is not fully compliant with the Latvian Education Classification.

2. The Content of Studies and Implementation Thereof

Analysis

The descriptions of the study course and the final thesis are of high quality and comply with the provisions set forth in the regulatory enactments. Overall, the content is relevant and complementary, and it complies with the aims of the study programme, ensures the achievement of the learning outcomes, and meets the needs of the relevant industry and the scientific trends.

The design of the programme makes it possible to combine studies with professional and personal life as many of master-level's students have families and careers in the communication area. The courses and the covered themes are strongly relevant to the aims and needs of the programme and industry.

Upon meeting with the study direction management, experts learned that the number of students who enter the programme has been growing for the last 3 years. At the same time, the number of graduates is fluctuating. Considering the Faculty's aim to establish this programme also in the region at Liepāja branch, the market for potential students and employees must be carefully studied before taking the final decision. During the meeting with the representatives of the Liepāja branch as well as academic personnel interested in developing the programme at Liepāja it became clear that there is a strong academic interest and network available while the knowledge about the market is rather fragmented and based on popular notions about, for instance, the prospects for regional development and attracting emigrated Latvians as oppose to in-depth education market research.

Considering that the programme is aimed at students with a reasonable experience at their respective fields of career, the student mobility can be a challenge. However, during the discussion with student representatives, experts found a great appreciation for the international components of the programme in the form of guest speakers and lecturers from the partner institutions abroad that can be seen as alternative, given all kinds of restrictions for traveling the students of the programme might face. The course organization into modules is recognized by working students as an incentive that, along with the prestige of the university, is seen as a success.

The content of the study programme has been developed by academics and professionals in the industry, which provides a high-quality and up-to-date approach to the learning process. It is regularly discussed and improved in terms of feedback from students and employers.

As stated in Appendix 22.2, the themes of master's thesis during the last years demonstrate contemporary and research-worthy topics with both academic and practical contribution.

The self-assessment report of the programme states the informal ambitious aim of the programme "to prepare the potential opinion leaders and decision-makers in the public and private area" (p. 223). In order to achieve this goal, more attention should be devoted to the deeper understanding of leadership theories and the development of the leadership skills by allocating, for instance, more than 2 credits for courses "Leadership Theories and Diversity Management" and "Organizational Theory and Management".

The experts approve the intentions to implement the programme in the form of distance learning while indicating that the course descriptions have to be adjusted for distance learning to comply with the legal requirements. The experts recognise the readiness of the field of study and particular programmes to implement the distance learning mode. However, it does not free one from the necessity to adjust the course descriptions since the pace and methods of studies for the distance learning mode has its specifics. The study field possesses the necessary resources and the support in a form of essential online platforms as well as methodological assistance to the teaching faculty. The experts also approve the idea to execute the implementation of the study programme in English while encouraging the management of the program to facilitate the necessary English learning and testing support (see more detailed analysis at the Chapter 3).

Regarding the plans to implement the programme at RSU's Liepājā branch, experts do not approve these endeavors at the moment since the information to be able to properly assess such plans is missing. Alternatively as well as considering the possibilities brought about in the sphere of higher education by Covid-19 pandemic, experts encourage considering the development of the distance learning version of the programme.

Conclusions by specifying the strengths and weaknesses

Overall the study process is balanced and includes both scientific and professional aspects. A lot of courses are dedicated to strategic topics and covers a broad range of topics, at the same time it is worth paying more attention to content that will allow students to be more ready to work under changing conditions: working in a digital era, with agile approach to tasks (that currently are slightly represented in courses).

Strength:

1. The balance between scientific and professional elements of the programme.
2. The balance between strategic management and PR content of the programme.
3. Module system of organizing the programme content.
4. The well-balanced ratio between scientific contributions and labour market requirements.
5. The content of the courses focuses on learning contemporary theories and also the aspects of practice.

Weaknesses:

1. The programme content devoted to readiness to work under changing conditions could be more developed.

2. The connection with employers needs to be maintained more systematically.
3. Incoming international lecturers and students are few/missing.
4. Outgoing student mobility is rare.
5. In-depth devotion to developing skills and knowledge in leadership and relevant theories is needed to achieve implied ambitions of the programme.
6. The study course descriptions are not adjusted for distance learning.
7. Lack of a clear plan for programme implementation in the Liepāja branch.

3. Resources and Provision of the Study Programme

Analysis

Digital learning tools are developed and academic staff is available for consultations to students both on-site and remote. The necessary literature resources (databases, books - both in Latvian and English, library) for research and programme implementation are available with a strong emphasis on their online accessibility. The existing resources (learning environment, study materials, learning tools and technical equipment, rooms, financial resources) of the faculty support the achievement of the study programme objectives. Many resources (databases, library) are available also for students who will study in Liepaja Branch. The need for additional printed books has to be solved before the program execution in Liepāja.

The library of RSU has enough resources for ordering the necessary study materials. Students have access to textbooks, e-books, e-journals and important academic publications in the field of strategic management and PR. The remote access was operatively provided upon state of emergency when most of the courses were moved online. Students have the opportunity to learn and work with modern digital technology.

Expert's group welcomes faculty's initiatives of digitalisation of teaching methods used for evaluations of the submitted works and making broader use of the opportunities offered by e-studies. It allows working with students and lecturers more conveniently. It is highly valued that contact hours are mostly used through interactive lectures and practical interactive classes or seminars, where new technologies available at RSU are used.

Conclusions by specifying the strengths and weaknesses

The study programme is well ensured with resources necessary for a modern study process. The premises in Riga as well as in Liepaja provide a lot of digital resources, IT support and access to all software necessary for a successful study process, library with possibility to use databases available from RSU IP addresses and accessible for students by logging in to the Student Portal and other resources.

Strengths:

1. Strong emphasis on digitally available literature that becomes especially important during Covid-19 pandemic.
2. Ability to flexibly react to the students' needs for remote access of the digital resources due to the pandemic.

Weaknesses:

1. The resources for programme implementation in Liepāja branch are not fully provided and there is no clear plan on when and how it will be done.

4. Teaching Staff

Analysis

Overall, the highly-qualified academic staff is involved in the implementation of the study programme, who has extensive experience in teaching the study course, as well as practical work experience in the field. The capacity of RSU's elected academic staff (which has grown considerably since the previous accreditation is supplemented by the teaching staff elected to an academic position in other higher education institutions or practically working. In addition, PhD students get involved in the implementation of the study programme, for example, the study course "Knowledge and Innovation Management" is read by PhD student.

Teaching staff of the study programme conducts scientific research work at national and international level. Achievements include participation in the EKOSOC scientific project, several projects of the specific objective. Several lecturers publish regularly in scientific editions, including authors or co-authors of monographs by their activity not only popularising RSU, study field and the study programme, but also allowing to use them in the study process; in particular it is worth to mention "Scientific Writing and Dissemination of Research Results", "Pluralism Anxiety. Acting Socially in Latvia", as well as several entries in the Latvian National Encyclopaedia and its printed volume "Latvia".

