

Expert group joint opinion

Evaluation Procedure: Assessment of Study Field

Higher Education Institution: Ventspils University College

Study field: Translation

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

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Ventspils University of Applied Sciences (VUAS) is an accredited state higher education and research institution in Latvia, established on July 23, 1997. It focuses on higher education, scientific activities, knowledge commercialisation, and lifelong learning. Registered as a scientific institution since May 20, 2013, VUAS operates under the supervision of the Ministry of Education and Science of Latvia.

The assessment of the "Translation" study field at Ventspils University of Applied Sciences (VUAS) indicates a strong alignment with the institution's strategic goals for 2021-2027. The study programmes are effectively designed to modernise education and equip students with in-demand skills. By integrating digital tools, fostering industry partnerships, and ensuring a clear academic progression, the study field exemplifies a commitment to quality education that adapts to societal needs. VUAS has incorporated a SWOT analysis into its development planning, addressing key areas for improvement while capitalising on existing strengths and opportunities. The management structure is well-organised, supporting continuous development with transparent decision-making processes. Established systems for student admission and assessment ensure consistency and transparency, although there is a need for clearer guidelines on plagiarism.

The strengths of the study field include a focus on digital competencies and relevant content, integration of machine and legal translation, and strong industry partnerships that enhance student employability. The governance framework is comprehensive, providing effective support for programme development. However, weaknesses persist, particularly in internationalisation efforts to attract students and guest lecturers. Additionally, a decline in master's programme enrolments suggests the need for targeted strategies to maintain programme sustainability. There is also a lack of specific guidelines regarding plagiarism.

VUAS employs a robust internal quality assurance system with shared responsibilities among stakeholders. Continuous feedback collection from students and employers helps in programme updates, though formal employer surveys have not been conducted recently. The university maintains open communication with students and provides information about its programmes in both Latvian and English.

Resources are adequate, with modern facilities and technology supporting the educational experience. While the average teaching load is high, VUAS is actively working to recruit guest lecturers and offers a motivational system for research activities. Students receive comprehensive academic, career, and psychological support.

In terms of scientific research, VUAS aligns its activities with strategic goals related to modernization and knowledge transfer. The research conducted is relevant to the study field and contributes to higher education and state language policy. Although there is significant financial support for research, modernization of simultaneous interpreting booths and increased faculty mobility remain challenges. In cooperation and internationalisation, VUAS maintains strong local partnerships but lacks a comprehensive strategy for expanding international ties. Participation in Erasmus+ programme is low, highlighting an opportunity to enhance student mobility and collaborative research.

VUAS has made strides in implementing recommendations from previous assessments, such as establishing a database of exemplary theses and strengthening employer collaborations. However, the enhancement of French language representation in the curriculum remains unfulfilled due to external challenges.

Overall, VUAS demonstrates a commitment to improving the "Translation" study field, addressing both its strengths and weaknesses while continuously adapting to the evolving educational landscape.

I - Assessment of the Study Field

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1.1 Management of the Study Field

Analysis

1.1.1.

The "Translation" study field at Ventspils University of Applied Sciences (VUAS) contributes to several core strategic objectives outlined in the VUAS Strategy 2021-2027. One of the key goals aligned with the study field is the Modernisation and Digitalisation of Education. This study field focuses on equipping students with essential 21st-century competencies, supporting VUAS's broader aim of modernising and digitising its educational study programmes. For example, the bachelor's (BA) study programme "Translation and Language Technology" offers study courses designed to develop field-specific and digital skills at practical and theoretical levels. In Expert Groups' opinion study courses like "Machine Translation Post-editing" provide hands-on experience with machine translation tools and their integration into computer-assisted translation. Additionally, the study course "Written Translation Technology: Business and Legal Texts (DE-LV)" enables students to acquire the knowledge, skills, and competencies necessary to translate business and legal texts from German to Latvian using computer-aided translation tools, with practical training on their application in legal translation. At the theoretical level, the BA study programme includes topics such as digital culture, digimodernism, and the digitalisation of gaming and play, as outlined in the study programme curriculum (Annexe:3-6_appendix_Studiju plāns_EN (1) (2).xlsx). At the master's (MA) study level, the "Translation and Terminology" study programme addresses themes of digitalisation and modernisation through study courses that reflect the latest advancements in theory and practice. After reviewing study course descriptions, the Expert Group found that for example, the study course "Introduction Into Digital Humanities, LV" provides an introduction to key developments in the translation field. In the study course "Translation Theory and Text Linguistics", students gain deeper insights into localisation and digitalisation. Additionally, in the study course "Principles and Methods of Research Work and Course Paper" students are trained to utilise digital tools for research purposes (Annexe: 3-7_piel_Kursu_apraksti_EN_26.07..docx.pdf).

During the on-site visit meeting with employers, the Expert Group confirmed that industry specialists - current translators, and representatives of translation agencies are actively involved in implementing the study programmes within the study field. During the interview, employers mentioned their participation in BA and MA thesis defence committees and student internships. Experts agree that this engagement aligns with VUAS's strategic goal of developing systematic cooperation with external partners. A vital strength of the study field is its intense collaboration with industry partners. Through internships students gain practical exposure to real-world applications of their studies, supporting VUAS's objective of fostering deeper connections with industry and other educational institutions. This collaboration ensures the study programmes stay relevant and adaptable to societal needs. The involvement of industry professionals in study programme development further solidifies the university's commitment to this strategic direction, ensuring that graduates are well-equipped to meet the demands of the rapidly evolving labour market. Experts agree that the study field's focus on preparing highly qualified specialists and researchers in translation, linguistics, and literary studies aligns closely with the strategic goal of advancing scientific excellence. The involvement of industry professionals in supervising students' final theses ensures that the study field contributes to knowledge transfer and strengthens the link between the university and the national economy. This is further demonstrated by student participation in industry-relevant projects. During interviews with study programme directors, students, and graduates, the student's active engagement in translation-related projects was highlighted, particularly where research skills were essential. One notable project mentioned was Interactive

Terminology for Europe (IATE), a European Union (EU) initiative where the institution collaborates on terminology chosen annually by the translation department at the European Commission. Under the supervision of the study programme director, a group of students researches new terminology, translates it, and validates it using relevant sources. The course description for the MA study course Translation of Legal Texts and Legal Terminology EN-LV specifies that the IATE project as an additional material for coursework is included in the source section of the study course syllabus (Annexe: 3-6_appendix_TT_26.07..docx.pdf).

In reviewing the interconnection between the bachelor's and master's study programmes within the study field at VUAS, it becomes clear to the Expert Group that several foundational courses in the bachelor's study programme are further developed and expanded at the master's study programme level. This progression establishes a logical and coherent academic pathway, where the core knowledge and skills acquired during the bachelor's study programme are enhanced through more specialised courses at the master's level. For example BA Course: Terminology and Lexicography I & II introduces students to the basics of terminology, focusing on principles of term formation and the systemic nature of terminology, while MA study course: Language for Special Purposes, Terminology and Terminography advances this foundation, emphasising the specialised use of terminology in professional contexts (EN, DE, RU, LV). It shifts from introductory knowledge to a deeper understanding of terminology in specific domains, honing students' expertise in terminography. BA study courses such as Written Translation Technology: LSP and Legal Texts (EN) and similar ones in other languages (DE, RU, FR) introduce students to the basics of legal translation. Meanwhile, the master's study programme includes courses such as Translation of Legal Texts and Legal Terminology (EN-LV) and Translation of European Union Legal Acts I & II (EN-LV), which provide more in-depth analysis of legal translation and terminology. Additionally, Legal Linguistics (LV) covers the linguistic aspects of legal texts. BA study course: Introduction to Computer-Aided Translation introduces basic tools and techniques used in translation technology and the study course - Computer-Aided Translation in the master's study programme deepens this knowledge by exploring advanced software tools and professional translation technologies, reflecting the growing significance of digital literacy in the translation industry.

Experts note that the BA study programme at Ventspils University of Applied Sciences offers a comprehensive range of language-specific courses in English (EN), German (DE), Russian (RU), and French (FR). These courses lay the foundation for language and translation proficiency, with corresponding advanced courses in the MA study programme that deepen students' specialised knowledge within these languages. In the MA study programme, students continue to engage with these languages (e.g. "Language for special purposes, terminology and terminography", EN, DE, RU, LV) while also being introduced to translation aspects in a multilingual environment, further enhancing their capacity to work across multiple languages.

It should be emphasised that during the Expert Group on-site visit interview process, it was evident that the study programme directors collaborated closely to ensure the alignment and complementarity of the curricula. This collaboration ensures that students transitioning from the bachelor's to the Master's study level, experience a logical academic progression, with systematic development of their skills in translation, linguistics, and language technology. The strong working relationship between the study programme directors guarantees that both levels of education are interconnected, facilitating a smooth transition for students and ensuring continuity in their learning experience. This close coordination reflects the university's commitment to providing a well-structured and coherent education in the field of translation.

In conclusion, the interconnection between the BA and MA study programmes is evident in how foundational knowledge from the BA level is systematically expanded in the more specialised MA study programme courses. This progression enables students to develop both depth and breadth in their translation skills, effectively preparing them for the demands of professional practice.

In Expert Group opinion, the study field's aims are clearly defined and attainable. These alignments

ensure that the study field supports VUAS's strategic objectives and addresses the evolving demands of the labour market and society.

1.1.2.

The review of documents provided by the Ventspils University of Applied Sciences (VUAS) reveals an identification and analysis of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) related to the study field. Depending on the documentation and the on-site visit interview results studied, it can be mentioned that the analysis is integrated into the institution's development planning documents, given explicitly in the form of annexe 2.1, which reflects a strategic approach to enhancing its study programmes. VUAS has demonstrated notable strengths in the "Translation" study field. High student satisfaction and industry-relevant study programmes are central to its strengths. The curriculum's alignment with European standards, evidenced by the implementation of the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) and the European Single Diploma Supplement, underscores the quality of education, although the issue connected to the credit amount within the MA study programme is further elaborated in 2.2.1 criterium of the Expert Groups joint report. The university's partnerships with industry companies and the presence of modern technical support further contribute to the high-quality educational experience. Corresponding to the VUAS Strategy 2021-2027 document, the strengths mentioned above align with VUAS's strategic objectives to offer contemporary, high-quality education and adapt to dynamic labour market conditions (Annexe: 2-1_appendix_Studiju attistibas plans_2021-2027_ENG.pdf).

Despite these strengths, the Expert Group has identified several weaknesses. The internationalisation of the study field "Translation" has been revealed as an aspect that needs improvement, including attracting foreign guest lecturers and students and increasing student exchanges with foreign universities. The details mentioned above were discussed during the on-site visit interviews with the university representatives. Additionally, a gradual decrease in master's study programme enrollments and the impact of the pandemic on faculty burnout and student numbers highlight areas needing attention. The lack of evening or extracurricular study programmes limits accessibility for full-time workers, and slow renewal of academic staff may hinder study programme vitality (SAR, pp.18-20).

However, it should also be mentioned that the interviews conducted with graduates and current students highlighted that they value the flexibility of their weekly schedule, which allows them to balance their studies with part-time employment. Similarly, feedback from study programme staff underscored the benefits of their flexible schedules within the university, reflecting a shared appreciation for this aspect of their working conditions. Additionally, some MA students noted that this is their second time pursuing a Master's degree. They indicated that their motivation for re-enrolling was the need to update their knowledge in the field and refresh their previous expertise.

In the VUAS Strategy 2021-2027 document, the university envisions developing Europe-level study programmes and increasing distance learning options to attract a broader student base, including those from remote areas. Opportunities to create joint study programmes with other institutions and promote international mobility further align with VUAS's strategic goals of expanding educational reach and fostering academic collaboration (Annexe: 2-1_appendix_Studiju attistibas plans_2021-2027_ENG.pdf)

The reviewed documentation and interview results indicate that VUAS faces several significant threats. These include demographic declines and economic fluctuations, which could potentially impact student enrollment and the sustainability of its study programmes. University representatives noted that the limited local population challenges achieving high enrollment rates.

The studied documentation confirms that VUAS has integrated its SWOT analysis into its development planning. The study field development plan is aligned with the university's strategic objectives, addressing identified weaknesses and threats while leveraging available opportunities. This plan, revised and updated following the VUAS strategy, includes measurable performance

indicators and tasks that underscore the institution's commitment to improving its study programmes (VUAS Strategy 2021-2027).

1.1.3.

The studied documentation showed that the management structure of Ventspils University of Applied Sciences is well-organised and oriented towards developing its study field. Key decision-making bodies, such as the Constitutional Assembly, the Council, and the Senate, play critical roles in strategic planning, policy-making, and maintaining academic standards, demonstrating a clear focus on the continuous enhancement of the study field. The multi-tiered decision-making structure, with clearly defined roles and responsibilities among councils and committees, supports an efficient decision-making process by ensuring that relevant stakeholders are involved at appropriate levels. The annexe 1.3 document indicates that robust support from administrative and technical staff is in place to ensure the smooth operation of study programmes, managed by the Rector, Vice-Rectors, Deans, and various department heads who oversee administrative functions. The alignment of management practices with the needs of the study programmes is also evident, as bodies like the Study Council and Research Council are tasked with developing proposals for their improvement and development (Annexe: 1-3_appendix_Characteristics of main decision making institutions_ENG).

In Experts' Group opinion the governance framework of Ventspils University of Applied Sciences is comprehensive and well-coordinated, aligning with its strategic objectives in higher education. The Expert Group found that based on the provided information and interview results, the management structure of the "Translation Studies" study programme at VUAS is well-defined and strategically oriented towards the field's development. The Faculty of Translation Studies (FoTS) directs the management of the study field, with oversight provided by the Dean of the FoTS and general supervision by the Vice-Rector for Studies.

As noted during the on-site visit interviews with VUAS representatives, the Dean of the Faculty is responsible for a broad range of operational, administrative, and academic functions. The Study programme Directors are accountable for the quality of their respective study programmes. They oversee the continuous development of the study programmes to align with current scientific and industry standards, supervise internships, manage student performance assessments, and prepare essential reports and documents for accreditation and evaluation. Furthermore, the interviews highlighted strong personal and professional collaboration within the team.

The management structure also facilitates regular discussions on the development of study programmes through formal meetings of the Faculty and Study Councils and informal gatherings. This structured and flexible collaboration combination strengthens internal cohesion and enables prompt problem-solving. As the VUAS Self Assessment Report (SAR, p. 22) outlines and was confirmed during the on-site interview with the dean of the faculty, the commitment to open communication and quick issue resolution is evident in the weekly meetings at the Dean's office, which allow for an informal exchange of ideas and where issues can be raised and addressed quickly.

The expert group agrees that the presentation of Modular Object-Oriented Dynamic Learning Environment (Moodle) that is being used as VUAS e-learning environment platform, university facility tour, and interviews with academic and management staff collectively demonstrated practical internal cooperation between the university staff. Each staff member was well-informed about the essential details of the study field's development and its requirements, highlighting a strong understanding and coordination within the institution. The study field's decision-making process is efficient and adaptable to changing needs.

The Self-Assessment Report (SAR, pp. 21-23) highlights the presence of modern technical infrastructure, supporting the effective delivery of study programmes, particularly through tools such as Moodle and other digital platforms. During the on-site visit, it was observed that the technical team maintains and updates Moodle, providing assistance to students and academic staff

in its use. Moreover, specialised facilities such as translation booths, which are essential for the study programmes in the translation study field, are managed by technical staff, ensuring that the equipment functions optimally during both classroom teaching and practical training sessions.

1.1.4.