The teaching staff of the programme integrates their research into teaching as well as demonstrates good research and project work capabilities. Several lecturers regularly participate in working groups dedicated to the development of higher education, science and communication on a national level (including state institutions, governmental organizations etc.). Teaching staff is devoted to organizing interactive lectures and seminars, as well as developing individual tasks for their students. They regularly meet to foster the mutual understanding about the development of the program. The use of modern technologies are involved in the organizing and implementing the study process along with preparation of study materials that are also available in e-environment.

They promote student research via their courses, facilitate students' participation in conferences and publications in RSU journals as well as ensure the connection with the specifics of the job market via field trips and personal expertise.

Cooperation of the teaching staff is promoted within the scope of implementation of the study programme in a targeted way by organising an annual meeting for teaching staff and offering to attend faculty and RSU seminars on the latest news in studies. In addition, the teaching staff is also invited to faculty council meetings, where matters of professional improvement, planned academic and scientific activity, mutual cooperation of the teaching staff, and other important matters affecting the study process and its improvement are discussed.

Several members of teaching staff cooperate by jointly implementing study courses, supervising student papers, as well as performing an academic activity, for example, "Knowledge and Innovation Management".

Mutual cooperation among members of teaching staff is promoted by the heads of the study programme by seeing that study courses are updated and by maintaining regular communication with teaching staff and communicating on a daily basis to resolve issues related to the study process (self-assessment report, p. 233).

Regarding the academic staff's ability to implement the program in English in future, it has to be noted that currently about one third of the staff members involved in the implementation of the programme has met requirements regarding the assessment of their English skills as being on level

B2 or higher or has a degree from a foreign university in a manner that allows for experts to familiarize themselves with a documental proof besides the self assessment (Annex 6.1 information about the RSU language examination, Annex 6.2 Biographies of teaching staff members). However, more staff members indicate their English to correspond to B2 or higher. During the visit, experts observed various levels of English being used for interaction with most academic staff members being able to interact very well. In the absence of the information allowing to determine which academic staff members are intended to be involved in the programme's implementation in English, experts see the necessity to continue providing possibility for RSU-based language testing along with the intensive language courses or those in need for improving English language skills.

Conclusions by specifying the strengths and weaknesses

Strength:

1. Teaching staff have the necessary expertise and proven knowledge in the area. There are academics and professionals recognised in the sector.
2. The involvement of the practitioners from the field of management and communication into implementation of the courses as well as field trips.

5. Assessment of the Compliance of the Study Programme "Strategic Management and Public Relations"

Requirements

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

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

Justification: Annex 24-1. The degree awarded as a result of the study programme does not fully comply with the Latvian Education Classification.

2. Documents confirming that the higher education institution/ college will provide the students with the options to continue the acquisition of education in another study programme or at another higher education institution/ college (a contract with another accredited higher education institution/ college), in case the implementation of the study programme is discontinued.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Justification: Annex 24-2. RSU provides the possibility to continue studies in:

1. Academic master's study programme "Communication and Media Studies".
2. Other RSU's master programme.

3. Document confirming that the higher education institution/ college guarantees to the students a compensation for losses if the study programme is not accredited or the licence of the study programme is revoked due to the actions of the higher education institution/ college (actions or failure to act) and the student does not wish to continue the studies in another study programme.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Justification: Document provided in the Annex 24-3

4. 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

Justification: Document provided in the Annex 24-4 and CV of the teaching staff indicates the proficiency of the official language.

- 5 5. 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.
Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant
Justification: Document provided in Annexes 24.5, 6.1 and 6.2 indicates the proficiency of the English language. However, from Annex 6.1 and 6.2 can be concluded that, in fact, about one-third of the academic staff members involved in the implementation of the programme have a documented proof of having B2 or higher English proficiency (RSU language test or a degree obtained from a university abroad).
- 6 6. 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.
Assessment of compliance: Not relevant
Justification: Not relevant
- 7 7. 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 Institutions of Higher Education.
Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant
Justification: Annex 24-7
 24 academics are involved in the implementation of the compulsory and restricted elective part of the academic master's study programme "Public Relations and Strategic Management", eleven of whom have been elected to academic positions at RSU. Out of eleven academic staff representatives, two are professors and three are associate professors.
- 8 8. The sample of the study agreement complies with the mandatory provisions to be included in the study agreement.
Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant
Justification: Annex 24-8
- 9 9. 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 56.1, Paragraph two and Section 56.2, Paragraph two of the Law on Institutions of Higher Education.
Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant
Justification: Annex 19 and 20. The course descriptions are prepared in Latvian and English and they meet most of the requirements regarding course descriptions except that they are not adjusted for distance learning. Despite the additional information received on 11 February 2021 about the existence of a clear mechanism and methodological guidelines for providing study programmes online, also the formal course descriptions have to be adjusted.
- 10 10. The study programme complies with the valid professional standard or the requirements for the professional qualification (if there is no professional standard required for the relevant occupation) provided that the completion of the study programme leads to a professional qualification.
Assessment of compliance: Not relevant
Justification: Not relevant
- 11 11. 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 Institutions of Higher Education.
Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant
Justification: Annex 24-9

12 12. The study programme complies with the State Academic Education Standard or the Professional Higher Education Standard.

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

Justification: Compliance of study programme “Public Relations and Strategic Management” with the National Educational Standard - Annex 17-1. However, the degree awarded as a result of the study programme does not fully comply with the Latvian Education Classification.

13 13. The joint study programmes comply with the requirements prescribed in Section 551, Paragraphs one, two, and seven of the Law on Institutions of Higher Education (if applicable).

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

Justification: Not relevant

14 14. Each member of the academic staff has either publications published in reviewed editions within the last six years, including international editions (if they have worked for a shorter period of time, the number of publications shall be in proportion to the work period), or artistic creation achievements (for instance, exhibitions, films, theatre performances, and concert activity), or a five-year practical work experience (except for the experience in the implementation of the study programme) in accordance with the Law on Institutions of Higher Education.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Justification: Annexes 6.2 and 6.4. While the majority of the academic staff comply with this requirement, there are some elected members, who should be encouraged to publish more. The way data is presented does not allow experts to fully judge the impact of research.

15 P5 - Overall rating

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

Justification: All legal requirements have been met except that the degree does not fully comply with the Latvian Education Classification;

It does not affect the compliance assessment but it has to be noted that the self-evaluation documentation contains conflicting information on the English proficiency of the academic staff and the formal course descriptions are not aligned for distance learning mode.

Requirements (R6-R8)

1 R6 - The compliance of the study provision, scientific support (if applicable), informative provision (including libraries), material and technical provision, and financial provision with the conditions for the implementation of the study programme and ensuring the achievement of the learning outcomes.

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

Justification: The programme has a good resource base, the students and the teaching staff have access to the necessary resources to ensure the quality of teaching and learning process, although, some aspects need improvements as the staff preferred to have access to Microsoft Office and the study course descriptions are not adjusted for distance learning. However, the resources in RSU Liepāja branch are currently not sufficient for programme implementation and there is no clear plan on when and how they will be provided.

2 R7 - The compliance of the qualification of the academic staff members, visiting professors, visiting associate professors, visiting docents, visiting lecturers, and visiting assistants with the conditions for the implementation of the study programme and the provisions set out in the respective regulatory enactments.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Justification: Annexes 6.1 and 6.2

3 R8 - The study programme leading to the master or doctoral degree is based on the advances and findings in the relevant field of science or artistic creation.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Justification: Research seems to be a part of the study process with an increase of student research skills.

Conclusions by specifying the strengths and weaknesses

On February 11th 2021 the expert group received additional information about programme implementation in distance learning mode and actual English proficiency of staff members, thus eliminating some of the previous remarks of the expert team.

The main issue is the fact that the degree awarded as a result of the study programme does not comply with the legal requirements. The experts consider that the most appropriate degree for this study programme would be "Master of Social Science in Media and Communication (Science)" and suggest that the legislation should allow for such a degree.

There are also some additional remarks which currently do not affect the compliance assessment but still remain:

- 1) the self-evaluation documentation contains some conflicting information on the English proficiency of the academic staff;
- 3) the formal course descriptions are not adjusted for distance learning.

Overall, the programme complies with the legal requirements of the state but adjustments are needed in regard to the degree awarded, course descriptions for distance learning, ensuring the proficiency of English for the academic staff members involved in the study programs offered in English in the future along with the rise of peer-reviewed international academic publications is obtained.

Strengths:

1. The overall compliance with the legal requirements of the state is mostly achieved.

Weaknesses:

1. The degree awarded as a result of the study programme does not fully comply with the Latvian Education Classification.
2. The documented proof for assessment of the English proficiency is episodically missing.
3. The number of international peer-reviewed publications is low.
4. The formal study course descriptions are not adjusted for distance learning mode
5. The RSU Liepāja branch is currently not ready for programme implementation due to the lack of market analysis and lack of resources and/or clear action plan on how to provide them .

Based on the currently available information and the analysis provided above, the experts would like to express concerns about programme implementation in RSU Liepāja branch due to the lack of market analysis and relevant resources for the Liepāja branch.

Evaluation of the study programme "Strategic Management and Public Relations"

Evaluation of the study programme:

Good

6. Recommendations for the Study Programme "Strategic Management and Public Relations"

Short-term recommendations

- | |
|---|
| 1. The emphasis on the course content devoted to the readiness to work in changing conditions should be developed. |
| 2. In order to prepare students to understand and operate in the changing environment, it is suggested to implement in the course content some topics related to change management. |
| 3. To create better interaction with the job market, more systematic connection with employers' needs should be established. |
| 4. More emphasis on leadership skills and theories is needed in the curriculum to achieve the ambitions of the programme. |
| 5. Change the title of the degree to be obtained until the decision on accreditation is made so that the degree complies with the requirements of regulatory enactments. |
| 6. Update the course descriptions for distance learning. |
| 7. Ensure that the academic staff is fully ready for implementation of the study programme in English. |
| 8. Ensure that there is a market analysis and that the RSU Liepāja branch has sufficient resources for programme implementation |

Long-term recommendations

- | |
|---|
| 1. International component of the programme should be strengthened by facilitating the amount of incoming academic staff and students as well as outgoing student mobility. |
| 2. To work on developing closer cooperation with foreign universities to promote the awareness of RSU (for example, more active participation and call for international conferences, teaching staff visiting lectures, communication on social media in English etc.). |
| 3. Ensuring the English learning and testing support for academic staff members. |

II. "Health Communication" ASSESSMENT

II. "Health Communication" ASSESSMENT

1. Indicators Describing the Study Programme

Analysis

Students who successfully complete the academic master's study programme "Health Communication" (code 45321) will receive a master degree of social sciences in communication science.

The Master's study programme "Health Communication" reflects the interdisciplinary orientation and the essence of the programme, providing potential applicants with a clear message of the expected content of their studies, and potential partners - with an internationally recognized title of such a study programme. The degree offered along with the programme's aims, objectives, learning outcomes, and admission requirements are interrelated and sufficiently explicated. The assessment of learning outcomes has generally been appropriate, transparent and objective, and it supports the learner's development, which is also confirmed by the feedback of students. The indicators describing the study programme are strongly interrelated. However, this is an academic master

study programme, therefore the degree has to comply with Cabinet Regulations No 322 "Regulations on the Latvian Education Classification", Annex 2. According to these regulations, the degree should be "Master of Social Science in Journalism and Communication".

The master study programme "Health Communication" has been accredited on a full-time and part-time basis in Latvian, but only full-time studies are currently being implemented. The Faculty of Communication will in future consider the possibility to also start a part-time implementation of the study programme. The study programme is also submitted for implementation in English, however, the management of the study programme does not have any specific plan for the next two years on how to work on it because that would be significant in order to attract foreign students for their studies permanently as well as for the ERASMUS exchange. As stated in the self-assessment report, RSU is planning in the future to extend the possibilities for the implementation of the study programme and also attracting part-time and foreign students which are seen as necessary.

Conclusions by specifying the strengths and weaknesses

Strengths:

1. Clear and internationally recognisable name of the programme.
2. Logically developed and systematically explained study indicators.

Weaknesses:

1. The degree awarded does not fully comply with the Latvian Education Classification.

2. The Content of Studies and Implementation Thereof

Analysis

The study courses thematically are relevant to the needs of the industry and scientific trends of the field of health communication research and practice, and the interdisciplinary nature of the field, as also reflected by course descriptions. Overall, the selection of courses demonstrates a good balance between health and communication-related topics with an equal proportion of each discipline being reflected in the content of the studies.

Considering that the Master's programme has been established very recently, there is no possibility for the experts to familiarize themselves with master's thesis research. However, the self-assessment report includes a sufficient description of a variety of research directions available for students to examine health communication aspects on the national and international level, e.g. building on their professional backgrounds (self-assessment report, p. 98).

The general student satisfaction with their studies is demonstrated by both, the self-assessment document as well as was confirmed during the meeting with the respective students.

However, in the 2019 winter admission's students' survey "they mention that the acquisition of some study courses proved to be difficult due to insufficient prior knowledge" (self-assessment report, p. 99). Experts see this aspect in combination with students' general study and professional workload as a potential threat to students' ability to accomplish their degree successfully. Taking this into consideration, some support might be needed in a form of, for instance, organizing a special course/ activities aimed at those with insufficient background to level their point of departure with more experienced peers. That being said, the descriptions of the study courses and the description of the prospective final thesis are of high quality and comply with the provisions set forth in the regulatory enactments.

The course descriptions are prepared in Latvian and English. The programme is currently implemented in Latvian but the self-assessment report indicates the intention to implement the program in full and part-time also in English.