The documents and Expert Group's on-site visit interview results from current students and graduates reveal that the admission process at Ventspils University of Applied Sciences (VUAS) is overseen by an Admission Commission composed of key academic and administrative personnel. Applications for undergraduate study programmes are handled through a centralised online portal. In contrast, applications for master's study programmes can be submitted either in person or online via the university's internal systems, as also some graduates mentioned during the interviews. The documentation mentions that foreign students apply through the "DreamApply" (SAR, p. 24) system. Each year, Ventspils University of Applied Sciences (VUAS) publishes detailed admission and matriculation rules (VUAS website: https://irp.cdn-website.com/f6b5d556/files/uploaded/Uznemsanas__noteikumi_2024_2025_LV-4d71548c.pdf), including specific guidelines for foreign students, on its website.

The recognition of prior education and professional experience is governed by specific regulations that outline the process for evaluating and accrediting previously completed courses and experiences (VUAS website: https://irp.cdn-website.com/f6b5d556/files/uploaded/14_Par_profesionalas%20pieredzes%20atzisanu_nolikums.pdf). This process includes the issuance of a recognition protocol (Annexe: 7_pielikums_atzīšanas_protokols) and an individualised study plan, which the Vice-Rector must approve for Studies. The university employs standardised procedures across all study fields to recognise prior learning outcomes. Information on these requirements and necessary documents is accessible on the VUAS public website and the Moodle platform.

Through the provided Standard sample of study agreement (Annexe: 2-5_appendix_stud_liguma_paraugs_ENG), applicants are informed about the specifics of enrollment, their rights, and other necessary details related to their studies.

Besides, during interviews, students confirmed their awareness of the opportunity to have prior learning or professional experience recognised; however, the use of this system remains limited. In the academic year 2023/2024, only 18 recognitions were processed, including eight for study courses acquired through Erasmus+ mobility and ten for courses from other VUAS study programmes (SAR, p. 24). Most students indicated that they did not have eligible prior studies or experience for recognition. While the system itself is operational, the expert group recommends that there is a need for more robust communication to ensure that all students are fully aware of the procedures and benefits of recognising prior learning or experience. Enhanced communication strategies would likely increase student engagement with this opportunity.

1.1.5.

The studied documentation and the results of the Expert Group on-site visit interviews with the faculty dean and the university representatives show that the methods, principles, and procedures for assessing students' achievements at Ventspils University of Applied Sciences are well-developed and clearly defined.

The document that the university provided, "Regulation on the procedure for organising examinations and assessing students' knowledge" (VUAS website: <https://en.venta.lv/university/documents>), shows a comprehensive framework for the study process, including aspects related to student assessments. The document outlines various procedural elements involved in studying, such as organising lectures, practical sessions, and examinations. It specifies the procedures for assessing student performance, including details on how assessments will be conducted and evaluated. The regulations ensure that these processes are well-defined and

structured, contributing to a clear understanding of how student achievements are measured. The regulations align assessment methods with the aims of the study programmes by integrating assessment procedures with the overall educational objectives. The document describes how assessments are designed to reflect each study programme's learning outcomes and objectives. It ensures that the evaluations are relevant to the content being taught and that they effectively measure whether students are meeting the study programme's goals.

The Expert Group also noted that these regulations are responsive to student needs by establishing procedures that are fair, transparent, and supportive of student learning. The system's effectiveness in addressing student needs was further corroborated through interviews with students, who confirmed that they are assessed fairly and have a clear understanding of how their grades are formulated. This positive feedback from students is an indicator that the established assessment system is functioning well and is perceived as credible and supportive of their learning experience.

The methods, principles, and procedures for assessing student achievements at Ventspils University of Applied Sciences are well-defined, systematically implemented and closely aligned with the study programmes' aims and responsive to student needs. The alignment of these processes with both academic and student requirements underpins their relevance and effectiveness in the university's educational context.

1.1.6.

The studied documentation (SAR, p. 27) and the results of the on-site visit Expert Group interviews with VUAS representatives revealed that Ventspils University of Applied Sciences has established clear principles of academic integrity and effective mechanisms to ensure their observance. The "Regulations on Academic Integrity at Ventspils University of Applied Sciences," approved by the VUAS Senate, outline the ethical standards and responsibilities of all university members, including students, academic staff, and general staff (VUAS website: Regulations on the Academic Integrity <https://en.venta.lv/university/documents>). The university's procedures for addressing breaches of academic integrity include a range of sanctions depending on the severity of the violation, which are enforced by relevant bodies such as the Ethics Committee, the Faculty Council, and the Rector. According to the information studied, VUAS ensures that all stakeholders are well-informed about these regulations. New staff members are briefed on the regulations upon their appointment, and students are made aware of the policies through study programme directors and various communication channels. The regulations cover various forms of academic dishonesty, such as plagiarism, cheating, deceit, and complicity, and provide comprehensive definitions and examples of these breaches. Practical anti-plagiarism tools, such as the Unified Inter-University Computerised Plagiarism Checker (PLAG3) and other automated systems, detect and prevent plagiarism in students' and staff members' work. However, when the Expert Group asked university representatives about the percentage of allowed plagiarism or how the "severity" of the plagiarism is measured, they mentioned 10 percent as a general guideline. This percentage, however, is not specified in the official document. Accordingly, the Expert Group recommends having the allowed percentage of plagiarism clearly indicated in the regulations, along with details on in which cases it applies and other relevant guidelines to ensure consistent understanding and application across the institution.

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

Conclusions:

The assessment of the "Translation" study field at Ventspils University of Applied Sciences (VUAS) confirms its strong alignment with the institution's strategic goals for 2021-2027. The study programmes are well-designed to support the university's focus on modernising and digitalising education and equip students with skills in high demand in the current labour market. By integrating digital tools, fostering industry partnerships, and ensuring a clear progression from undergraduate to postgraduate studies, the study field demonstrates a commitment to quality education and adaptability to changing societal needs.

VUAS has effectively integrated its SWOT analysis into its development planning, identifying and addressing key areas for improvement while leveraging existing strengths and opportunities. The management structure is well-organised, with transparent decision-making processes that support the continuous development of the study field. Furthermore, established systems for student admission, recognition of prior learning, and assessment procedures are well-defined and effective, ensuring transparency and consistency. Academic integrity is maintained through policies and tools, although there is room for improvement in the clarity of guidelines on plagiarism.

Strengths:

1. The study field's focus on digital competencies and industry-relevant content directly supports VUAS's strategic goals of education modernisation, digitalisation, and scientific excellence.
2. The study programmes integrate vital areas such as machine and legal translation, aligning with labour market needs and European standards. Using the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) and the European Single Diploma Supplement highlights the quality and transparency of the educational offerings.
3. Strong partnerships with industry provide valuable opportunities for student internships, thesis supervision, and practical skill development, enhancing the employability of graduates.
4. The university's comprehensive governance framework, with well-defined roles and efficient decision-making processes, ensures effective development support for the study field. The structured support from administrative and technical staff meets the needs of the study programmes.

Weaknesses:

1. A gradual decline in master's study programme enrollments, coupled with demographic challenges, indicates the need for targeted strategies to attract and retain students and ensure the long-term sustainability of the study programmes.
2. The existing academic integrity regulations lack specific guidelines on permissible levels of plagiarism, which could lead to inconsistent application. More precise guidelines are necessary to ensure uniform understanding and enforcement.

1.2. Efficiency of the Internal Quality Assurance System

Analysis

1.2.1.

Based on the SAR (SAR, pp. 27-30) and detailed information provided during the on-site visit, the Experts Group claims that there is a clearly established quality assurance system which involves a multi-level approach, with responsibilities shared among various stakeholders. (Annexe: 2-2_appendix_studiju virziena pārvaldības shēma-TVT-TT_ENG.png). The study programme directors oversee the quality of their respective study programmes, ensure alignment with the quality management system, and implement necessary improvements. The dean of the faculty provides overall leadership and guidance for quality assurance efforts within the faculty, the vice-rector for studies coordinates quality assurance activities across the university and ensures adherence to

institutional standards. Other relevant staff members contribute to quality assurance activities, such as subject matter experts, academic advisors, and administrative staff.

The information on the VUAS quality assurance is publicly available on the website https://irp.cdn-website.com/9945ff8b/files/uploaded/ENG_KVS_rokasgramata.pdf

The procedure for the implementation of the regulations (SAR, p. 29) is described by the VUAS Quality Management System processes, such as assessment of student satisfaction, the improvement of the study programme, the development and licensing of study programmes as well as cooperation with employers, industry associations.

Additionally, VUAS ensures the continuous development of its study programmes by utilising structured feedback from various stakeholders to inform decision-making and improvement processes. As outlined in the VUAS Self Assessment Report (SAR, pp. 27-30), student, graduate, and employer surveys are conducted regularly to assess satisfaction with both the content and delivery of the courses. These surveys, described in the "Regulations on Student, Graduate and Employer Surveys," (available to VUAS staff in the section "Study Programme Directors" of the e-learning environment Moodle) play a crucial role in maintaining study programme quality, as they enable the university to gather valuable insights into students' learning experiences and employers' expectations (annexe 2-6). Moreover, the involvement of employers in these evaluations helps VUAS align its study programmes with labour market needs, as seen in the focus on adapting the curriculum to meet emerging industry trends.

According to the information provided in the SAR (SAR, p. 29), periodic assessment of study programmes to assess their effectiveness and alignment with industry standards, comprehensive analysis of student performance, including academic achievements, skill development, and overall satisfaction, gathering and analysing feedback from students, graduates, and employers to identify areas for improvement, active student involvement and close collaboration with external partners to develop joint projects, internships, and research opportunities prove that VUAS has established a solid Quality Management System to ensure the excellence of its study programmes. This system is designed to align with the aims and learning outcomes of the study field, meet the needs of students and employers, and foster a culture of continuous improvement. Implementation of a continuous improvement cycle is based on feedback, evaluation results, and emerging trends. By analysing the information given in the SAR, the Expert Group confirms that the necessary adjustments to study programmes, curriculum, and teaching methods to enhance student learning experiences have been implemented.

1.2.2.

According to the SAR and the information presented during the on-site visit, Ventspils University of Applied Sciences (VUAS) has a well-defined procedure for developing and reviewing study programmes. The "Regulations on the Procedure for the Development, Licensing and Improvement of Study Programmes"

(https://irp.cdn-website.com/f6b5d556/files/uploaded/Nolikums_Studiju-programmu-izstrades-licence-sanas-pilnveides-kartiba.pdf) outlines the process, with the Dean supervising and the study programme director preparing the documents.

Stakeholder feedback plays a crucial role. Faculty study programme councils, with student, graduate, and employer representatives, review the content and propose changes. During study programme revisions, feedback from stakeholders - graduates, career counsellors, and employers is actively sought. For instance, the "Translation" study programme was transformed into "Translation and Language Technology" based on such input. During the on-site visit, the Experts Group was provided with a detailed explanation of how and why the title of the MA study programme was changed, and how its content was altered.

In line with the Study Development Plan 2021-2027, VUAS emphasises a strategic approach to modernising and continuously enhancing its study programmes. The development and review

procedures are not only shaped by legislative frameworks, such as the Latvian and European Qualifications Frameworks but also by a systematic and inclusive feedback process. This process integrates input from students, employers, and other external stakeholders, ensuring that the study programmes remain aligned with labour market needs and academic standards. For example, the plan includes specific tasks aimed at promoting interdisciplinary cooperation, engaging industry partners, and adapting curriculum based on student feedback and employer expectations (Annexe: 2.1).

Regular reviews ensure the relevance of a study programme. Study programme directors consider lecturers' feedback when creating annual study plans. For example, a second foreign language was introduced earlier based on teaching experience.

VUAS aligns study programmes with legislation and evolving needs. New study programmes like "Translation and Terminology" are created based on updated professional standards. The Latvian and European Qualifications Frameworks guide content development, emphasising practical skills, such as translation technology. The "Translation and Language Technology" study programme exemplifies this approach. Stakeholder feedback led to its creation, with information technology courses and a focus on two working languages.

1.2.3.

Based on the information provided in the SAR and the VUAS regulation: "Procedure for the Submission and Examination of Student Proposals and Complaints at Ventspils University of Applied Sciences" (SAR, pp. 31-32), Expert Group learned that at the beginning of each academic year, students have a designated meeting with faculty and administrative staff, including the VUAS Rector, Deans, study programme directors, and student council representatives. This forum allows students to ask questions and raise any issues they might be facing. Furthermore, students can submit complaints or suggestions throughout the year, either in writing or orally. Most complaints are resolved promptly, demonstrating VUAS's commitment to addressing student concerns efficiently. During the on-site visit, the Expert Group was informed that submission of complaints is a rare case as students and teachers have close cooperation and many issues are solved on a daily basis.

Beyond these yearly meetings, VUAS employs technology to enhance student support. An internal communication platform, like WhatsApp or Telegram, connects students directly with faculty and administrative staff, including Deans and administrative assistants. This platform allows students to quickly get answers to questions or identify the appropriate person, such as a lecturer, study programme director, or the Study Department, to address specific concerns. Often, senior students within the group chat can answer new students' questions, fostering a sense of community and peer support. Additionally, students can approach faculty members directly for guidance, ensuring they are directed to the right person within the hierarchy while understanding the importance of following proper procedures.

The system extends to addressing academic concerns as well. Students can challenge grades received in tests through a clearly defined procedure outlined in the "Regulations on the Procedure for Organizing Tests and Assessment of Student Knowledge." This multi-step process ensures fairness and due process for students contesting their grades. By implementing a multi-faceted approach, including designated meetings, a convenient communication platform and a clear procedure for challenging grades, VUAS demonstrates its commitment to creating an environment in which students feel comfortable raising concerns and receiving prompt and effective support.

The mechanisms implemented by VUAS for submitting student complaints and suggestions appear to be effective based on multiple factors. The designated meetings at the beginning of each academic year provide a formal opportunity for students to communicate directly with university leadership. At the same time, the availability of ongoing channels for both written and oral submissions of complaints ensures continuous access to support. The low frequency of formal

complaints suggests that many issues are resolved informally through close cooperation between students and staff, which speaks to the effectiveness of the established communication culture. Internal communication platforms, such as WhatsApp or Telegram, allow for swift responses and support, contributing to a sense of community and fostering peer assistance. The clearly defined procedures for addressing academic concerns, such as grade disputes, further enhance the system's effectiveness by ensuring transparency and fairness. The Expert Group considers that the combination of formal meetings, informal communication platforms, and structured procedures indicates that VUAS has implemented an effective mechanism that encourages students to voice their concerns and ensures timely feedback and appropriate action, thereby promoting continuous improvement in the student experience.

1.2.4.

Based on the SAR, Annexe 2.6. "Analysis and evaluation of the results of student, graduate and employer surveys and their use in improving the content and quality of studies" and information provided to the Expert Group during the on-site visit, Ventspils University of Applied Sciences conducts regular surveys among students, graduates, and employers to evaluate various aspects of the study process, including teaching methods, course content, and overall study programme quality. VUAS employs a comprehensive system for collecting and analysing statistical data to enhance its study programmes. This system involves various data collection methods, regular feedback mechanisms, and a focus on continuous improvement (Annexe: 2-6_appendix_Aptauju rezultātu vizualizācijas_ENG - TVT_LTT).

The results of these surveys are analysed by relevant academic and administrative bodies, such as study programme directors and the Study Department, ensuring that the assessment methods remain relevant to the aims of the study programmes and meet the needs of students

Statistical data is primarily collected through the study administration information system, supplemented by Google Forms and data analysis tools. This data is used to create annual self-assessment reports for each faculty, which analyse the effectiveness of study programme improvement processes. Additionally, student surveys are conducted at the end of each semester to gather feedback on the quality of the study process. These surveys cover various aspects, including course content, lecturer performance, course organisation, and lecturer qualifications. Students are required to complete these surveys (including 15 questions) and the results are analysed to inform study programme improvements (SAR, pp. 32-35).