The survey of potential employers indicates the recognized need for programme's graduates yet this need is mostly confirmed by the communication industry, media and health NGOs. More in-depth understanding of potential employers offering the in-house career opportunities would give a better insight into job prospects. The students' feedback is generally very positive and supportive to this unique programme. Considering that current and potential students will mostly also be full-time employed professionals in their respective fields, the student mobility can be a challenge. Given the specifics of the programme combined with the current health crisis related to Covid-19, the emphasis on internationalisation at home can be a productive solution and needs to be developed further.

The study implementation and evaluation methods comply with the best practice of teaching and learning at HEIs and the student-centered approach. It might be valuable to consider and describe its specifics for master's level students with an extensive professional background more in detail. Partly, the needs of professionals that return to obtain master's are covered by organizing the studies according to the module principle. However, the self-assessment document covers the basic principles that can be attributed to all levels of students but the situation of bachelor students are, by far, different from that of the master's in terms of their learning and associated challenges that stem from their professional and private contexts (self-assessment report, p. 96 contains a mistaken reference to bachelor thesis instead of master's thesis development).

Considering the study field's future aim to establish this programme also in the region at Liepāja branch, the market for potential students and employees must be carefully studied before taking the final decision. During the meeting with the representatives of the Liepāja branch as well as academic personnel interested in developing the programme at Liepāja it becomes clear that there is a strong academic interest and network available while the knowledge about the market is rather fragmented and based on popular notions about, for instance, the prospects for regional development and attracting emigrated Latvians as oppose to in-depth market research.

The experts approve the intentions to implement the programme in the form of distance learning while indicating that the course descriptions have to be adjusted for distance learning to comply with the legal requirements. The experts recognise the readiness of the field of study and particular programmes to implement the distance learning mode. However, it does not free one from the necessity to adjust the course descriptions since the pace and methods of studies for the distance learning mode has its specifics. The study field possesses the necessary resources and support in a form of essential online platforms as well as methodological assistance to the teaching faculty. The experts also approve the idea to execute the implementation of the study programme in English while encouraging the management of the program to facilitate the necessary English learning and testing support (see more detailed analysis in Chapter 3).

Conclusions by specifying the strengths and weaknesses

The content and implementation of the study programme so far has been successful and demonstrates a great potential for being developed further.

Strengths:

1. Uniqueness and interdisciplinary combination of highly demanded knowledge and skills.
2. Support from the communication and media industries as well as from the public sector.

Weaknesses:

1. More focus on introductory academic activities specifically aimed at the preparedness of the students with insufficient background knowledge to pursue Master's studies upon enrolling is missing.
2. The lack of in-depth understanding of potential employers offering the in-house career opportunities.
3. The lack of a specific student-centered approach that would prioritize students - working professionals.
4. Study course descriptions are currently not adjusted for distance learning.
5. Lack of market analysis for programme implementation in the Liepāja branch

3. Resources and Provision of the Study Programme

Analysis

The existing resources (learning environment, study materials, learning tools and technical equipment, rooms, financial resources) of the faculty support the achievement of the study programme objectives. Digital learning tools are developed and academic staff is available for consultations to students both on-site and remotely. The necessary literature resources (databases, books, library) for research and programme implementation are available with a strong emphasis on their online accessibility. Overall, the implementation of new study programs in Latvia, especially in the field of communication and related fields is accompanied by the lack of relevant literature in Latvian language. The body of literature in Latvian develops slowly but steadily, meanwhile, the students have necessary English skills to be able to follow the latest scholarly work published in English. RSU provides the required literature indicated in study course descriptions for the Master's program "Health Communication. As to the technology resources, during the meeting with experts, academic staff pointed out the necessity to have access to Microsoft Office.

The library of RSU has enough resources for ordering the necessary study materials. Students have access to textbooks, e-books, e-journals and important academic publications in the field of health communication. The remote access was operatively provided upon state of emergency when most of the courses were moved online. Students have the opportunity to learn and work with modern digital technology.

The resources for programme implementation in Liepāja branch are currently not provided, except from the premises and there is no clear plan on when it will be done.

Experts welcome faculty's initiatives of digitalisation of teaching methods used for evaluations of the submitted works and making broader use of the opportunities offered by e-studies. It allows working with students and lecturers more conveniently. It is highly valued that contact hours are mostly used through interactive lectures and practical interactive classes or seminars, where new technologies available at RSU are used.

Conclusions by specifying the strengths and weaknesses

The study programme is well ensured with resources necessary for a modern study process.

Strengths:

1. Strong emphasis on digitally available literature that becomes especially important during Covid-19 pandemic.

2. Ability to flexibly react to the students' needs for remote access of digital resources due to the pandemic.

Weaknesses:

1. The resources for programme implementation in Liepaja branch are currently not provided

4. Teaching Staff

Analysis

30 lecturers are involved in the implementation of the academic master study programme "Health communication": five professors and six associate professors, seven assistant professors and one acting assistant professor, five lecturers, three acting lecturers and four invited lecturers. 26 members of the teaching staff (83 %) work full time at the RSU. All members of the teaching staff who are involved as lecturers or visiting lecturers in the study programme hold at least a Master's degree in a related field of science (self-assessment report, p. 102 and Annex 6.2).

The program's teaching staff demonstrates dynamic growth as illuminated by a number of newly defended PhDs included in the teaching corpus of the program. The research activities complement the focus of the programme and support the interdisciplinary combination of communication and health fields of science. The general qualification of the lecturers is in full compliance with the requirements. The involvement of external experts and lecturers is very welcome and could be expanded.

RSU academic staff is involved in national and international scientific research; for example, in many projects of the international programme "INTERREG Baltic Sea Region" that also cover aspects related to health communication. In the academic year 2019/2020, there was a plan to participate in study "Breast Cancer Screening" of the Tallinn Health Care College where the efficiency of communication in the implementation of screening programmes will be studied and to implement a project of fund Voldemārs of LCCI by conducting "Harm Reduction Strategy for Promoting Restriction of Smoking". Students are involved in these studies. Data from the studies will be integrated by explaining the relation of theory and practice in the content of some courses (self-assessment report, p. 103).

In 2020, under the guidance of academic staff, the students will be involved in the research of what determines the effectiveness of communication in promoting female participation in breast-cancer screening programs. Two master's theses are being drafted on this subject. Both research methodology and results are discussed in the courses "Health Marketing" and "Lobbying".

A mechanism for mutual cooperation among the teaching staff in order to promote improvement and interrelation of study courses/modules has been created. Heads of the study programme analyse the content of study courses and design the development of courses in accordance with the sequence of acquired knowledge in order to ensure that acquired knowledge in these study courses is considered from different perspectives and the acquired competence would be examined from another aspect. For example, models of behaviour are acquired in study course "Health Communication", then these models are used in practical assignments when developing communication strategies in study course "Health Communication and Social Marketing", and in study course "Research Use, Methods in Health Communication" efficiency of communication in the use of different models is determined (self-assessment report, p. 107).

Student representatives reported some issues in regards to the quality of teaching of one faculty

member. They said their concerns were taken seriously by the university. The channels of communication between the students and the university representatives should be maintained. In order to avoid such situations in the future, experts recommend appropriate measures to be taken in support of legitimate student concerns.

Regarding the academic staff's ability to implement the program in English in future, it has to be noted that currently about half of the staff members involved in the implementation of the Master's program has met requirements regarding the assessment of their English skills as being on level B2 or higher or has a degree from a foreign university in a manner that allows for experts to familiarize themselves with a documental proof besides the self assessment (Annex 6.1 information about the RSU language examination, Annex 6.2 Biographies of teaching staff members). However, more staff members indicate their English to correspond to B2 or higher. During the visit, experts observed various levels of English being used for interaction with most academic staff members being able to interact very well. In the absence of the information allowing to determine which academic staff members are intended to be involved in the programme's implementation in English, experts see the necessity to continue providing possibility for RSU-based language testing along with the intensive language courses or those in need for improving English language skills.

Conclusions by specifying the strengths and weaknesses

In conclusion, the body of teaching staff of the program is having the necessary level of education and involvement in national and international research. They cooperate in developing study courses that complement each other as well as provide opportunities for students to participate in research. The suggestions regarding the quality of the teaching reported by the students are heard and the staff is willing to work toward improvement.

Strengths:

1. Dynamic development of new faculty members.
2. Student involvement in research.
3. Interrelation of the study courses that allows to tackle the gained knowledge from different perspectives.

Weaknesses:

1. While the students' complaints regarding the quality of the teaching of one faculty member are heard, the actions necessary to fix this situation that should be taken/ expected from the faculty member and the field of study, are not clearly communicated to students.

5. Assessment of the Compliance of the Study Programme "Health Communication"

Requirements

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

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

Justification: Annex 24-1. The degree awarded as a result of the study programme does not fully comply with the Latvian Education Classification.

- 2 2. Documents confirming that the higher education institution/ college will provide the students with the options to continue the acquisition of education in another study programme or at another higher education institution/ college (a contract with another accredited higher education institution/ college), in case the implementation of the study programme is discontinued.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Justification: Annex 24-2. RSU provides the possibility to continue studies in RSU's academic master's study programme "Communication and Media Studies", RSU's academic master's study programme "Public Relations and Strategic Management", RSU's academic master's study programme "Public Health".

- 3 3. Document confirming that the higher education institution/ college guarantees to the students a compensation for losses if the study programme is not accredited or the licence of the study programme is revoked due to the actions of the higher education institution/ college (actions or failure to act) and the student does not wish to continue the studies in another study programme.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Justification: Document provided in the Annex 24-3

- 4 4. 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

Justification: Document provided in the Annex 24-4 and CV of the teaching staff indicates the proficiency of the official language.

- 5 5. 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.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Justification: Document provided in Annexes 24.5, 6.1 and 6.2 indicates the proficiency of English language. However, from Annex 6.1 and 6.2 can be concluded that, in fact, about half of academic staff members involved in the implementation of the programme have a documented proof of having B2 or higher English proficiency (RSU language test or a degree obtained from a university abroad).

- 6 6. 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.

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

Justification: Not relevant

- 7 7. 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 Institutions of Higher Education.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Justification: 33 academics are involved in the implementation of the compulsory and restricted elective part of the academic Master's study programme "Health Communication", twenty-two of whom have been elected to academic positions at RSU. Out of twenty-two academic staff representatives, four are professors, and five are associate professors.

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Justification: Annex 24-8

- 9 9. 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 56.1, Paragraph two and Section 56.2, Paragraph two of the Law on Institutions of Higher Education.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Justification: Annex 19 and 20. The course descriptions are prepared in Latvian and English and they meet most of the requirements regarding course descriptions except that the course descriptions are not adjusted for distance learning. Despite the additional information received on 11 February 2021 about the existence of a clear mechanism and methodological guidelines for providing study programmes online, also the formal course descriptions have to be adjusted.

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

Justification: Not relevant

11 11. 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 Institutions of Higher Education.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Justification: Annex 24-9

12 12. The study programme complies with the State Academic Education Standard or the Professional Higher Education Standard.

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

Justification: Compliance of Study Programme "Health Communication" with the National Educational Standard - Annex 17-1. However, the degree awarded as a result of the study programme does not fully comply with the Latvian Education Classification.

13 13. The joint study programmes comply with the requirements prescribed in Section 551, Paragraphs one, two, and seven of the Law on Institutions of Higher Education (if applicable).

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

Justification: Not relevant

14 14. Each member of the academic staff has either publications published in reviewed editions within the last six years, including international editions (if they have worked for a shorter period of time, the number of publications shall be in proportion to the work period), or artistic creation achievements (for instance, exhibitions, films, theatre performances, and concert activity), or a five-year practical work experience (except for the experience in the implementation of the study programme) in accordance with the Law on Institutions of Higher Education.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Justification: Annexes 6.2 and 6.4. While the majority of the academic staff submitted an impressive list of publications, there are some members who should be encouraged to publish more.

15 P5 - Overall rating

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

Justification: All legal requirements have been met except that the degree does not fully comply with the Latvian Education Classification.

It does not affect the compliance assessment but it has to be noted that the self-evaluation documentation contains conflicting information on the English proficiency of the academic staff and the formal course descriptions are not aligned for distance learning mode.

Requirements (R6-R8)

- 1 R6 - The compliance of the study provision, scientific support (if applicable), informative provision (including libraries), material and technical provision, and financial provision with the conditions for the implementation of the study programme and ensuring the achievement of the learning outcomes.

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

Justification: The programme has a good resource base, the students and the teaching staff have access to the necessary resources to ensure the quality of teaching and learning process, although, some aspects need improvements as the staff preferred to have access to Microsoft Office.

The course descriptions are currently not adjusted for distance learning mode. The resources for programme implementation in the Liepāja branch are currently not provided.

- 2 R7 - The compliance of the qualification of the academic staff members, visiting professors, visiting associate professors, visiting docents, visiting lecturers, and visiting assistants with the conditions for the implementation of the study programme and the provisions set out in the respective regulatory enactments.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Justification: Annexes 6.1 and 6.2

- 3 R8 - The study programme leading to the master or doctoral degree is based on the advances and findings in the relevant field of science or artistic creation.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Justification: Relevant research is incorporated in the study process both in courses and via the possibility to participate in national and international research projects, thus, allowing students to build their research capacity necessary for creating new knowledge.

Conclusions by specifying the strengths and weaknesses

On February 11th 2021 the expert group received additional information about programme implementation in distance learning mode and actual English proficiency of staff members, thus eliminating some of the previous remarks of the expert team.

The main issue is the fact that the degree awarded as a result of the study programme does not comply with the legal requirements. The experts consider that the most appropriate degree for this study programme would be "Master of Social Science in Media and Communication (Science)" and suggest that the legislation should allow for such a degree.

There are also some additional remarks which currently do not affect the compliance assessment but still remain:

- 1) the self-evaluation documentation contains some conflicting information on the English proficiency of the academic staff;
- 3) the formal course descriptions are not adjusted for distance learning.