Feedback from graduates is also crucial. Annual surveys (including 20 questions) are conducted to assess their satisfaction with the education, study methods, and overall study programme. These surveys are conducted in accordance with specific regulations and their results are discussed in various university governance bodies.

Although formal employer surveys have not been conducted recently, qualitative feedback is obtained through regular meetings and discussions. Employers provide insights into internships, cooperation models, and graduate performance, which are then considered for potential study programme adjustments. As indicated in the VUAS Self Assessment Report (SAR, p. 35) and discussed during the on-site visit, regular and informal surveys from lecturers as well as employers could be planned to receive more information. The Expert Group concludes that obtaining and giving feedback to the students is easier since they are in close contact with the university. However, providing feedback to graduates and employers has its challenges. Therefore, the Expert Group suggests that a system through which graduates and employers would receive information about the results of surveys and planned changes could also be introduced.

VUAS also prioritises regular feedback from faculty members. Class observations, informal meetings, and coffee breaks are organised to assess teaching styles, and materials used, and identify areas for improvement. Student representatives are also involved in study programme councils to contribute their perspectives and ensure student needs are considered.

Thus, the Expert Group believes that VUAS's mechanism for collecting and using statistical data involves a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods, focusing on student and graduate feedback, employer insights, and faculty performance. This comprehensive approach allows VUAS to continuously improve its study programmes and ensure they meet the evolving needs of students and the job market.

1.2.5.

Ventspils University of Applied Sciences (VUAS) publishes information about its study programmes in both Latvian and English on its website. The Marketing and Public Relations Department is responsible for ensuring this information is up-to-date. The Faculty administration and study programme directors prepare and submit the information, and the Study Department and Vice-Rector for Studies monitor its accuracy against official sources.

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

Conclusions:

VUAS has a well-established multi-level quality assurance system with shared responsibility among stakeholders. Study programme directors, deans, and the vice-rector for studies all play a role in ensuring study programme quality and alignment with institutional standards.

VUAS implements a continuous improvement cycle for its study programmes. This cycle involves feedback collection (student satisfaction surveys, employer discussions), evaluation results, and analysis of emerging trends. Based on this information, adjustments are made to study programmes, curriculum, and teaching methods.

Stakeholder feedback is crucial in developing and reviewing study programmes. Faculty study programme councils with student, graduate, and employer representatives provide input on content and propose changes.

VUAS prioritises open communication with students. Students have designated meetings with faculty and staff at the beginning of each year and can submit complaints or suggestions throughout the year.

VUAS utilises a comprehensive system for collecting and analysing data to improve its study programmes. This includes student surveys, graduate surveys (though formal employer surveys are lacking), and feedback from faculty members.

VUAS has published information about both study programmes of the study field “Translation” on their webpage. Information is available both in the Latvian and English languages.

Strengths:

1. Responsibilities are shared among various stakeholders, including study programme directors, deans, and external partners. This ensures a comprehensive approach to quality control.
2. VUAS uses feedback from students and graduates, and employers to regularly review and update its study programmes. This ensures the study programmes remain relevant to the job market and student needs.

Weaknesses:

1. While VUAS gathers qualitative feedback from employers, formal surveys haven't been conducted recently.
2. There's no system for informing graduates and employers about survey results and planned study programme changes. This could hinder transparency and engagement.

Assessment of the requirement [1]

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

VUAS ensures continuous improvement, development, and performance of the study field in the implementation of its internal quality assurance system. The shortcomings highlighted in the section should be understood as recommended steps for further improvement of the quality assurance of studies.

- 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

VUAS has a clear and publicly available quality policy. This policy is implemented through well-defined procedures for study programme monitoring, feedback collection, and regular updates to ensure the quality of higher education is maintained across all study fields. This is evidenced by the established cycle of continuous improvement, where study programme directors and the vice-rector for studies ensure study programme alignment with institutional standards and stakeholder expectations.

- 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

VUAS has developed a mechanism that outlines clear processes for the development, internal approval, and regular supervision of study programmes. This mechanism involves input from multiple stakeholders, including faculty, students, and employers, ensuring that study programmes remain relevant and are periodically inspected for performance and quality assurance. Study programme revisions, such as the name change of the BA study programme from "Translation" to "Translation and Language Technology," illustrate the system's effectiveness in aligning with evolving academic and industry requirements.

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

VUAS has established clear criteria and conditions for evaluating students' academic performance, which are publicly available. These procedures are designed to ensure that students achieve the intended learning outcomes, as demonstrated through continuous assessments and evaluations. For example, feedback mechanisms such as course-specific student surveys allow for timely adjustments in teaching and evaluation methods, ensuring alignment with study programme objectives.

- 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

VUAS has developed comprehensive procedures to assure the qualifications of its academic staff and the quality of their work. These include regular evaluations, training, and professional development opportunities. Additionally, feedback from students and peers is used to further

enhance teaching quality and performance.

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The institution has established a data collection mechanism to analyse student achievements, graduate employment, and overall satisfaction with study programmes. It conducts regular surveys to gather feedback from students, graduates, and employers. This data is analysed and used to make informed decisions on study programme improvements and staff performance, ensuring the institution's key performance indicators are met.

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The institution implements a good quality assurance system to ensure the continuous improvement and efficient performance of its study programmes. Regular feedback from stakeholders, including employers and students, leads to informed decision-making and adopting industry-relevant curriculum changes. As noted, the introduction of new courses and study programme revisions based on emerging trends ensures the institution stays aligned with labour market needs and academic standards.

1.3. Resources and Provision of the Study Field

Analysis

1.3.1.

After reviewing all the documents submitted to the Expert Group and listening to the management of VUAS during the on-site visit, it was found that the university has a well-established system for determining and redistributing the financial resources necessary for the implementation of the study field and the corresponding study programmes, i.e. the main sources of financing of the study field are the state budget grant, Ventspils Municipality funds, tuition fee revenues and other revenues from fee-based services. Of course, for the regional university, the main source of funding is the state budget grant for the implementation of accredited and licensed study programmes. The state budget grant is agreed with the Ministry of Education and Science each year to finance a certain number of study places (SAR, p. 36) while funding from the Ventspils Municipality is an important additional support for the allowances of lecturers and researchers with doctoral degrees. In addition, VUAS seeks to attract funding through international and local projects, such as research projects funded by grants from the Latvian Council of Science or research and infrastructure projects co-funded by the EU Structural Funds under the European Commission's Horizon 2020 programme (SAR, p. 36). During the on-site visit, the Expert Group found that the number of students in the study field is sufficient, e.g. in the autumn semester of 2023, the total number of students at FoTS was 221, of which 41 were financed by natural or legal persons and 180 by the state budget. (SAR, p. 36). Financial resources are used sparingly and purposefully, as confirmed by the Management of the university, the largest item of expenditure is the salaries of lecturers and staff, i.e. about 75% of the total expenditure. The remaining 25% is spent on administrative needs - heating, repairs, and purchase of fixed assets (SAR, p.37).

Teaching staff remuneration is determined on the basis of the Cabinet Regulation of 5 July 2016 No 445 "Regulations Regarding Remuneration of Teachers". Salaries are approved at the VUAS Council

meeting. In turn, the amount of remuneration of the FoTS general and administrative staff is known precisely and, when calculating the costs of a study programme, is distributed among study programmes in proportion to the number of students in each study programme

During the on-site visit interview with the management of VUAS, the Expert Group learned that from this year (2024) a new motivation system for financing scientific research has been established and implemented, which is linked to additional salary increments for lecturers, setting precise and easily measurable key performance indicators (KPIs), for example, to produce one scientific Q1 and Q2 publication in SCOPUS per year, to attend a certain number of conferences in Latvia and abroad. In the Expert Group's view, such a system is motivating and effective in achieving the university's research goals.

The Expert Group is satisfied with the learned information, therefore concluding that the criterion is fully fulfilled.

1.3.2.

The study field "Translation" is implemented in the premises of VUAS, 101 and 101a Inženieru Street, Ventspils. During the on-site visit, the Expert Group verified that the condition of the premises and their equipment is sufficient for the quality implementation of the study programmes, the lecturers and students have modern classrooms and computer classroom laboratories. In the same building, there is also a student dormitory, a specially equipped lounge for students, a quiet room for students to study and a library. Outside, behind the building, there is a large and spacious garden with a sports field. The Expert Group learned in the on-site visit excursion through the VUAS premises, that the garden is suitable for holding events and a few VUAS graduation ceremonies have taken place there. VUAS has two modern amphitheatre auditoriums with 190 and 140 seats, equipped with multimedia audiovisual equipment, where students can practise conference interpreting. (SAR, p 38). However, the Expert Group after the discussions with the teaching staff and study programme directors identified that investments into newer conference booths would be very appreciated by teaching staff and students. The study rooms and equipment are constantly being modernised and during the on-site visit Expert Group observed that all lecture rooms were equipped with computers and projectors, a workstation for the lecturer (in many cases with a modern desk, that can be used as a sitting or standing desk), and in many cases the projectors have been replaced by interactive whiteboards, which not only gives students better quality images but also helps the university to save energy resources, a very important aspect in the fight against climate change.

VUAS provides environmental accessibility for both lecturers and students with reduced mobility, with an elevator in the 'A' building and a diagonal lift enabling people with reduced mobility to move between the 'A' and 'B' buildings. The Expert Group also verified that the open-source e-learning system Moodle has been implemented at VUAS and during the on-site visit Experts Group received an answer, that the latest version of Moodle - 4.4, released on 22.04.20024, is in use.

During the on-site visit, the Expert Group learned that unused classrooms are rented by VUAS to Ventspils Technical College and various start-up companies, generating additional income to invest in the university. The Expert Group believes that this also creates a very positive environment and atmosphere where students can interact with employers and prospective students, developing a regional and national science and innovation hub in one place.

During interviews with lecturers and students, the Expert Group found that both students and lecturers have a clear understanding of how to use the material and technical base of the university, where to turn for technical assistance, how to use Moodle, and how to order the necessary teaching or scientific literature. In light of the above, the Expert Group considers that the VUAS has adequate material and technical support, a unified system for improving the material and technical base is in place and functioning, and priorities for necessary investments have been defined, for example, during the on-site visit, the management of the university clearly indicated to the Experts Group,

that one of the priorities is the insulation of the building, both to reduce heat loss in winter and to save energy costs.

1.3.3.

During the on-site visit to the VUAS library, the Expert Group found that the VUAS library is located on the premises of the university, it is spread over two floors and has a spacious and bright reading room. The total stock of the university library consists of approximately 32 600 items of books and approximately 800 audiovisual materials amongst whom are also materials in linguistics, translation and literary studies. (SAR, p. 40). All users of the VUAS computer network (students and docents) are provided with free access to the most popular Internet databases: LETA, Letonika, Lursoft, EBSCO, Periodika.lv, Scopus, Web of Science and many others.

During the discussions with lecturers and students, the Expert Group found out that lecturers and students of the VUAS prefer to work with electronic databases for obtaining information, thus the library does not need to purchase printed materials in large numbers. The Expert Group agrees that nowadays the most recent scientific articles are initially published electronically and only later included in printed scientific collections. Electronic databases such as Science Direct, Scopus or Web of Science provide access to virtually the entire range of scientific publications for the purposes of scientific research.

Each year, FoTS allocates financial resources and purchases the most up-to-date books in the field, adding to the library's book collection. By studying the documentation provided by the VUAS, the Expert Group found that the FoTS budget allocated EUR 1000 for the replenishment of textbooks needed for the study field in 2023. In the last three years, 16 printed books have been added to the range of books in the study field with state funding (Annexe: EN-2_Scopes received in the last three years in Languages (public funding).xls) and 106 printed books with municipal funding (Annexe: EN-2_Scopes received in the last three years in Languages (municipal funding). xls), and a total of 122 books, which proves that the university has a system in place for the development and acquisition of methodological and informational support. Also, the VUAS library offers additional services to all interested parties, such as scanning, copying, computer printing, etc. But to further systematise and streamline the ordering of new materials, VUAS plans to introduce an official Google Forms template to be filled in by lecturers and sent to the library for ordering after faculty consultation.

In view of the above, the Expert Group concludes that the VUAS library resources and databases are accessible to all interested parties and are sufficient for the needs of the study field. During the on-site visit meetings, the Experts Group learned that VUAS has a system for purchasing methodological and informative materials. For this purpose, in consultation with the Dean, teaching staff can ask the library to purchase the necessary articles, and e-books or order specific methodological literature.

1.3.4.

After reviewing the SAR documentation and the evidence gathered during interviews conducted during the on-site visit to VUAS, the Expert Group found that the following modern information and communication technology (hereinafter referred to as ICT) solutions are used for the implementation of the study field - Moodle, whose functionality and capabilities were presented to the Expert Group, BigBlueButton, which the Expert Group had the opportunity to assess through communication with stakeholders who could not attend the on-site visit, Google Workspace, MS Office365, LAIS, etc. If it is necessary to deliver a lecture remotely, lecturers can choose which ICT solution to use - BigBlueButton, Zoom or MS Teams, and it is also an opportunity for students to get hands-on experience with a wider range of modern tools that are actively used in businesses.

According to VUAS Self Assessment Report (SAR, pp. 42-43), students are first registered in the LAIS system, where they can see their courses and final grades posted, while for accessing the VUAS

server infrastructure, the VUAS Infrastructure Department provides students and lecturers with a username and password that allows access to the e-learning environment Moodle, Google services (with lietotajvards@venta.lv and Google account), as well as the VUAS Forum and other internal services. Moodle courses are organised by study programmes and years, so students can log in and easily find relevant courses. The VeApp (mobile application) is currently being developed and will be used as a planning and information tool for easier, faster and more efficient communication, organisation and control of classes and attendance, as well as other essential processes. The VeApp solution will also include a blog section where students and lecturers will be able to share their experiences or express their opinions on topics of interest to them. The Expert Group believes that this will be a very modern, user-friendly solution that will significantly facilitate communication and reduce misunderstandings, as each student and lecturer will be able to see all the necessary information on their smartphone, for example, lecturers will be able to make entries about changes in lecture schedule, and students will immediately receive a pop-up notification about the latest changes.

It is noteworthy that in 2023, more than 90% of the content in the study field was delivered through technology (SAR, p. 43). ICT resources are administered, maintained and secured by the VUAS Infrastructure Unit, ensuring their continuous availability and updating. Periodic training in the use of new or existing technologies is organised for the teaching and administrative staff and students of the VUAS, thus ensuring their effective use and full mastery.

As additional communication tools between students and lecturers, WhatsApp or Telegram groups are also used. The use of these tools is negotiated between the lecturers and the students themselves. In turn, as confirmed by the Dean of FoTS during the interviews, both the student and the course supervisors have a common WhatsApp group with the Dean of the Faculty, in which topical issues are discussed.

Taking into account the above-mentioned information and the ICT tools presented during the on-site visit, the Expert Group considers that the ICT solutions used to support the study process in the study field are appropriate and effective.

1.3.5.

After reviewing the SAR documentation and the evidence gathered during the interviews conducted during the on-site visit to VUAS, the Expert Group verified that election to academic positions in VUAS is governed according to the Cabinet Regulations No. 129 adopted 25th of February 2021 "Procedures for Evaluating the Scientific and Teaching Qualifications or Results of Artistic Creation Work of an Applicant for the Position of Professor or Associate Professor and of a Professor or Associate Professor Holding the Position" and the procedure "Procedures for Selection of Academic Staff of Ventspils University of Applied Sciences" approved by the VUAS Senate on 31st of August 2021 (available only in Latvian: https://irp.cdn-website.com/f6b5d556/files/uploaded/Noteikumi_akademiska_person_atlases_kartiba.pdf).