Overall, the programme complies with the legal requirements of the state but adjustments are needed in regard to the degree awarded, course descriptions for distance learning, ensuring the proficiency of English for the academic staff members involved in the study programs offered in English in the future along with the rise of peer-reviewed international academic publications is obtained.

Strengths:

1. The overall compliance with the legal requirements of the state is mostly achieved.

Weaknesses:

1. The degree awarded as a result of the study programme does not fully comply with the Latvian Education Classification.

2. The documented proof for assessment of the English proficiency is episodically missing.
3. The number of international peer-reviewed publications is low.
4. The formal study course descriptions are not adjusted for distance learning mode
5. The RSU Liepāja branch is currently not ready for programme implementation due to the lack of market analysis and lack of resources and/or clear action plan on how to provide them .

Based on the currently available information and the analysis provided above, the experts would like to express concerns about programme implementation in RSU Liepāja branch due to the lack of market analysis and relevant resources for the Liepāja branch.

Evaluation of the study programme "Health Communication"

Evaluation of the study programme:

Good

6. Recommendations for the Study Programme "Health Communication"

Short-term recommendations

- | |
|--|
| 1. Ensuring the preparatory activities for incoming Master’s students aimed at familiarizing them with the specifics and expectations of Master’s level research. |
| 2. Change the title of the degree to be obtained until the decision on accreditation is made so that the degree complies with the requirements of regulatory enactments. |
| 3. Update the study course descriptions for distance learning mode |
| 4. Ensure that the academic staff is fully ready for implementation of the study programme in English. |
| 5. Ensure that there is a market analysis and a clear plan for providing resources for programme implementation in the RSU Liepāja branch |

Long-term recommendations

- | |
|---|
| 1. Investigating the opinion and establishing connections with potential employers of the graduates that would facilitate the in-house career opportunities. |
| 2. Developing student support system that would consider the specifics of students-working professionals and would be aimed at facilitating the threats of drop-out without a degree. |
| 3. Ensuring the English learning and testing support for academic staff members. |

II. "Communication Culture and Multimedia" ASSESSMENT

II. "Communication Culture and Multimedia" ASSESSMENT

1. Indicators Describing the Study Programme

Analysis

The PhD study programme “Communication Culture and Multimedia” (code 51321) aims to prepare highly qualified specialists meeting international requirements in the field of communication science – teaching staff, scientific staff, and professionals in the field of communication, as well as public

communicators and opinion leaders. Students who successfully complete the curriculum will receive a degree (Ph.D.) in Mass Media and Communication.

The aim of the programme is to enable multimedia research in Latvia and to take part in international academic and applied research in this field, as well as to develop a methodologically sound basis for research of Latvian and wider East European communication assuming that culture-centred intellectual thought in these communities lays serious emphasis on national culture in the analysis of social processes, which also affects special types of implementation of communication practices. The programme contributes to a wider understanding of the concept of culture, analysing the practice of developing, disseminating, and interpreting communication messages.

Learning outcomes of the study programme “Communication Culture and Multimedia” are defined as knowledge of latest scientific approaches to and insights in communication, quantitative and qualitative research methodology and methods of research in communication science; skills in increasing their scientific qualification, implementing scientific projects, gaining internationally recognised achievements, leading research or practical development tasks in media institutions, communication departments of companies, public institutions and private organisations; competence to solve important research tasks, proposing research ideas, planning, structuring and leading scientific projects of national and international level, and further independently critically analysing, summarising and interpreting the data obtained empirically.

The study programme is in Latvian, but the international component brought by knowledgeable lecturers from abroad was highly valued by students. Students also found that the programme is “very modern and topical concerning globalisation, as the result these kinds of skills are very important for every individual not only for the experts within the field”.

Experts were happy to hear of the RSU's plans to offer teaching in English, and also of restructuring the programme and streamline it with other PhD programs at RSU. The expert group thinks that should improve the quality of the programme in the years to come, and its ability to attract a diverse group of PhD researchers.

Another aspect that could be improved on is how to prepare PhD students for the labour market after they graduate. The experts got the impression that there could be more clarity in explaining and marketing what the programme hopes to achieve and what a candidate could aspire to do with his or her degree.

Experts also believe that the process of accepting students could be more transparent and institutionalised. Experts recommend that the job prospects of PhDs could be better communicated to them and also to prospective students when admitting students to doctoral studies, a balance must be kept between purely academic research and research topics which provide great (practical) value for society or/and industries outside the university.

Conclusions by specifying the strengths and weaknesses

Despite the fact that the programme is relatively new and there are no state-funded study places it has managed to enroll a pretty good number of students each year. The problem is that many of them have unfortunately dropped out of the studies. The integration of PhD researchers within the research and teaching activities of the department could be enhanced. Experts thought that the programme would benefit from further transparency in terms of its goals and procedures. In general, supporting and investing in the research environment for the faculty would also reflect on an

enhanced experience for PhD researchers.

Strengths:

1. The PhD programme prepares researchers well in scientific research methods and writing skills.

Weaknesses:

1. Research grants are scarce and overall funds for research are limited, which works against the sustainable development of research activities.

2. The Content of Studies and Implementation Thereof

Analysis

The programme delivers on its core purpose of preparing students to conduct social science research. The study courses are of high quality. The content is relevant and complementary, and it complies with the aims of the study programme, ensures the achievement of the learning outcomes. Experts enjoyed meeting the PhD students at the department who are working on important and engaging topics. In the conversation, PhD researchers seemed confident and knowledgeable about their topics and their studies. That said, experts did not get a complete picture of the selection process in place to accept students and also the opportunities available to them, whether to teach and collaborate with faculty while studying, or on what jobs they are preparing for after they graduate.

According to the self-assessment report The Social Sciences Platform provides RSU doctoral and post-doctoral training, as well as support in the training of qualified academic and research staff. To support scientific activity, the platform's academic and scientific staff teach study courses related to research methodology and organization, including ethical aspects of scientific work. All activities related to doctoral and post-doctoral education, resources and grants for individual doctoral research paper, as well as the entire study programme, are coordinated by the Department of Doctoral Studies of RSU. Research grants, however, are still scarce and overall funds for research are limited, which works against the sustainable development of research activities.

Following interviews with PhD students and graduates, experts found the following:

- 1) PhD researchers are able to conduct significant original scientific research using modern methods of empirical data collection and processing;
- 2) They are able to formulate a research problem, plan, implement and lead scientific and practical research, summarise and interpret results;
- 3) They are able to present their research in conference proceedings and scientific publications;
- 4) They have a good understanding of the classical and modern scientific theories of communication and culture, know research methodology in communication science and cultural research;
- 5) They are able to increase their scientific qualification, propose research problems, implement and lead scientific and applied research.

This indicates that the PhD study implementation methods, including the evaluation methods, contribute to the achievement of the aims and learning outcomes of the study courses and the study programme. Student-centred learning and teaching principles are taken into account and PhD researchers are generally satisfied. An area where the programme could be improved is in transparency, research and communication about what students can expect after completing their degrees.

The experts approve the intentions to implement the programme in the form of distance learning

while indicating that the course descriptions have to be adjusted for distance learning to comply with the legal requirements. The experts recognise the readiness of the field of study and particular programmes to implement the distance learning mode. However, it does not free one from the necessity to adjust the course descriptions since the pace and methods of studies for the distance learning mode has its specifics. The study field possesses the necessary resources and the support in a form of essential online platforms as well as methodological assistance to the teaching faculty. The experts also approve the idea to execute the implementation of the study programme in English while encouraging the management of the programme to facilitate the necessary English learning and testing support (see more detailed analysis at the Chapter 3).

Conclusions by specifying the strengths and weaknesses

In conclusion, experts find that PhD researchers are broadly satisfied with the programme and their ability to conduct research. The issue of a student drop-out is a concern. In order to reduce drop-outs, find additional ways to support learners during their studies and analyze possible new ways to adapt the learning process to the individual needs of learners without compromising academic quality. Furthermore, PhD researchers would benefit from more thought and discussion from the faculty and administration about what to expect after the completion of their degree.

Strengths:

1. PhD researchers are positive about the programme and their ability to conduct research.
2. PhD researchers have commended their working relationship with department faculty.

Weaknesses:

1. Relatively high rate of drop-outs.
2. There could be better preparation for PhD researchers about what to expect after the completion of their degree.
3. More transparency on all aspects of PhD study from selection to post-graduation expectations.
4. Course descriptions currently are not adjusted for distance learning mode.

3. Resources and Provision of the Study Programme

Analysis

The existing resources (learning environment, study materials, learning tools and technical equipment, rooms, financial resources) are of a high standard. The library of RSU has sufficient resources for ordering the necessary study materials. Students have access to textbooks, e-books and important academic publications in the field of media. PhD researchers expressed their satisfaction with their ability to acquire books and resources for their research. A general concern is the absence of state-funded study places. Also, while experts have to the conclusion that the assessment of learning outcomes has generally been appropriate, they find that there could be further transparency in some aspects, like student selection and post-graduation expectations.

Overall, the implementation of new study programs in Latvia, especially in the field of communication and related fields is accompanied by the lack of relevant literature in Latvian language. The body of literature in Latvian develops slowly but steadily, meanwhile, the students have the necessary English skills to be able to follow the latest scholarly work published in English. RSU provides the required literature indicated in study course descriptions for the programme.

Conclusions by specifying the strengths and weaknesses

Strengths:

1. Technical facilities and supportive infrastructure.

Weaknesses:

1. Absence of state funded study places.

4. Teaching Staff

Analysis

The qualification of the teaching staff members involved in the implementation of the study programme complies with the requirements for the implementation of the study programme. 20 academics are involved in the implementation of the compulsory and restricted elective part of the academic doctoral study programme "Communication Culture and Multimedia", fourteen of whom have been elected to academic positions at RSU. Out of fourteen academic staff representatives, five are professors and five are associate professors. Many researchers have individual international collaborations and networks.

The teaching staff of the study programme complies with the requirement in regard to employing experts approved by the Latvian Science Council in the field "Mass media and communication" and there are 6 members of the teaching staff who currently have the expert rights.

The teaching staff of the RSU Faculty of Communication has implemented and continues to implement several research projects.

Since 2010, lecturers of the study field in cooperation with the LU Artificial Intelligence laboratory have developed and continue to improve the methodology of computerised processing of digital communication texts. Resources barometrs.korpuss.lv/ and saeima.korpuss.lv/ are available online.

The lecturers involved in the implementation of the doctoral study programme publish academic articles in Latvian and English in peer-reviewed scientific journals in Latvia and abroad. Lecturers cooperate with media and communication professionals, speak in mass media and organise practical classes for professionals, thus raising the prestige of academic education.

Research work of the academic staff is mostly related to the lecturers' specialization within the framework of the programme and their study courses. Studies conducted by the academic staff are an important contribution to both the development of the represented field and the development of the study programme, as well as the improvement of the study content. Through research, the lecturers bring the most topical industry novelties to the study courses. Teaching staff prepares scientific papers, participates in conferences and practical seminars, develops textbooks and methodological materials (self-assessment report, p. 213).

The doctoral study programme has a mechanism for mutual cooperation between teaching staff. It promotes the improvement and interlinking of study courses. When implementing interdisciplinary projects, lecturers of the study field cooperated with researchers in the field of sociology, social anthropology, psychology, economics and statistical data analysis. This resulted in the improvement of the course Qualitative Research Methods by extending the knowledge base on formulation of interviews and questionnaires; the course "Communication and Cultural Theories" has been developed using the ideas provided by psychologists on social representations, attitudes, values and anonymity.

Regarding the academic staff's ability to implement the programme in English in future, it has to be noted that currently about half of the staff members involved in the implementation of the PhD

programme has met requirements regarding the assessment of their English skills as being on level B2 or higher or has a degree from a foreign university in a manner that allows for experts to familiarize themselves with a documental proof besides the self-assessment (Annex 6.1 information about the RSU language examination, Annex 6.2 Biographies of teaching staff members). However, more staff members indicate their English to correspond to B2 or higher. During the visit, experts observed various levels of English being used for interaction with most academic staff members being able to interact very well. In the absence of the information allowing to determine which academic staff members are intended to be involved in the programme's implementation in English, experts see the necessity to continue providing possibility for RSU-based language testing along with the intensive language courses or those in need for improving English language skills.

Conclusions by specifying the strengths and weaknesses

Strengths:

1. High qualification of the teaching staff.

Weaknesses:

1. Some PhD students feel isolated.
2. Long-term research profile linked to present strengths and to opportunities related to the country and industry priorities for development is lacking.
3. Research productivity and mobility of researchers, as well as collaborative research among academic staff and doctoral students, is lacking.
4. Contradicting information about the staff members' proficiency in English

5. Assessment of the Compliance of the Study Programme "Communication Culture and Multimedia"

Requirements

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Justification: Annex 24-1

- 2 2. Documents confirming that the higher education institution/ college will provide the students with the options to continue the acquisition of education in another study programme or at another higher education institution/ college (a contract with another accredited higher education institution/ college), in case the implementation of the study programme is discontinued.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Justification: Annex 24-2. RSU provides the possibility to continue studies in PhD programme "Communication Management" of the Turiba University (a cooperation agreement has been concluded).

- 3 3. Document confirming that the higher education institution/ college guarantees to the students a compensation for losses if the study programme is not accredited or the licence of the study programme is revoked due to the actions of the higher education institution/ college (actions or failure to act) and the student does not wish to continue the studies in another study programme.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Justification: Document provided in the Annex 24-3.