All available vacancies are listed on the VUAS website, under University: Vacancies: <https://en.venta.lv/university/vacancies>. It can be seen that as of the 19th of August 2024, the staff of the university is full and there are no vacancies at the university. The management of the university and the Dean of FoTS informed Expert Group that all the lecturers were attracted to the university through open advertisements in the EURAXESS database, in the "Latvijas Vēstnesis", or on the websites of the VUAS and the Ministry of Education and Science. It was also stressed during the interviews that the university is very actively working to involve doctoral students and guest lecturers from other European universities in the Study Field Study Programmes, for example, within the European Social Fund (ESF) project "To strengthen the academic staff of Ventspils University of Applied Sciences in the areas of strategic specialization" (No. 8.2.2.0/18/A/009), cooperation with 2 foreign lecturers from Turkey was established (SAR, p. 45). As well as a guest lecturer from the

University of “Niš” in Serbia was recruited.

Taking into account the above-mentioned, the Expert Group concludes that VUAS has established and follows certain procedures for attracting qualified teaching staff in compliance with the applicable legislation. Teaching staff are recruited through open calls for tenders and advertisements published on the EURAXESS database, on the websites of VUAS and the Ministry of Education and Science, etc. Potential guest speakers are approached at conferences and seminars, or cooperation is strengthened in the framework of various projects.

1.3.6.

During the on-site visit to VUAS Expert Group verified that the core of professional development of academic staff consists of the teaching/pedagogical part and the research/scientific part. Practical and academic experience exchange is collected and developed during the participation in translation industry conferences, for example, ELIA (European Language Industry Association) events, seminars or specialised training, depending on the needs and goals of a staff member. The procedure for assessing and listing the professional development of the lecturers elected by the VUAS in accordance with the necessary professional qualification of a pedagogue of a higher education level is determined by the “Regulations on the Pedagogical Professional Development of the Lecturers of Ventspils University of Applied Sciences and its Recording”, approved by the VUAS Senate on 20.09.2017, Resolution No. 17-125. (VUAS internal circulation document, available to vnta domain users on the university's server), developed in accordance with the Regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers No. 662 of 28th of October 2014 “Provisions on the education required for educators and improvement of professional qualifications and professional qualifications of educators” (SAR, p. 48). During the interviews with the teaching staff, lecturers confirmed that each of them is responsible for their own professional development, depending on their research topic or study subject, the university gives the freedom to choose the most suitable and beneficial events. The self-assessment report indicates that all VUAS lecturers must complete a professional development programme of 160 hours (including at least 60 contact hours) by the end of the election period (SAR, p. 48). During the on-site visit, lecturers confirmed that they must once a year submit a report on professional development with the attached attestations to the management of the university. VUAS also provides various professional development courses for its teaching staff, for example, Moodle course building guide, Moodle tests and surveys, and Application of Web of Science in practice: from study design to the evaluation of results (SAR, p. 48). The Expert Group believes that the existing self-development progress system is motivational for lecturers and gives a lot of flexibility and opportunities to choose the topic of interest; progress monitoring and evaluation of achieved results is also in place. During the interviews, the teaching staff informed the Expert Group that, starting in February 2021, they had the opportunity to participate in internships with various companies in Latvia. After these internships, the study programme directors recognized the importance of translation technology for students' futures. Consequently, the FoTS management decided to establish a partnership with CAT tool Memsource (Phrase) a global translation management system provider - XTRF.

In addition, as it was confirmed by management, Ventspils municipality provides an additional bonus for lecturers with a doctoral degree. Students during the meetings confirmed that they had the opportunity to express their opinions about the lecturers and their taught study courses by participating in surveys on LAIS.

Based on the data provided by the VUAS and information gained during the interviews, there are constant opportunities for the teaching staff to participate in international mobility exchange programmes and participate in local and international conferences and seminars relevant to the purpose of professional development, as well as have regular opportunities to learn from the industry representatives. The Expert Group therefore concludes that the criterion is fully fulfilled.

1.3.7.

During the on-site visit, the Expert Group observed high engagement from the academic staff of the FoTS. Based on statistical data in SAR (Annexe: 2-8_appendix_Studiju virziena mācībspēki_TVT_TT_EN.xlsx) implementation of the study field in the 2023/2024 academic year is provided by 17 lecturers of which 10 has been elected to the FoTS, the same time in Annexe: 2-9_CV_Tulkošanas_virziens_EN.pdf are provided 18 CV of study field "Translation" lectures. The Expert Group conducted that one of the study programme's director's name is not mentioned in Annexe: 2-8_appendix_Studiju virziena mācībspēki_TVT_TT_EN.xlsx. 8 out of 17 lecturers are guest or visiting lecturers.

The Dean of FoTS explained to the Expert Group that in order to ensure that the academic load is not too high, always when the pedagogical load exceeds 1.2, the approval of the load requires a separate decision by the Faculty Council and the VUA Senate (also stated in SAR, p. 50). All stakeholders during the on-site visit confirmed to the Expert Group that the pedagogical load on lecturers is generally quite high, especially for elected staff. As a result, the management of the university and FoTS are working to increase the number of visiting lecturers (who would help both with the transfer of industry knowledge to students and with load sharing).

In light of the above, the Expert Group recognises that the lecturers' workload is currently balanced, but that the VUAS, as a regional university, needs to continuously increase its efforts to retain and motivate existing lecturers, as well as to orientate the new generation towards academic and scientific work.

1.3.8.

After reviewing the documents provided to the Expert Group and information gathered during the on-site visit while listening to the dean, study programme directors and students, the Expert Group concludes that students are provided with full support in their study process, and responsible for this is faculty Administrative Assistant. Students with special needs are provided with environmental accessibility, such as a diagonal lift that helps movement from building A to building B. During the interviews, students emphasised that there are no discriminatory attitudes at the university, communication is respectful and result-oriented, students are always listened to and their opinions are taken into account. Students can also turn to the Study Department specialist, the director of the study programme, and the dean of the faculty for certain questions (SAR, p. 50). Once a year, VUAS organises career days for students, inviting Latvian employers to present their companies and job vacancies. The study programme directors also help students establish contacts with employers' representatives, and company representatives regularly give students guest lectures on how to apply for internships or freelance jobs.

During the Expert Group on-site visit interview with students, they also stated that various social events in order to integrate and socialise with students from other faculties, both full-time and Erasmus+, are taking place. Students also affirmed that support regarding information about Erasmus+ mobility options and all necessary documents is given. Seminars regarding Erasmus+ options are organised and students can easily reach out to the specialist of the Study Department in external relations.

Regulations "Regulations on Study Procedures at Ventspils University of Applied Sciences" (available on [VUAS](https://view.officeapps.live.com/op/view.aspx?src=https%3A%2F%2Fvp.cdn-website.com%2F9945ff8b%2Ffiles%2Fuploaded%2FNolikums%2520par%2520studiju%2520k%25C4%2581rt%25C4%25ABbu%2520Ventspils%2520Augstskola%25C4%2581-eb343320%2520(1).docx&wdOrigin=BROWSELINK) web page: [https://view.officeapps.live.com/op/view.aspx?src=https%3A%2F%2Fvp.cdn-website.com%2F9945ff8b%2Ffiles%2Fuploaded%2FNolikums%2520par%2520studiju%2520k%25C4%2581rt%25C4%25ABbu%2520Ventspils%2520Augstskola%25C4%2581-eb343320%2520\(1\).docx&wdOrigin=BROWSELINK](https://view.officeapps.live.com/op/view.aspx?src=https%3A%2F%2Fvp.cdn-website.com%2F9945ff8b%2Ffiles%2Fuploaded%2FNolikums%2520par%2520studiju%2520k%25C4%2581rt%25C4%25ABbu%2520Ventspils%2520Augstskola%25C4%2581-eb343320%2520(1).docx&wdOrigin=BROWSELINK)) provide all students of VUAS with the possibility to receive professional psychological or career support on study-related issues as needed in cooperation with the Ventspils Education Administration. Students can apply for counselling from a psychologist or career counsellor by submitting a written application to the Study Department or in person. (SAR, p. 51).

VUAS is proud of a very personal approach to students. The Expert Group therefore concludes that the criterion is fully fulfilled.

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

Conclusions:

Material, informative, technological and financial provisions comply with the needs required for the successful implementation of the study field. VUAS has modern study premises and technologies, serving students' educational and leisure needs. Information and communication technology solutions are adequate.

The average teaching load for elected staff is quite high, but the VUAS is actively working on regrowth and attracting guest lecturers. Procedures for attracting qualified teaching staff are carried out in accordance with the principles of good governance.

VUAS has a motivational system in place for scientific and research activities. The exchange of practical experiences and participation in local and international conferences and projects is one of the main objectives for all FoTS members. All representatives of the teaching staff confirmed that they are aware of various opportunities and are regularly offered to attend conferences and seminars as well as participate in the Erasmus program, which are funded by the University. In addition, the municipality offers an extra bonus for lecturers who have a doctoral degree.

There are various opportunities for academic staff to develop themselves through participation in seminars, and conferences and expand their knowledge on topics of their interest. Students are provided with academic, career and psychological support when needed.

Strengths:

1. Additional financial support from the Ventspils State City Municipality Council.
2. Very modern and decent study premises, library and IT equipment. Excellent working conditions for teaching staff.
3. Clear and motivational teaching staff's KIP (Bonus) programme.
4. High potential to develop modern unique study interdisciplinary study programmes and study courses, joint research projects with industry.
5. Very personal approach with students.

Weaknesses:

1. Simultaneous interpreting booths need to be modernised to be more in line with today's realities.
2. Teaching staff mobility remains a challenge due to the heavy workload of the elected teaching staff.
3. Relatively low number of current doctoral students involved in study programmes realisation of the study field.
4. As a regional University, VUAS must continually increase its efforts to retain and motivate existing faculty and to attract the new generation to academic and scientific work.

1.4. Scientific Research and Artistic Creation

Analysis

1.4.1.

Science is recognised to be one of the strategic development areas of VUAS for the period of 2021–2027 (SAR, p. 4). In this regard, the strategic development goal set by VUAS emphasises “excellence of science and the transfer of knowledge in the national economy, as well as the increase of the innovation capacity, the social and economic values of knowledge and research in

cooperation with external ones, incl. international partners” (SAR, p. 4). According to VUAS Development Strategy for 2021–2027, in order to achieve excellence in science, four objectives have been put forward: 1. Promotion of scientific excellence; 2. Strengthening cooperation; 3. Promotion of commercialization; 4. Strengthening the research capacity and quality of VUAS. To evaluate the accomplishment of the aforementioned objectives, the key indicators that are indicated in the VUAS Development Strategy for 2021–2027 are the amount of research funding, quantity and quality of publications, number of cooperation agreements and patents.

Within Objective 1, there are seven activities proposed in VUAS Development Strategy for 2021–2027 (p. 42): 1.1. Increase the number of publications indexed in international databases; 1.2 Increase the number of publications with foreign co-authors; 1.3. The organisation of international scientific events in areas of VUAS specialisation; 1.4. Strengthen the development and quality of doctoral study programmes; 1.5. Develop new ones, incl. interdisciplinary doctoral study programmes; 1.6. Participate in international, national and branch research programmes; 1.7. Publish informational and explanatory articles on VUAS’s scientific achievements, raising awareness of scientific research and results achieved.

Activity 1.1 “Increase the number of publications indexed in international databases”. Having evaluated the documents submitted (Annexe: 2-9_CV_Tulkošanas_virziens_EN, Annexe: 2-12 _Appendix_kvantitative teaching staff scientific results_ENG, Annexe 2.13 _Appendix_TVT_TT_EN), teaching staff members were actively publishing scientific papers in 2017, reaching 20 publications per all elected lecturers (7 elected members). Then there was a slight decline in the number of publications (15 and 17 papers for 2018 and 2019, respectively). The total number of publications in recent years is also observed to be decreasing. Regarding the impact factor, based on the CVs of the teaching staff, in 2023 there were five scientific articles in the category of Web of Science, SCOPUS and ERIH PLUS publications; in 2022 - six scientific articles; in 2021 - three scientific articles (confirmed also at <https://en.venta.lv/zinatne/scientific-publications>). It has been noticed by the Expert Group that only some teaching staff members are particularly active in publishing the results of their research. During the on-site visit, the VUAS Rector confirmed the implementation of a new support mechanism to ensure a competitive remuneration policy starting from the academic year 2024/2025. The new system for financing scientific research determines additional salary increments for lecturers, setting precise KPIs with regard to the determined number of scientific Q1 and Q2 publications per year, and participation in scientific conferences (seminars, forums) in Latvia and abroad. The teaching staff members also confirmed that due to different situations they had upward and downward trends in scientific research activities, being most active during the elaboration of their PhD theses. However, it should be noted that during the interview, the teaching staff members promised to take more active participation in scientific research activities, especially in light of a new support (motivation) system being launched in the academic year 2024/2025.

Activity 1.2 “Increase the number of publications with foreign co-authors”. Based on Annexes 2.9 and 2.13, the elected teaching staff members have joint publications with local researchers (e.g., RTU Liepāja Academy (former University of Liepāja), University of Latvia, Institute of Horticulture). The Expert Group recommends the FoTS teaching staff develop joint publications with foreign partners within the concluded international cooperation agreements.

Activity 1.3. “Organization of international scientific events in areas of VUAS specialisation”.

According to the information provided in VUAS Self Assessment Report (SAR, p. 54), VUAS annually organises the scientific conference of VUAS in December, where the teaching staff (also of the study field “Translation”) present the results of their research. The Faculty of Translation Studies (FoTS) of VUAS had been organising the biennial international scientific conference “Bridging Languages and Cultures”, which was interrupted during the Covid-19 pandemic. The SAR (p. 55) states that it is planned to resume the organisation of the conference. The Expert Group recognizes the importance of the implementation of this activity as the conference plays an important role in the promotion of the scientific activities of the FoTS teaching staff, the exchange of good practices among

international partners and industry representatives, involvement of the students of the study field “Translation” in the scientific research activities which will have a positive impact on the study process. The scientific research areas (development tendencies in translation studies, linguistics, intercultural communication, professional translation environment, technologies and tools, etc.) of the conference “Bridging Languages and Cultures” contribute to the development of the study field “Translation” by developing and proposing innovative solutions and strategies that could improve the study process in terms of the organisation of the study environment, development of textbooks and teaching/training activities, application of corpus-based teaching methods (creation, development and maintenance of terminological databases).

Activity 1.6. “Participate in international, national and branch research programmes”.

Within the reporting period, nine national and international research projects were implemented by VUAS FoTS (SAR, pp. 51–53). The Expert Group has identified two main areas of scientific research within the implemented projects: (1) update of the study content and digitisation of the study process; (2) scientific excellence and knowledge transfer to economy and society.

From 2018 to 2021, the FoTS participated in Erasmus+ Strategic Partnership (KA2) project “The Evolution of the Legal System and Profession: Translating into Diversity” which was aimed at improving the quality of higher education and ensuring compliance with labour market requirements, strengthening multilingualism (French and English languages) and multidisciplinary, thus also promoting and developing international cooperation with higher education institutions, introducing innovative activities in higher education (such as the development of new modules of independent work in the online environment). Within the framework of the Erasmus+ Strategic Partnership (KA2) programme, the project “Distance Learning in the Work of Language Teachers” was also implemented from 2018–2020. Within the project, cooperation partners from Finland, Estonia, the Czech Republic, Poland, and Latvia (VUAS FoTS) developed the methodology for the organisation of distance learning mode in order to provide support to language teachers in the creation and implementation of online classes. Within the ERASMUS+ KA226 – Partnerships for Digital Education Readiness (Higher education) programme, representatives of the VUAS FoTS were engaged in the project “Germanic Studies Digitally” (2022–2023). The aim of the project was to promote the digitisation of studies through the development of a study material platform for the acquisition of the German language, literature, culture etc. The project “Digitisation Initiatives for Improving the Quality of Studies in the Areas of Strategic Specialisation of Higher Education Institutions” was implemented together with cooperation partners (University of Latvia, Rezekne Academy of Technologies and Daugavpils University) from 2022 to 2023. The project aimed to develop digital capacity by integrating technological solutions into the content and process of study courses.

According to VUAS Self Assessment Report (SAR, p. 51), the project “The Latvian Language of Science in the Intralingual Aspect” of state significance within the Fundamental and Applied Research Programme of the Latvian Council of Science was carried out from 2018 to 2020. The strategic outcome of the project was to promote the use of a quality Latvian language of science in the national academic environment and develop the prerequisites for further research of scientific discourse. The project “Latvian Language” of the National Research Programme (2018–2021) was aimed to develop human capital, the Latvian language and the Livonian language, digitise language resources, thus ensuring the availability of research results necessary for society, as well as to contribute to education and language acquisition and to strengthen the role and functions of the state language. The project “Improvement of the quality of the content of Ventspils University of Applied Sciences study programs, improvement of resource efficiency and ensuring better management” (2018 to 2023) implemented under the Operational Programme “Growth and Employment” was in line with the strategic development of VUAS related to the modernization of studies. The representatives of VUAS FoTS are currently engaged in the project “Diversity of the Latvian Language in Time and Space” (2021–2024) of the State Research Programme “Letonika for

the Development of Latvian and European Society". By studying the regional and historical features of the linguistic environment in Latvia, a safe and strong basis for national identity is being developed. The project benefits a broad range of stakeholders, from researchers and policymakers to local communities and cultural organisations. In 2021, the project "Smart Complex of Information Systems of Specialised Biology Lexis for the Research and Preservation of Linguistic Diversity" of the grant programme of the Latvian Council of Science was launched. The Expert Group has acknowledged that the results of the project (an open-access interactive and multifunctional data management system) contribute to higher education (such as linguists, and language researchers), cultural heritage (NGOs and governmental agencies engaged in cultural heritage preservation) and industry (terminologists, experts developing natural language processing tools, machine translation, and linguistic databases) sectors.

Having reviewed all the provided documents and SAR, the Expert Group concludes that the projects implemented by FoTS meet VUAS strategic goals, such as modernisation and digitalisation of the studies, as well as scientific excellence and knowledge transfer to the economy. The scientific research activities of FoTS are related to the identification and exploration of translation studies in Latvia, the role and functions of the state language, the development and study of terminology, and the examination of the study process aimed at its development and improvement (digitisation) meeting the needs of the digital society. The Expert Group confirms that the scientific research activities are relevant both for the study field and the industry. According to Annexe 2.14, the FoTS has 11 cooperation agreements that are in force in the area of research and innovation, as well as international cooperation (such as, e.g., Skrivanek Baltic Ltd., Valodu vēstniecība Ltd., Ventspils Freeport Authority, Translate PRO Ltd.). The Expert Group recommends evaluating an opportunity to more actively attract industry representatives in the implementation of the research projects and initiatives, as well as devote special attention to the publicity campaign with regard to the research projects and research areas of the FoTS. The Expert Group has failed to find detailed information about the areas of research of the FoTS on the homepage. At <https://en.venta.lv/science>, there is the area "Research in Humanities" where it is stated that it is conducted by VUAS FoTS, but opening the dedicated page <https://en.venta.lv/en/zinatne/research-in-humanities>, error '404 Not Found' appears. The same situation happens with the link to projects (<https://en.venta.lv/en/zinatne/projekti>) and conferences (<https://en.venta.lv/en/zinatne/projekti>). The Expert Group recommends updating the information (link) about the research activities of the FoTS on the website page.

To promote knowledge transfer in the national economy, the themes of the graduation papers are developed and proposed in cooperation with industry representatives taking into account the labour market trends and skill needs. Industry representatives are also attracted as scientific advisers of graduation papers (SAR, p. 15). During the on-site visit, the industry representatives acknowledged their participation in the proposal of themes and their guidance of students in the elaboration of graduation papers.

The Expert Group concludes that a more detailed (specific) plan of action in the research area along with the deadlines set in the Study Development Plan of the FoTS could ensure the full correspondence and coverage of the development of the scientific potential of the study field in compliance with the VUAS Development Strategy for 2021–2027. The Expert Group is of the opinion that the scientific capacity of the study field could benefit from the inclusion of the expected scientific research outcomes (measurable indicators) for the teaching staff (in academic and research positions) of the study field in the Study Development Plan of FoTS taking into account the VUAS Development Strategy for 2023–2027.

1.4.2.

The connection of scientific research with the study process is revealed in the research activities of the teaching staff CVs (Annexe: 2-9_CV_Tulkošanas_virziens_EN). The provided documents

confirmed that during the reporting period, the teaching staff presented their research results at international scientific conferences in Latvia and abroad. Participation in conferences promotes synergy between teaching activities (the study process) and the latest research in science, establishing and maintaining international cooperation with foreign higher education institutions as well as attracting the students of the study field in the research activities.

The results of research conducted by the teaching staff of the study field are integrated in the study process in the form of study themes, and practical activities included/updated within the content of the study courses as demonstrated by study course descriptions of both study programmes. To promote students' awareness of the scientific research conducted by the teaching staff, the lists of basic literature sources are recommended to be supplemented with the latest scientific articles and textbooks published by the teaching staff of the study field.

During the on-site visit, it was observed by the Expert Group that the students highly appreciated that the teaching staff members (during lectures and practical classes) supplement the content of the study courses with their latest scientific and applied research results, thus also making the study course content topical and relevant to the industry needs and social innovation.

It should be noted that the themes of study projects and graduation papers supervised by the teaching staff are also related to their field of research. During the on-site visit, the Expert Group was provided with the graduation papers that confirmed the practice of lecturers supervising the graduation papers related to their area of research.

1.4.3.

International scientific cooperation is promoted within the projects implemented by VUAS FoTS (SAR, pp. 51-53), e.g., Erasmus+ Strategic Partnership Key Action 2 (KA2) project "The Evolution of the Legal System and Profession: Translating into Diversity", Erasmus+ Strategic Partnership (KA2) programme, the project "Distance Learning in the Work of Language Teachers", Erasmus+ Strategic Partnership (KA2) programme, the project "Distance Learning in the Work of Language Teachers", ERASMUS+ KA226 - Partnerships for Digital Education Readiness (Higher education) study programme - project "Germanic Studies Digitally".

The study programmes make use of the opportunities from cooperation with foreign higher education institutions as the teaching staff bring diverse perspectives, research methodologies, and teaching methods to the classroom, thus enriching students' learning experiences by exposing them to international expertise. As the students of the study field are also involved in international research projects, cooperation with foreign higher education institutions enables the students to engage with partner institutions from various cultural backgrounds, thus preparing them for work in a globalised environment.

To enhance the global recognition of the study field, the Expert Group recommends disseminating the research results of the international cooperation between the FoTS and foreign partner institutions by publishing joint publications.

The VUAS Self Assessment Report (SAR, p. 55) also states that the teaching staff of the study field participate in the annual scientific conference organised by VUAS, thus encouraging the exchange of scientific ideas. There is also an international scientific conference "Bridging Languages and Cultures" dedicated to translation and terminology-related issues focusing on translatology science development in Latvia and teaching methodology development and approbation within the study field. The conference was organised by VUAS FoTS once every two years, but during the Covid-19 pandemic, it was interrupted. As stated in the VUAS Self Assessment Report (SAR, p. 55), VUAS FoTS is planning to resume the organisation of the conference. The Expert Group supports this decision by VUAS FoTS as the conference can contribute to the international cooperation within the study field, increase the number of publications (joint publications with foreign partners) of the teaching staff, involve the students of the study field in the research activities, and bring added value to the study process enriched with the latest innovations in the field.

The study field also envisages expanding international cooperation and benefitting from the cooperation in the International Consortium COLOURS. More specific activities are recommended to be elaborated within the study field to continuously develop international cooperation in scientific research within the study field.

1.4.4.

VUAS has developed a financial support mechanism for the involvement of the teaching staff in scientific research. The allocation of funding for the research activities of the teaching staff is determined by the following regulations listed in the VUAS Self Assessment Report (SAR, pp. 37 – 38): 1. VUAS regulations on a unified remuneration system (approved by VUAS Senate Resolution No. 18-98 of 21 November 2018); 2. Regulation on additional remuneration for VUAS employees (approved by the VUAS Senate on 11 January 2012, Resolution No. 12-02); 3. Regulations on the procedure for granting funding for business trips to participate in conferences (approved by the VUAS Senate on 24 May 2017, Resolution No. 17-83); 4. Regulations on the granting of funding for the publishing of educational materials, scientific monographs and collections of scientific articles (approved by the VUAS Senate on 21 June 2017, Resolution No. 17-104); 5. Regulations of the competition “Development of scientific activity at Ventspils University of Applied Sciences” (approved by the VUAS Senate on 24 May 2017, Resolution No. 17-86).

According to the information provided in CVs of the teaching staff (Annexe: 2-9 _CV_Tulkošanas_virziens_EN), it can be stated that the teaching staff of the study field are regularly provided with the opportunity to participate in the research projects implemented by the FoTS. It was also confirmed by the teaching staff during the on-site visit. The elected academic staff members of VUAS FoTS may also be elected to the scientific positions of researchers and senior researchers at FoTS. In accordance with the Regulation “On Additional Remuneration of Ventspils University of Applied Sciences Employees”, additional remuneration is determined for the academic staff elected by the VUAS with a PhD degree who has fulfilled one of the criteria referred to in Paragraph 3 of the Regulation in the previous two academic years. In accordance with these regulations, teaching staff members who have acquired the status of an expert of the Latvian Council of Science are granted a lump sum.

According to the regulations on the procedure for granting funding to participate in conferences (Rules on the Procedure for the Allocation of Funding for Business Trips to Participate in Conferences approved by VUAS Senate on 24 May 2017), the conference participation fee, transport and accommodation expenses are covered by VUAS. The next financial support mechanism is the procedure for announcing, applying, evaluating and approving internal research projects – the Regulations “Development of Scientific Activities at Ventspils University of Applied Sciences”, according to which the teaching staff are granted funding for research projects initiated by themselves. In accordance with these regulations, projects for the competition may be submitted to the VUAS by employees of the University who have a PhD degree. The number of project promoters must include at least one master’s student and/or PhD student or young scientist (up to five years after obtaining a PhD degree).

There is also a support mechanism developed to encourage teaching staff to conduct scientific research work. In accordance with the regulations on the procedure for granting academic leave for VUAS teaching staff for scientific research or for carrying out scientific work outside their workplace, teaching staff members who have worked in VUAS academic positions for at least six years and who have used this type of leave not later than six years ago and for whom VUAS is the place of election are entitled to request paid academic leave of six calendar months for carrying out research work outside the workplace.

During the on-site visit, the teaching staff of the study field confirmed that they understand the importance and impact of scientific research on the study process. The SAR does not provide information on the teaching staff that are involved in the exploration and development of particular

research areas within the study field.

During the reporting period, the teaching staff of the study field have published 112 scientific publications (Annexe: 2-12_appendix_kvantitative teaching staff scientific results_ENG). Quantitative data on the publications is provided in Annexe 2.12 without specifying the impact factor, citation analysis or other metrics of these publications. Having evaluated the documents submitted (Annexes 2.9, 2.12, 2.13), teaching staff members were actively publishing scientific papers in 2017, reaching 20 publications per all elected lecturers (7 elected members). Then there was a slight decline in the number of publications (15 and 17 papers for 2018 and 2019, respectively). The total number of publications in recent years is also observed to be decreasing. Regarding the impact factor, based on the CVs of the teaching staff, in 2023 there were five scientific articles in the category of Web of Science, SCOPUS and ERIH PLUS publications; in 2022 - six scientific articles; in 2021 - three scientific articles (confirmed also at <https://en.venta.lv/zinatne/scientific-publications>). The Expert Group found that only some teaching staff members are particularly active in publishing the results of their research.

The Expert Group considers that the mechanisms for the involvement of VUAS teaching staff in scientific research include a robust financial support system through internal and external grants, clear regulations for academic leave, open opportunities for participation in research projects, and incentives for high-quality research output. However, to encourage the teaching staff to engage in meaningful scientific research that aligns with both their academic interests and the FoTS strategic priorities, the Expert Group recommends evaluating other mechanisms, such as, for example, reducing teaching (academic) loads for active researchers, promoting interdisciplinary cooperation, creating mentorship programmes for junior teaching staff to receive guidance from experienced colleagues.

1.4.5.

According to the information provided in the Self Assessment Report (SAR, p. 56) as well as based on the descriptions of the study courses, VUAS FoTS has developed an inclusive mechanism to involve both junior and senior students in scientific research activities. At the level of curriculum, both study programmes have study courses on the language of science, research methods, and methodology. At the bachelor level, there is the study course "The Language of Science and Research Methodology" (3 credit points) that apart from the study of theoretical material also involves the elaboration of the study paper. The master study programme proposes the study course "Principles, Methods of Research Work and Course Paper" (6 credit points). The prerequisite of the study course is the development of the study paper which makes up 50 % of the final grade in the study course. Apart from the specific study course aimed at developing research skills, the students of the bachelor study programme have to elaborate two more study papers within the study courses "Latvian Written Practice II" (3 credit points) and "Terminology and Lexicography I" (3 credit points). The information on the study courses that include study papers is provided in Annexe 3.6. However, the Expert Group has not identified the requirement to develop the study paper as a prerequisite for the completion of the study course "Latvian Written Practice II" in the description of the study course. According to the description of the study course "Terminology and Lexicography I", the development of the study paper makes up 50 % of the final grade in the study course. In addition, the final requirement for the students of both study programmes is to develop graduation papers that are characterised as student's independent research work, where the student determines the research topic according to the chosen specialisation area (Annexe: 3-7_appendix_studiju kursu apraksti_EN.docx).

According to the VUAS Self assessment Report (SAR, p. 56), the best study (research) papers are then presented at local (VUAS), republican or foreign student scientific conferences, thus establishing new partnerships and collaborations with students involved in the research of other universities and at the same time broadening the horizons of the topical issues, trends of the

industry. As a motivation system, participation in student scientific conferences enables the students to have a higher grade for their graduation paper. The Expert Group considers that such a system can encourage students' involvement in research activities; however, the Expert Group also recognizes that the effectiveness of this practice lies in the way how it is implemented. If students see such a system as a mere formality to receive a higher grade, the result might not be effective as they will not strive to achieve learning outcomes. If participation in scientific conferences, seminars and workshops is tightly connected to the quality of the research and the development of presentation skills, and if students receive meaningful feedback and guidance on the elaboration of scientific articles or study papers, the system of offering higher grades for their graduation paper can be successful.

Research skills are also developed and improved within the internship in translation that lasts three working days, during which the students work on a theme proposed by the teaching staff. The themes proposed are related to particular research areas of the teaching staff, such as translation theory and history, terminology, etc. The Expert Group agrees that a three-day internship in translation provides students with valuable hands-on experience by introducing them to the world of scientific research conducted in Translation Studies and Terminology. However, it is not enough to fully develop and improve research skills in the long run.

At the extra-curricular level, students participate in the annual student scientific conference, organised by VUAS or another university. Students are also engaged in one of the FoTS projects, e.g., "Digitisation Initiatives for Improving the Quality of Studies in the Areas of Strategic Specialisation of Universities".

Two motivating mechanisms are implemented by the FoTS to encourage the students to participate in scientific research activities: awards and possible grade increase in a research-related course and/or for the graduation paper.

Based on the VUAS Self Assessment Report (SAR, p. 85), assistant professors take an active part in the research projects and attract students to them. During the Expert Group on-site visit, and meeting with the VUAS stakeholders, the teaching staff confirmed that they supervise student research papers, as well as the students acknowledged that they are informed of the research activities and take part in conferences, internship days, and research projects. The students of the master study programme also shared their experience of being involved in the research activities within the study course "Translation and Terminology Management". The master study programme director shared the example of good practice of collaborating with the student in research activities that resulted in the student's publication of a scientific article in a reputable database, which afterwards also culminated in the prize awarded to the student.