- 4 4. 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
Justification: Document provided in the Annex 24-4 and CV of the teaching staff indicates the proficiency of the official language.
- 5 5. 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.
Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant
Justification: Document provided in the Annexes 24.5, 6.1 and 6.2 indicates the proficiency of the official language. However, from Annex 6.1 and 6.2 can be concluded that, in fact, about the half of the academic staff involved in implementing the PhD programme have a documented proof of having B2 or higher English proficiency (RSU language test or a degree obtained from a university abroad).
- 6 6. 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.
Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant
Justification: Annex 24.6 and 26-6-7
 20 academics are involved in the implementation of the compulsory and restricted elective part of the academic PhD study programme "Communication Culture and Multimedia", fourteen of whom have been elected to academic positions at RSU. Out of fourteen academic staff representatives, five are professors and five are associate professors. 6 members of the teaching staff have been approved as experts by the Latvian Science Council.
- 7 7. 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 Institutions of Higher Education.
Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant
Justification: Annex 24-7
 20 academics are involved in the implementation of the compulsory and restricted elective part of the academic PhD study programme "Communication Culture and Multimedia", fourteen of whom have been elected to academic positions at RSU. Out of fourteen academic staff representatives, five are professors and five are associate professors.
- 8 8. The sample of the study agreement complies with the mandatory provisions to be included in the study agreement.
Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant
Justification: Annex 24-8
- 9 9. 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 56.1, Paragraph two and Section 56.2, Paragraph two of the Law on Institutions of Higher Education.
Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant
Justification: Annexes 19 and 20. The course descriptions are prepared in Latvian and English. However, the course descriptions are not adjusted for distance learning mode.
- 10 10. The study programme complies with the valid professional standard or the requirements for the professional qualification (if there is no professional standard required for the relevant occupation) provided that the completion of the study programme leads to a professional qualification.
Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

Justification: Not relevant

- 11 11. 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 Institutions of Higher Education.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Justification: Annex 24-9

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

Justification: Not relevant

- 13 13. The joint study programmes comply with the requirements prescribed in Section 551, Paragraphs one, two, and seven of the Law on Institutions of Higher Education (if applicable).

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

Justification: Not relevant

- 14 14. Each member of the academic staff has either publications published in reviewed editions within the last six years, including international editions (if they have worked for a shorter period of time, the number of publications shall be in proportion to the work period), or artistic creation achievements (for instance, exhibitions, films, theatre performances, and concert activity), or a five-year practical work experience (except for the experience in the implementation of the study programme) in accordance with the Law on Institutions of Higher Education.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Justification: Annexes 6.2 and 6.4. The majority of academic staff members comply with this requirement.

- 15 P5 - Overall rating

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Justification: All legal requirements have been met.

It does not affect the compliance assessment but it has to be noted that the self-evaluation documentation contains conflicting information on the English proficiency of the academic staff and the formal course descriptions are not aligned for distance learning mode.

Requirements (R6-R8)

- 1 R6 - The compliance of the study provision, scientific support (if applicable), informative provision (including libraries), material and technical provision, and financial provision with the conditions for the implementation of the study programme and ensuring the achievement of the learning outcomes.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Justification: The programme has a good resource base, the students and the teaching staff have access to the necessary resources to ensure the quality of teaching and learning process, although, some aspects need improvements as the staff preferred to have access to Microsoft Office. The study course descriptions are currently not adjusted for distance learning mode.

- 2 R7 - The compliance of the qualification of the academic staff members, visiting professors, visiting associate professors, visiting docents, visiting lecturers, and visiting assistants with the conditions for the implementation of the study programme and the provisions set out in the respective regulatory enactments.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Justification: Annexes 6.1 and 6.2

- 3 R8 - The study programme leading to the master or doctoral degree is based on the advances and findings in the relevant field of science or artistic creation.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Justification: Research seems to be a part of the study process with increase of student research skills.

Conclusions by specifying the strengths and weaknesses

Overall, the programme complies with the legal requirements of the state but adjustments are needed so that assessment of the proficiency of English for the academic staff members involved in the study programs is obtained.

Strengths:

1. The overall compliance with the legal requirements of the state is mostly achieved.

Weaknesses:

1. The documented proof for assessment of the English proficiency is episodically missing.
2. The formal course descriptions are not adjusted for distance learning mode

Evaluation of the study programme "Communication Culture and Multimedia"

Evaluation of the study programme:

Good

6. Recommendations for the Study Programme "Communication Culture and Multimedia"

Short-term recommendations

- | |
|---|
| 1. In order to reduce drop-outs, find additional ways to support learners during their studies and analyze possible new ways to adapt the learning process to the individual needs of learners without compromising academic quality. |
| 2. More transparency and communication regarding career trajectories of PhD students. |
| 3. Further integration of PhD researchers into research activities. |
| 4. Update the course descriptions for distance learning mode |
| 5. Ensure that the academic staff is fully ready for implementation of the study programme in English. |

Long-term recommendations

- | |
|---|
| 1. In consultation with the ministries, find an opportunity for the state to finance free PhD study places. |
| 2. Ensuring the English learning and testing support for academic staff members. |
| 3. Encourage faculty to find dedicated time for research in order to enhance the research culture across the board. |

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
Pursuant to Section 5, Paragraph 21 of the Law on Institutions of Higher Education, the higher education institution/ college shall ensure continuous improvement, development, and efficient performance of the study direction whilst implementing their internal quality assurance systems:	Fully compliant		The Deming cycle is used for the implementation and application of the internal quality system. The system ensures continuous improvement, development, and efficient performance of the study field and the relevant study programmes.
R2 - The cooperation with different organisations from Latvia and abroad implemented within the study direction ensures the achievement of the aims of the study direction.	Fully compliant		36 Erasmus+ agreements with foreign HEI (Annex 7) and open-ended agreements with seven organisations for the provision of places of practice for RSU communication students (Annex 9.2). The list contains a variety of companies, both agencies, and associations.
R3 - Compliance of scientific research and artistic creation with the development level thereof (if applicable).	Fully compliant		While the number of international peer-reviewed publications could be higher for some of the elected academic staff members as well as the main focus of the current research projects is predominantly devoted to local issues, overall, the research is topical and corresponds with national and global research trends as illustrated by Annexes 6.4 and 14.
R4 - Elimination of the shortcomings and deficiencies identified during the previous assessment of the study direction, if it has been conducted, or the implementation of the provided recommendations.	Fully compliant		Analysing the ten recommendations that were desirable to improve for the entire study field "Information and Communication Sciences", the experts conclude that most of the recommendations have been taken into account and implemented (Annex 11 and on-site interviews).

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	Photography (43321)	Partially compliant	Partially compliant	Fully compliant	Not relevant	Good
2	Multimedia Communication (43321)	Partially compliant	Partially compliant	Fully compliant	Not relevant	Good
3	Journalism (43321)	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Not relevant	Good
4	Public Relations (43342)	Partially compliant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Not relevant	Good
5	Communication and Media Studies (45321)	Partially compliant	Partially compliant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Good
6	Strategic Management and Public Relations (45321)	Partially compliant	Partially compliant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Good
7	Health Communication (45321)	Partially compliant	Partially compliant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Good
8	Communication Culture and Multimedia (51321)	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Good

The Dissenting Opinions of the Experts

N/A