The Expert Group has found substantial evidence that the students of both study programmes are engaged in scientific research activities during the entire period of studies. However, the Expert Group recommends adding information on the study papers that are integral components of some study courses in the description of the relevant study courses, thus emphasising the synergy between theory and practice in research. The Expert Group also recommends establishing a regular mechanism for publishing students' research papers, abstracts or thesis statements at the regional, state and European levels (e.g., VUAS student scientific conference proceedings, the collection of scientific articles "The Word: Aspects of Research", open access journal "Vertimos studijos" by Vilnius University). The Expert Group considers that the papers elaborated by the students in cooperation with teaching staff, international students, and/or industry representatives will contribute to the development of the study field, provide valuable practical insights, and stimulate interdisciplinary innovation.

1.4.6.

The VUAS Self Assessment Report (SAR, pp. 57–58) provides information about the modernised process of organising and tracking the workload of the teaching staff using Google Docs, where all

information about the study courses delivered, lecturers, groups etc. is provided.

As an innovative solution developed within VUAS project “Next Generation Micro Cities of Europe”, VeApp information system has been developed. It is a unique tool for day-to-day learning and activity planning, information exchange and communication for the convenience of VUAS students and teaching staff. The VeApp is made available for iPhone, iPad and Android smartphone users. The application also serves as an informative platform to publish important announcements in real-time. The study process also benefits from the new video studio, which serves as a tool for creating new materials and improving the existing ones. The studio provides professional filming, light and sound equipment, as well as high-end editing and recording software (SAR, p. 57). The software can be used for streaming and online lessons, as well as video recording. The opportunities of the video studio were used to develop a new study course “Computer Game Localization” (1 credit point). The study course is offered to the students as a free elective study course. In light of content digitization, the Expert Group recommends intensively using the opportunities provided by the video studio to digitise the material of the study courses.

Within the project “Digitisation Initiatives for Improving the Quality of Studies in the Areas of Strategic Specialisation of Higher Education Institutions”, the FoTS teaching staff create new study courses, as well as upgrade the existing ones. As it is stated in the VUAS Self Assessment Report (SAR, p. 58), as a result of the project, 77 study courses will be digitised. However, quantitative indicators of the FoTS teaching staff in terms of the study courses of the study field “Translation” are not specified. The Expert Group highly evaluates the launched e-platform “Language Technology Terms” developed within the aforementioned project. This platform will be made available to everyone interested in language technology terms.

Within the research projects, the teaching staff developed term dictionaries (e.g., “English-Latvian-English Medical Dictionary” (mobile app); “The new botanical dictionary. Terms in Latvian-Latin-English-German-Russian”) (mobile app). (SAR, p. 119), thus integrating the latest scientific solutions into the study process.

The Expert Group concludes that the innovative solutions in the form of workload tracking for the teaching staff, the day-to-day learning, activity planning and communication system between the students and the employees of VUAS, as well as gradual digitization of the study content have a positive impact on the study process.

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

Conclusions:

Scientific research conducted by the FoTS meets VUAS strategic goals, such as modernisation and digitalisation of the studies, as well as scientific excellence and knowledge transfer to the economy. A more detailed (specific) plan of actions in the research area along with the deadlines set in the Study Development Plan of the FoTS could ensure the full correspondence and coverage of the development of the scientific potential of the study field in compliance with the VUAS Development Strategy for 2021–2027. The scientific research activities of the FoTS are related to the identification and exploration of translation studies in Latvia, the role and functions of the state language, the development and study of terminology, and the examination of the study process aimed at its development and improvement (digitisation) meeting the needs of the digital society. The scientific research activities of the FoTS are relevant both for the study field and the industry. The results of the implemented projects contribute to the higher education sector, state language policy, cultural heritage area and the industry sector. VUAS has developed a strong financial support mechanism for the involvement of the teaching staff in scientific research. Motivating mechanisms have also been elaborated by the FoTS to encourage the students to participate in scientific research activities. To promote students’ awareness of the scientific research conducted by the teaching staff, the lists of basic literature sources are recommended to be supplemented with the latest scientific articles,

textbooks published by the teaching staff of the study field. The innovative solutions in the form of workload tracking for the teaching staff, the day-to-day learning, activity planning and communication system between the students and the employees of VUAS, as well as gradual digitization of the study content have a positive impact on the study process.

Strengths:

- 1.A strong financial support mechanism for the involvement of the teaching staff in scientific research has been developed and maintained at the faculty and the university level. Additional financial support from the Ventspils State City Municipality Council.
- 2.International scientific cooperation is promoted within the research projects implemented. There are also 11 cooperation agreements that are in force in the area of research and innovation, as well as international cooperation.
- 3.Innovative solutions developed within the research projects of VUAS and FoTS are successfully integrated in the study process and have a positive impact on the organisation and content of studies for both students and the teaching staff members.
- 4.The FoTS had experience in organising the biennial international scientific conference “Bridging Languages and Cultures”, which was interrupted during the Covid-19 pandemic.
- 5.Teaching staff members conduct important research in the field, as well as are involved in various professional organisations at the state and international level. The results of research conducted by the teaching staff of the study field are integrated in the study process.
- 6.The teaching staff members recognise the need to be more active in the process of publishing the results of their research.
- 7.The students of both study programmes are engaged in scientific research activities during the entire period of studies.

Weaknesses:

- 1.Lack of the expected scientific research outcomes (measurable indicators) for the teaching staff (in academic and research positions) of the study field in the Study Development Plan of the FoTS.
- 2.Low involvement of industry representatives in the implementation of the research projects and initiatives of the FoTS.
- 3.Lack of joint publications with international cooperation partners within the concluded international cooperation agreements.
- 4.Only some teaching staff members of the study field are actively and systematically involved in publishing the results of their research.
- 5.Shortage of joint publications with the students.
- 6.Lack of a mechanism for publishing students’ research papers, abstracts or thesis statements at the regional, state and European level.
7. Insufficient publicity of the research areas of the FoTS on the homepage.

Assessment of the requirement [2]

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

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

A more detailed (specific) plan of actions in the research area along with the deadlines set in the Study Development Plan of the FoTS could ensure the full correspondence and coverage of the development of the scientific potential of the study field in compliance with the VUAS Development Strategy for 2021–2027. The contribution of the teaching staff to the scientific publications is inconsistent (only some members are active in this process). There is a lack of

joint publications with international cooperation partners and shortage of joint publications with the students.

1.5. Cooperation and Internationalisation

Analysis

1.5.1.

Based on the information that has been gathered during the on-site visit, it can be stated that VUAS maintains close contact with numerous different cooperation partners from Latvia. Based on the information that is provided in the VUAS Self Assessment Report (SAR, pp.58-59), the cooperation partners include employer's representatives, Ventspils City Municipality, Ventspils Education Board, companies such as SIA Skrivanek Baltic and Agency of Languages, cooperation agreements with the University of Latvia and Riga Technical University and others. It has to be noted that in 2020, cooperation with the Riga Technical University Liepaja Academy (previously Liepaja University) and Daugavpils University was launched to develop a new joint doctoral study programme. The study programme is implemented in September 2022, which is a great reflection of cooperation among universities in Latvia. However, the expert group has to bring the attention that the study programme and the cooperation related to it is accredited in another study field "Language and Culture Studies, Mother Tongue Studies, and Language Programmes". Based on the provided information during the on-site visit and observations made by the Expert Group, it can be concluded that representatives of partner organisations participate in the study process and the development of study programmes in various ways such as providing internships to students actively reaching out to VUAS, providing feedback on study courses and their possible improvements through internship evaluations, providing guest lectures, and participating in career days in spring. Some of the employers also have been present in student thesis defence as part of the evaluation committee. As it was stated during the on-site visit, as the Ventspils city is compact in size and the industry is specific, people working in the industry know each other very well. A significant number of graduates who continue their career in Ventspils are employed after graduation by agencies in the region, such as "Translate Pro" and "NordText", for example. There is some cooperation in terms of research projects and conferences in place. In the meeting with the teaching staff, it was mentioned that soon there will be a workshop on a new tool with AI functions. As a future potential cooperation development, the Expert Group encourages the faculty to develop joint research projects with the business enterprises and other cooperation partners as the potential still is not fully exploited.

Based on the provided analysis, it can be concluded that the VUAS selects cooperation partners based on specific features relevant to the study field and implemented study programmes as well it is important to note that regional cooperation with institutions, companies and agencies is crucial. In addition to that, based on the SAR (SAR, p. 59), companies and institutions are selected for potential cooperation based on overlapping fields of activity, for example, one company may be eligible for cooperation with different study programmes. Often, good candidates are companies where VUAS graduates work and where employers are satisfied with them, and experience shows that the graduates' training matches what they need. To establish mutual cooperation, partners need to understand whether there is potential for such cooperation and whether both sides gain from it, as well as what the short and long-term benefits are and what the opportunities for development are. Most often, such cooperation is consolidated through cooperation agreements. For example, cooperation with SIA Skrivanek Baltic has contributed to changes in the study programme in the direction of translation technologies, as both the students' internship in this translation agency and the teachers' internship within the project have convinced that it is necessary to strengthen the acquisition of modern translation technologies already in the study process. In expert groups' opinion, the approach of the chosen strategy seems reasonable and well-defined. For the future, it may be relevant to establish a policy/ strategy that clearly defines these aspects, although, it is

clear to the Expert Group what are the achievable results and aims of the chosen cooperation partners from what has been described and observed during the evaluation procedure.

1.5.2.

Based on the information gathered by the Experts Group during the on-site visit and information provided in the VUAS Self Assessment Report (SAR, p.60), cooperation with foreign institutions within the study field is organised mainly through the exchange of lecturers and students through Erasmus mobility provided opportunities, which are further elaborated in the analysis of 1.5.3.

The international dimension of the study field, including student and staff mobility through Erasmus+ and the involvement of foreign students and guest lecturers, directly supports VUAS's strategic goal of becoming a "digitally open and accessible European-level university." By promoting participation in international exchange programmes, the study field enhances VUAS's global visibility and fosters an international learning environment. However, interviews with BA students revealed that they tend to focus more on academic development, such as participating in international conferences, rather than taking advantage of Erasmus+ mobility exchange opportunities. In contrast, MA students during the on-site visit meeting expressed satisfaction with their previous participation in Erasmus+, noting how it broadened their perspectives and enhanced their experience.

Based on the VUAS Self Assessment Report (SAR, p.60), the partners of VUAS are mostly Erasmus project partners, as well as partners active in the EMT network. For example, as part of the move towards strengthening translation technology courses in the curriculum, VUAS translation study field strengthened its contacts with Porto, The Porto Accounting and Business School (ISCAP), with which it collaborated in the Erasmus project No 2018-1-LV01-KA203-046965, as the Porto project demonstrated the university's good technical equipment and its use in translation studies. After the mobility of several lecturers in the Erasmus+ project, it was possible to get to know the good practices of this university in order to try to replicate them. Based on the meeting with the quality assurance (QA) manager and the manager for foreign students, it became clear that there is no separate strategy that has been developed for internationalisation. There are some points on that in the general strategy of the VUAS mentioning internationalisation. For future development, it would be recommended to expand the strategy focusing on specific achievable goals, and a clear strategy in regards to internationalisation of the university and its provided opportunities. Additionally, the expert group suggests further expanding the cooperation with institutions and universities based on the fact that at the moment the cooperation is through the Erasmus framework.

During the on-site visit meetings with the person responsible for the preparation of SAR and the Dean of the faculty as well as students, it was found out that some of the students have used internship opportunities in the European Commission, which was highly appreciated by the students. In the meeting with the students, it was also mentioned that students have the opportunity to visit Brussels as the master's study programme "Translation of Applied Texts" is part of the prestigious international European Master of Translation (EMT) network, where various seminars and webinars allow one to get acquainted with new trends in translation education at international level.

Based on the information gathered during the on-site visit and provided in the VUAS Self Assessment Report (SAR, p.60), it is clear that the VUAS have chosen partnerships within the study field and relevant study programmes. At this point of time, it is noticeable that the partners are mostly Erasmus project partners, as well as partners active in the EMT network. However, without a clear strategy and explanation why so. All the current activities and provided examples are great incentives and the Expert Group encourages VUAS to further expand these opportunities in the future, but also looking for possible international cooperation incentives as, for example, NORDPLUS and other projects with an opportunity to encourage and build new partnerships. It could possibly help to establish documentation with clear incentives, goals and plans in a strategic form on how to maintain and organise potential partnership-building activities for the next term of 3 to 5 years.

1.5.3.

The VUAS has concluded more than 50 Erasmus+ cooperation agreements with universities in about 20 countries. The list of Erasmus+ partner universities can be found in the “International Cooperation” section of the VUAS website. Each year, the mobility of students and lecturers to the respective partner universities takes place. Based on the information provided by the meeting with the QA manager and the manager for foreign students, the turnover of student mobility is quite limited. The most popular study exchange destinations for students have been Spain, Germany and Norway for the last couple of years. This study semester on study mobility from this study field, one student has gone to Norway. Altogether, from the university this semester, only 5 students are on Erasmus. There could be more. Based on the analysis in the VUAS Self Assessment Report (SAR, p.61), outgoing and incoming mobility of students in VUAS as a whole and in FoTS in the academic years 2020/2021 and 2021/2022 has decreased due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The drop-out of students is due to their exmatriculation by the VUAS or of their own choice, which also influences the number of students that go on to mobility. It was commented during the on-site meeting, that during the fall semester, the activity in general is lower but usually does not exceed 10. It is encouraged by the Expert Group that students of the study field are more active in participation in study exchange as well as traineeship opportunities abroad. In fact, it is very important for students of translation to be exposed to new cultures and environments to develop their language skills in the natural local language environment. For lecturers, the mobility usually takes place from one to two weeks.

Based on the on-site meeting with the directors of study programmes BA and MA, there are guest lectures provided by foreign lecturers. As stated in the VUAS Self Assessment Report (SAR, p.61), there have been projects through which foreign lecturers have been joining VUAS. The mechanisms for attracting foreign academic personnel are personal contacts of academic staff, participation in conferences, cooperation within projects, research, events, and advertisements, which seems relevant. The most recent one mentioned was in 2022 when cooperation with the University of Niš started on the courses “Contrastive Linguistics”, “Cognitive Linguistics” and “Introduction in Linguistics”. This cooperation continues in the courses “Lexicology and Terminology I” and “Introduction in Linguistics and Contrastive Linguistics”, which are taught remotely. The project also involved cooperation with a doctoral student at the University of Reykjavik in Iceland, who taught the free choice course “Literary Translation for Creativity” and replaced the guest lecturer in the course “Introduction to Linguistics”. During the on-site visit, one of the examples mentioned was a lecturer from Serbia, who does remote lectures. Another example is a Lithuanian colleague, who also knows Latvian, thus eventually she joined the permanent academic staff. The Expert Group encourages VUAS to further explore possibilities like that of guest lectures and also some on-site.

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

Conclusions:

VUAS maintains relationships with various local partners in Latvia, including universities, employers, municipal authorities, and industry players. This collaboration directly supports students' career development and study programme improvement, as evidenced by internships, feedback mechanisms, and participation in academic evaluations. VUAS has established international partnerships primarily through Erasmus+ mobility programmes, providing opportunities for faculty members and student exchange, which in the future can be improved on establishing other forms of cooperation with institutions abroad. The lack of a comprehensive internationalisation strategy is a key gap. VUAS participates in Erasmus+ mobility programmes, but the number of participating students should be improved. There is potential for expanding joint research projects with both local and international partners.

Strengths:

1. The institution benefits from its strong local ties in Latvia, particularly within Ventspils, where cooperation partners provide essential support.
2. VUAS has engaged various sectors (municipalities, businesses, and other organisations) that actively contribute to the learning process, exposing students to practical experiences.
3. Cooperation through Erasmus+ and the EMT network, enhances teaching quality and provides students and faculty with valuable exposure to global practices.
4. Graduates are often employed by local organisations, which reflects the direct impact of these partnerships on student career outcomes.

Weaknesses:

1. Despite numerous Erasmus+ agreements, student mobility remains low, with only a handful of students participating. This represents a missed opportunity for students to broaden their experiences and skills in different cultural and linguistic environments.
2. While there are points regarding internationalisation in the general strategy, a clear and detailed plan for expanding international partnerships and mobility opportunities is lacking.
3. Although there is cooperation in local research projects, the institution has not fully exploited the potential for collaborative research with businesses or international institutions, which could significantly enhance academic offerings.

Assessment of the requirement [3]

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

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

VUAS has strong partnerships with local Latvian institutions, such as universities, employers, and municipalities. These partnerships actively support student internships, curriculum development, guest lectures, and career placements. These activities directly contribute to achieving the aims of the study field by aligning educational outcomes with industry needs and ensuring practical learning experiences. While VUAS has some international partnerships, especially through Erasmus+ and the EMT network, the extent of international cooperation is limited. There is no cooperation through other frameworks abroad, except Erasmus. There is no comprehensive strategy for internationalisation, and student mobility is low. Without a structured approach to expanding international partnerships, the potential for broader international collaboration is underutilised. Joint research initiatives with local businesses and international institutions are limited.

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

Analysis

1.6.1.

According to the studied documentation, in 2013, the study field of Translation underwent an accreditation process that generated five key recommendations. Of these, four recommendations have been fully implemented, while one related to increasing French language representation remains partially unfulfilled due to external factors, such as inadequate French language preparation in secondary education. These efforts and outcomes are detailed in Annexe 2.18 (Annexe: 2-18_appendix_Rekomendāciju izpildes pārskats_tulkošana_11.05..docx (2)). This clarification provides a comprehensive overview of the university's response to the Expert Group's suggestions

and highlights the effectiveness of VUAS's strategic efforts in improving its study programmes.

The documentation and on-site visit interviews with study programme directors demonstrate that Ventspils University of Applied Sciences has made significant strides in addressing these recommendations. One specific recommendation from the Expert Group in 2013 was to increase the representation of the French language in the Translation study programmes. At that time, VUAS offered a bachelor's study programme that included courses in French, which may explain why the Expert Group emphasised this recommendation. However, due to insufficient French language preparation at the secondary education level, this goal has not been fully achieved. Despite this challenge, the university has made notable progress in other areas.

For instance, it has successfully established a comprehensive database of top-rated bachelor's and Master's theses, accessible in both physical and digital formats, serving as a valuable resource for future students and researchers. Some theses were handed to the Expert Group during the on-site visit. Furthermore, the university has strengthened its collaboration with employers by involving them in strategic planning and study programme development. Employers now contribute to the Study Programme Board and State Examination Defence Committees, actively shaping the curriculum and offering practical insights through guest lecturing.

According to the interview results and annexes 2.16 and 2.17, the university collaborates with Latvian and Baltic universities with a joint PhD study programme in "Languages and Literature Studies" being partially implemented.

In response to recommendations for enhancing specific study programmes, the university has revised its course offerings to include specialised areas such as translating medical and criminal law texts, addressing the increasing demand for expertise in these fields. This development is reflected in the MA study programme curriculum. According to interviews with the study programme director, these courses have been integrated into the curriculum to better align with labour market needs. Furthermore, the university has updated its technological infrastructure and translation tools, ensuring students can access resources necessary for professional translation work.

During the on-site visit, the Expert Group observed interpreting booths set up in the conference hall, allowing students to practise interpreting during events. The auditorium allocated for study field students, equipped with an interactive whiteboard, PCs, and headphones, was also visited. The academic staff's workload has been adjusted to align with course demands, ensuring sufficient time for mentoring and evaluating students. The current version of the study programmes is balanced in terms of credit allocation, with credits distributed into manageable units. For example, as noted by the BA study programme director, some 6-credit courses have been split into two 3-credit courses to enhance curriculum alignment. The workload issue was also mentioned during interviews with academic staff, who expressed satisfaction with their flexible schedules.

These actions reflect a comprehensive and well-organised approach to implementing the Expert Group's recommendations, underscoring the university's dedication to improving the quality and relevance of its study programmes.

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

Conclusions:

Ventspils University of Applied Sciences (VUAS) has made significant efforts to address the recommendations from its previous accreditation processes in the "Translation" study field. While certain suggestions, such as increasing the representation of the French language in the curriculum, have not been fully implemented due to external challenges, the university has made progress in other key areas. These include establishing a comprehensive database of top-rated theses, strengthening collaborations with employers by involving them in the study programme development, and enhancing partnerships with other universities. The development of specialised courses in areas like medical and criminal law translation reflects a proactive response to labour

market demands, demonstrating the university's commitment to aligning its study programmes with both academic and professional standards.

Additionally, VUAS has updated its technological infrastructure and created opportunities for students to engage in practical interpreting experiences, which were observed during the Expert Group on-site visit. The university has also addressed workload issues, redistributing course credits and adjusting staff responsibilities to support student mentoring and evaluation. These actions indicate a thorough and thoughtful approach to implementing Expert Group recommendations, highlighting the institution's dedication to enhancing the quality and relevance of its translation study programmes.

Strengths:

1. Ventspils University of Applied Sciences (VUAS) has created a valuable resource for students and researchers by developing a comprehensive database of exemplary bachelor's and master's theses in both physical and digital formats.
2. The university has effectively strengthened its collaboration with employers by incorporating their feedback into curriculum development, involving them in strategic planning, study programme boards, and state examination committees, which enhances the relevance and practicality of the study programmes.
3. The introduction of specialised courses, such as those focusing on medical and criminal law translation, demonstrates the university's responsiveness to industry demands and its commitment to aligning study programmes with labour market needs.
4. VUAS has invested in updating its technological infrastructure and translation tools, ensuring that students have access to up-to-date resources, which are essential for professional translation work.

Weaknesses:

1. The university has not fully implemented the recommendation to enhance the representation of the French language in the Translation study programmes. This goal remains unfulfilled due to external factors such as insufficient French language preparation at the secondary education level.
2. Despite improvements, the alignment of course offerings and credit distribution still faces challenges. Ensuring consistent coherence across the curriculum remains an area in need of further refinement.

Assessment of the requirement [4]

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

While some challenges remain such as fully integrating the French language into the curriculum due to external factors the university has made notable progress in addressing the majority of the recommendations. The measures taken demonstrate a proactive and structured approach to continuous improvement, ensuring that the study programmes meet both academic standards and the evolving needs of students and employers.

Given these actions, in Expert Groups opinion VUAS has fully complied with the requirement to eliminate deficiencies and implement recommendations, thereby addressing the shortcomings identified in previous assessments.

1.7. Recommendations for the Study Field

Short-term recommendations

1. Establish more robust communication to ensure all students are fully aware of the procedures and benefits of recognising prior learning or experience.
2. Have the allowed percentage of plagiarism clearly indicated in the regulations, along with details on in which cases it applies and other relevant guidelines to ensure consistent understanding and application across the institution.
3. Establish a clear and detailed plan for expanding international partnerships and mobility opportunities.
4. Develop more detailed (specific) actions in the research area of the study field and the respective measures to incorporate in the Study Development Plan of the FoTS.
5. Update the information about the Faculty of Translation Studies' research activities on the Ventspils University College website, ensuring the links in English are active hyperlinks.
6. Conduct formal employer surveys alongside the existing qualitative feedback methods.
7. Develop a system to share survey results and planned study programme changes with employers. This could be through dedicated newsletters, presentations, or employer advisory boards.
8. Consider hosting employer workshops to discuss industry needs and how VUAS study programmes can better prepare graduates.

Long-term recommendations

1. VUAS must expand its collaborative research with businesses and international institutions, which could significantly enhance academic offerings.
2. Increase student involvement and participation in Erasmus+ and other mobility projects.
3. Establish a mechanism for creating and promoting collaborative research 'hubs' comprising the teaching staff, students, international higher education partner institutions and industry representatives.
4. Develop opportunities for graduates to stay connected with the university, such as alumni events or mentoring programmes.
5. Clearly communicate the process for collecting and using feedback in quality assurance efforts.
6. Develop a communication plan to inform students, graduates, and employers about study programme changes and the rationale behind them.
7. Develop a mechanism for attracting doctoral students in the implementation of the study programmes.
8. Modernise the simultaneous interpretation booths to make them more updated to today's realities.
9. Explore ways to increase the representation of the French language in the curriculum, despite external challenges.

II - "Translation and Language Technology" ASSESSMENT

II - "Translation and Language Technology" ASSESSMENT

2.1. Indicators Describing the Study Programme

Analysis

2.1.1.

The professional bachelor study programme "Translation and Language Technology" complies with indicators, conditions and criteria of the study field of "Translation". The length of the implementation of the study programme, which is 4 years for full-time studies, is evaluated as sufficient for acquiring the necessary skills and way of thinking to enter the labour market. The admission of students takes place once a year.

The education classification code of the study programme 42227 (227) complies with Latvia's Cabinet of Ministers regulations no. 322 Regulations on the classification of education in Latvia, where it is determined that the thematic group of Humanities and Art includes the thematic field of Humanities, which includes the group of language studies and study programmes.

This study programme is the first to be implemented in the VUAS, which is their trademark, and it is developed in accordance with the trends and necessities of future employers' demands and requests.

2.1.2.

According to VUAS Self Assessment Report (SAR, p. 69), the title of the professional bachelor study programme is "Translation and Language Technology" with education classification code 42227 with the last 3 numbers (227) standing for language studies and study programmes according to the classification of Latvian education which can be accessed here: <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/291524-noteikumi-par-latvijas-izglitiba-klasifikaciju>. According to SAR (SAR, p. 71), there is a double qualification given after graduating as it is a professional bachelor study programme - translator and interpreter.

The expert group wishes to raise attention to the title of the study programme, since in the English language, there is a distinction between an interpreter and a translator (interpreters mediate languages orally, while translators work with written material), as well as in Latvian between "tulks" and "tulkotājs", it is important to review the title of the study programme in a way that both qualifications that are awarded, have been properly included in the title.

In accordance with the VUAS Self Assessment Report (SAR, p. 69), there are 8 goals specified in the study programme, but the main aim is to prepare professionals in accordance with the needs of the labour market, who can successfully complete translation assignments of varying degrees of difficulty in the language combinations they have acquired. However, at this point the aim of the study programme focuses on the preparation of qualified translators, leaving out the second qualification of an interpreter. It has to be noted that the competencies of a translator and an interpreter slightly differ. The professional standards defining a translator and an interpreter clearly separate the skills and expected tasks for them to be able to perform and acquire at their workplace. Thus, the expert group suggests a clear separation and reflection of both.

According to the information provided in the SAR (SAR, p.71), the admission requirement of this study programme is secondary education. It has been stated in the SAR (SAR, p.71), that after successful completion of the studies, students are awarded a Professional Bachelor's Degree in Translation. According to the SAR, the study programme is a full-time study programme with 240 ECTS to be gathered during the study process of 4 years (SAR, p.71). The implementation language of the study programme is Latvian. The title, code and degree to be obtained of the study programme, aims, objectives, learning outcomes and admission requirements are not fully interrelated. The title of the study programme as stated above, leaves out the interpretation from the title, which the expert group suggests to be addressed and updated.

In this study programme, 2 qualifications are to be issued upon graduation, which is considered to be a unique case. The Cabinet regulations No 305. "Regulations on the national standard for vocational higher education" (a working translation, since this document is only in Latvian) section 19. does not directly state that VUAS can not award a double qualification, however, it states, that for awarding one qualification, the minimum amount of credit points is 240 ECTS. Since that is exactly the amount of credit points that the bachelor study programme has, the Experts Group considers, that in this case only one qualification could be obtained. The Expert Group advises VUAS to review the implementation of the studies in a way that there is a clear distinction between the study programmes and qualifications that students receive at the end of the studies. Another possibility is establishing a format of sub-programmes, where students receive at the end one of either of the qualifications. The third option is that the students are offered only one qualification - translator. Additional analysis by an Expert Group is reflected further in paragraph 2.2.1. The duration and scope of the study programme implementation as well as the implementation language, are reasonable and justified.

2.1.3.

Based on the information provided in the VUAS Self Assessment Report (SAR, p.72), the professional bachelor's study programme "Translation and Language Technology" was established as a result of significant changes to the professional bachelor's study programme "Translation". The changes were made in 2021. The changes were implemented in the autumn semester of 2021, taking into account the needs and suggestions of employers, student recommendations, recommendations of the previous study programme accreditation committee and industry trends.

There are 6 changes that have been implemented in the study programme in accordance with the VUAS Self-Assessment Report (SAR, p.72):

1. The structure of the study programme has been changed: instead of the previous specialisations (English-Latvian-German, Russian-English-German and German-Latvian-English translation), a study programme with two working foreign languages has been created, the first of which is English and the second – German, Spanish, French or Russian (according to the language learnt in secondary education);
2. The name of the study programme was changed to "Translation and Language Technology" (formerly: "Translation");
3. Several study courses related to translation technology have been introduced: "Introduction to Computer-aided Translation", "Practical Management of Written Translation", "Machine Translation Post-editing";

Additionally, it has to be mentioned that during the on-site visit, one of the students mentioned that they are studying for the second time in the same study programme, specifically because it has been significantly updated in terms of the content of study courses.

4. Some existing courses have been combined, e.g. "Introduction to Linguistics and Contrastive Linguistics" (previously two separate courses).
5. The number of study programme implementation versions is reduced, providing for the future implementation of only the full-time intramural study programme version with Latvian as the main working language and optional foreign language acquisition in the study programme content.
6. The credit volume of all study courses has been changed due to the transition to the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System. VUAS has mentioned in the SAR the changes made within the study programme, however, there should also be a document describing the chosen methodology on which the transfer of the credit points has been made.

According to the Expert Groups, the changes are reasonable, responsive to changes in the industry environment, in regulatory enactments and supporting the development of the study programme.

2.1.4.

Based on the information provided in the VUAS Self Assessment Report (SAR, p.74), the State Employment Agency's occupational demand projections for Latvia, which can be accessed here: <https://proгноzes.nva.gov.lv/lv/profession>, reflect that the demand for legal, social and cultural and related professionals is growing rapidly. The study programme provides students with the skills and knowledge to work after graduation in both Latvian and international companies, mainly in the field of translation, but the acquired knowledge can also be used in other related fields such as international relations, and public relations, including in municipal and state institutions.

Based on the information provided in the Annexe: Statistics on the students in the reporting period - Table 1 (Annexe:3-2_pielikums_Statistika_par_studejosajiem_TVT), the number of enrolled students has been stable throughout the study years of 38 enrolled students, with a slight decrease in the 2022/2023 study year - 31. In Table 3 there is a reflection of the amount of graduates of the study programme, which has varied from 39 graduates in 2018./2019. to 17 graduates in 2020/2021. In the study year 2022/2023, the number of graduates was 20. The data shows there is also a tendency of graduate decrease. Table 4 shows the number of student dropouts per study year. In the time period of 01.10.2019. – 30.09.2020. There was the highest dropout rate of 39 students. The lowest was identified as 18 within the time period of 02.10.2021. – 01.10.2022. Based on the latest available data from 02.10.2022. – 01.10.2023. The amount of dropouts was 24, which is considered a significant number but within the normal range. In general, it can be concluded that there are fluctuations and a noticeable amount of instability within the numbers based on the Covid-19 pandemic and possible unique factors such as lack of demand/interest in the study programme in that specific study year. For the sake of economic and social maintenance of the study programme, it would be beneficial to stabilise the numbers and possibly to increase the demand of the study programme in order to result in an increase of graduates and student numbers involved in the study programme.

Based on the analysis of questionnaires filled by the students in the case of student exmatriculation, the reason for extramaculation has been mainly personal. Students have changed their place of residence, had financial problems or have chosen to work in another field, which has led to the interruption of their studies. The questionnaires also indicated an inability to combine studies with work. Additionally, it was stated that in the period from 2 October 2021 to 1 October 2022, students who have been exmatriculated have interrupted their studies due to the spread of Covid-19. The expert group lacked understanding of this statement because all restrictions related to the spread of the Covid 19 were lifted at the beginning of 2022, and also the spread of the virus reduced significantly in the mentioned period. Thus, it is important to analyse more in-depth the reasoning why students within this specific time period interrupted their studies, as Covid-19 cannot be a reason alone.

2.1.5.

Not applicable.

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

Conclusions:

The professional bachelor's study programme "Translation and Language Technology" aligns well with the requirements of the "Translation" study field. It is designed to meet the labour market's needs and provides students with essential skills for future employment. The study programme has undergone relevant updates based on feedback from stakeholders, including employers and students, ensuring that it stays current with technological advancements and industry demands. The curriculum, admission requirements, and implementation length are well-structured and justified.

The title, code and degree of the study programme are not fully interrelated with the aims, objectives and learning outcomes. The aim of the study programme does not address the qualification and specificity of the interpreter profession as well as the title of the study programme. However, the expert group wishes to raise attention towards the matter of currently 2 issued professional qualifications at the end of the studies, which is not in full alignment with Cabinet regulations No 305. Section 19. Despite some challenges, including a decline in the number of graduates and student dropouts, the study programme remains strong, providing broad career opportunities for graduates in the relevant industries.

Strengths:

1. The study programme is developed based on current labour market demands, ensuring graduates are equipped with relevant skills;
2. The study programme has been restructured to include dual foreign language acquisition, a focus on technology, and course adjustments that reflect current industry trends.

Weaknesses:

1. There has been a noticeable drop in the number of graduates, with a decrease in student enrollment and an increase in dropouts over recent years.
2. The study programme provides 2 professional qualifications to be obtained after finishing the studies. In Expert Group's opinion, the existing curriculum complies with the translator's professional standard but is not in full compliance with the Interpreter's professional standard. Therefore there are not enough professional study courses and internships, to award an interpreter qualification.
3. The aim and the title of the study programme do not cover interpreter qualification specificity and cover only translators.

2.2. The Content of Studies and Implementation Thereof

Analysis

2.2.1.

The bachelor's study programme "Translation and Language Technology" is carefully designed to conform to national regulations as outlined by the Law on Education of the Republic of Latvia and the Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No. 305 (Available here: Ministru kabineta 2023. gada 13. jūnija noteikumi Nr. 305 "Noteikumi par valsts profesionālās augstākās izglītības standartu". <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/342818> - Latvian only). The study programme, comprising 240 ECTS credits in a full-time format, is systematically organised to provide a thorough and integrated educational experience. Within the 240 ECTS, the study programme covers the Comprehensive study courses 30 ECTS, Fundamental theoretical knowledge courses and information technology courses in the field (professional field) 54 ECTS, Specialisation courses in the field (professional field) 99 ECTS, Elective courses 9 ECTS, Internship 30 ECTS, State Examination 18 ECTS (SAR, p.77, annexes 3.5 and 3.6).

Expert Group also notes, that 9 ECTS of the Comprehensive study courses that total of 30 ECTS is allocated to the entrepreneurship module, which consists of three study courses: Basics of Entrepreneurship (3 ECTS), Organization of Translation Work (3 ECTS), and Practical Management of Written Translation (3 ECTS). Expert group agrees, that these study courses collectively satisfy the regulatory requirement for the mandatory entrepreneurship component. The Expert group acknowledges that the curriculum complies with Section 22.1 of Cabinet Regulations No. 305.

It should also be mentioned that relatively modest elective credit allocation suggests that students may have minimal flexibility in choosing from diverse electives. The structure indicates that the study programme's design may lean towards pre-determined courses rather than offering an expansive choice of modules, limiting students' ability to tailor their studies based on individual academic or career interests. Compliance could be strengthened by expanding elective options and

offering students a broader array of modules to customise their learning paths more effectively, as suggested by Section 6(4) of the Cabinet Regulation. With a 30 ECTS internship integrated into the curriculum, the study programme complies with regulatory standards that mandate practical training aligned with learning outcomes. This element, supported by employer partnerships, ensures that students gain valuable real-world experience, which is essential for professional readiness and meets Cabinet Regulation standards for vocational training quality.

The study programme adheres to the State Education Standard, as demonstrated in Annexe 3.3, which contrasts the standard requirements with the study programmes indicators. The document confirms the alignment of the study programme with these requirements, addressing national economic, cultural, and social needs through a strong theoretical foundation in translation and interpretation sciences. It is designed to meet the sixth level of professional qualification, enhancing students' competitiveness in domestic and international labour markets. From the expert perspective, this alignment is a notable strength, as it ensures the study programme's relevance and responsiveness to both regulatory requirements and market demands. The comprehensive structure, which balances foundational theoretical knowledge with specialised and practical components, positions graduates well for professional roles in translation and interpretation. Additionally, the careful adherence to national standards highlights the institution's commitment to maintaining high academic and professional quality.

The curriculum, outlined in Annexe 3.5, includes General Study Courses, Theoretical Core Courses, Information Technology courses, Professional Specialization Courses, an Internship, and a bachelor's Thesis. By inspecting the study course syllabi, Expert Group found that study courses like "Introduction to Linguistics" and "Theory of Translation and Translatology" provide foundational and theoretical knowledge, while specialised courses, such as "Written Translation Technology: Entrepreneurship (EN)" and "Consecutive Interpreting EN-LV," develop specific professional skills (Annexe: 3-7_appendix_studiju kursu apraksti_EN.docx).

In Expert Group's opinion, the bachelor study programme is topical, addressing modern translation and language technology challenges with courses like "Machine Translation Post-editing" and "Translation of Marketing Texts," reflecting current industry trends. Its alignment with national education standards and focus on practical skills ensures relevance to the labour market, preparing students for professional success across various sectors, including business and law. The inclusion of communicative and digital skills, along with practical experience through internships, further supports the achievement of the study programme's objectives.

Regarding the interconnectedness and complementarity of the study programme, it is generally well-structured, though certain issues arise concerning prerequisites and the alignment between courses. Specifically, in the language learning module, some courses are set as prerequisites for others. For instance, Basic French I and II, aiming to develop language proficiency up to an A2 level, serve as prerequisites for the Business French course. However, as a course categorised under language for specific purposes, Business French typically requires a proficiency level of at least B2 as a prerequisite. This suggests a potential misalignment, and it may be more appropriate to adjust the course title to reflect the actual proficiency level, such as A2 or B1, to ensure consistency within the course sequence. When asked about this issue during the interview, the study programme director explained that the Business French course focuses on elementary-level language in the business context, such as everyday communication in business settings. Given this clarification, the Expert Group recommends aligning the course titles and descriptions more clearly with the language proficiency levels. Specifically, for general language courses that teach competencies up to an A2 level, there should be a smooth transition to higher-level courses. Alternatively, business language courses should accurately reflect the appropriate language proficiency level for specific purposes, such as A2 or B1. This adjustment will ensure better alignment, coherence, and complementarity across the study programme.

Regarding the alignment of the study programmes content with its objectives, the BA study

programme aims, among other goals, to equip students with the necessary theoretical knowledge, as well as practical skills and competencies for delivering professional interpreting and translation services in various sectors of the national economy e.g., business, marketing, and commercial law. The qualification awarded is indicated as "Translator and Interpreter"(SAR,p. 69-70).

However, based on the reviewed documentation and interview findings, the aspect of interpretation within the study programme seems somewhat debatable. Suppose the study programme is designed to grant a dual qualification as both a translator and an interpreter. In that case, the curriculum should offer students an equal opportunity to acquire the necessary knowledge and skills for both roles.

This concern was raised during the interview with the study programme director, who assured that sufficient interpretation skill development courses are included in the study programme. However, the curriculum lists the following interpreting courses:

- Consecutive Interpreting EN-LV
- Consecutive and Conversational Interpreting I DE-LV
- Consecutive and Conversational Interpreting I RU-LV
- Consecutive and Conversational Interpreting I FR-LV
- Simultaneous Interpreting EN-LV
- Consecutive and Conversational Interpreting II DE-LV
- Conversational Interpreting II RU-LV
- Conversational Interpreting II FR-LV
- Interpreting methodology I
- Interpreting methodology II

It is evident that while these courses are offered in different languages, they are essentially the same course, delivered in various language combinations. This implies that the number of distinct interpreting courses may be more limited than it appears.

The bachelor's study programme in "Translation and Language Technology" awards a dual qualification of "Translator and Interpreter" upon completion (SAR, p. 71). While the study programme's objective is to equip students with competencies in both translation and interpreting, the standard four-year study programme structure generally aligns with the requirements for a single professional qualification. According to Latvian higher education standards (Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No. 305.), a single qualification is typically expected for a study programme of this duration, which raises concerns regarding the study programme's capacity to offer comprehensive training for both qualifications within the current timeframe.

To enhance compliance and alignment with national and professional standards, the Expert Group recommends structuring the study programme into distinct "Translation" and "Interpretation" tracks, ensuring that an equal number of courses are dedicated to translation and interpretation that would support a balanced curriculum. This would enable students to select a primary focus and dedicate their studies to one qualification while still covering foundational elements of both fields. An equitable mix of translation and interpreting-focused courses would equip students more effectively for both professional paths, meeting the standards for achieving the "Translator and Interpreter" designation. The aspects of the dual qualification are further elaborated in the analysis of 2.1.2. criteria of the expert group report document.

The bachelor's study programme outlines seven key outcomes, emphasising theoretical frameworks and recent developments in linguistics and translation (SAR, p.70). These outcomes include delivering high-quality interpreting and translation services, mastering up-to-date information and translation practices, critically evaluating one's own work or that of others, understanding employment legislation, adhering to professional ethics, and engaging with research methodologies. A particular research-oriented outcome emphasises that graduates will possess the ability to carry

out scientifically valuable research in the field of translation studies and contribute to the advancement of terminology. As a culmination of their studies, students are required to produce a bachelor's thesis, which serves as their final research project. Besides, as the goal of the study programme states, the study programme prepares the professionals who independently carry out research in translation studies and linguistics and format it in accordance with the requirements (SAR, p.70). The curriculum allocates 3 credits to the course "The Language of Science and Research Methodology," which includes 32 academic hours of practical classes and 43 academic hours of independent study. While the course covers essential language competencies, it claims that students will gain the ability to conduct scientific research in translation studies, apply research findings in practice, and present their results according to academic standards. However, the allocation of practical and individual work hours within the 3-credit courses raises concerns about the feasibility of achieving the intended learning outcomes, particularly given the study programme's stated goal of fostering independent research skills. The limited number of hours dedicated to practical and self-directed learning may not provide sufficient opportunity for students to engage deeply with the material, develop advanced research competencies, and undertake substantial independent work, to develop the necessary skills for carrying research out independently. Moreover, given that only 3 credits are dedicated exclusively to research skill development within a 240-credit study programme, there is a potential risk that these skills may not be developed as thoroughly as intended.

During the on-site interviews, the stakeholders confirmed that the research skills are also elaborated within other study courses of the study programme. The information on the study courses that include study papers is provided in Annexe 3.6 according to which the students have to elaborate on two more study papers (apart from the study course on research methodology) within the study courses "Latvian Written Practice II" (3 credit points) and "Terminology and Lexicography I" (3 credit points). However, the Expert Group has not identified the requirement to develop the study paper as a prerequisite for the completion of the study course "Latvian Written Practice II" in the description of the study course. According to the description of the study course "Terminology and Lexicography I", the development of the study paper makes up 50 % of the final grade in the study course. In addition, the final requirement for the students of both study programmes is to develop graduation papers that are characterised as the student's independent research work, where the student determines the research topic according to the chosen specialisation area (Annexe: 3-7_appendix_studiju kursu apraksti_EN.docx). The Expert Group recommends emphasising the research competence development module in the curriculum.

Given the considerations above, the Expert Group recommends that the study programme ensure a logical alignment between the research-dedicated course and the intended outcome, and goals. Furthermore, enhancing the research skill development components at the appropriate level throughout the curriculum will help guarantee the achievement of the established outcomes.

Having reviewed the descriptions of the study courses, the Expert Group also recommends revising the literature sources, including more than one or two textbooks in the List of Mandatory (Basic) Literature. It is also recommended to reconsider the form of the final assessment of the study courses, giving priority to an examination (rather than a test) for core study courses (e.g., the study course "The Language of Science and Research Methodology", "Text Analysis", "Principles of Text Production", "Introduction into Computer-Assisted Translation").

2.2.2.

Not Applicable.

2.2.3.

The results of Expert Group on-site visit, interviews, and reviewed documentation indicate that the VUAS is highly student-oriented and offers comprehensive student-centred services. The well-

organised and user-friendly Moodle and BigBlueButton platforms keep students informed about resources essential for their academic development. The management and academic staff are committed to supporting students and enhancing their overall satisfaction, a quality the Expert Group finds particularly valuable. The Expert Group views the university's commitment to student-centred learning, particularly through the use of Moodle and BigBlueButton, as a major strength. These platforms foster an accessible and supportive learning environment, which contributes significantly to student engagement and satisfaction.

Regarding the study methods, interviews and syllabi show that in addition to theoretical approaches, such as lectures, practical activities are also actively integrated into the learning process. According to the students, lecturers incorporate individual and group work activities, along with interpretation simulations in the form of role-playing. During the interviews with the Expert Group, the teaching staff also confirmed the use of innovative methods, such as gamification. The Expert Group commends the integration of practical activities, such as role-playing and gamification, as innovative methods that enhance student engagement and critical skill development. These approaches align well with the study programme's learning outcomes and contribute to a dynamic and interactive learning experience. Considering the aspects mentioned above, the study implementation methods contribute to achieving the study programme's aims and indicate that student-centred learning and teaching principles are considered.

In evaluating the achievement of the study programme outcomes, it is important to highlight certain study programme specifics that emphasise the development of at least two working languages among students. Some courses are specifically designed to address various aspects of language use, thereby ensuring that students develop proficiency in multiple languages. The Expert Group views this focus as a strong and valuable aspect of the study programme. However, it should be noted that certain courses, such as "Introduction to Intercultural Communication" and "Written Translation Technology: LSP and Legal Texts," aim to ensure that students gain competency in at least two languages. Other courses, such as "Developing Tendencies of Latvian I" and "Developing Tendencies of Latvian II" in their outcomes focus on enabling students to communicate fluently in at least two foreign languages. Nonetheless, this emphasis on language proficiency may lead to ambiguity in achieving both the specific course outcomes and the broader program-level ones. The Expert Group believes that while the study programme's focus on developing proficiency in two languages is valuable, there is ambiguity in how this is measured in courses not primarily focused on language acquisition. Adjusting these course outcomes or incorporating more robust language components will improve alignment with the study programme's broader objectives. The courses primarily concentrate on theoretical (e.g., The course is designed to provide students with an in-depth systematic insight into contemporary Latvian language development processes) and practical aspects (e.g., To analyse intercultural communication problems and develop intercultural communication skills (for instance, promote openness, tolerance, ability to adapt) rather than language acquisition, which complicates the measurement of fluency in two foreign languages within the study courses. Although the study programme includes a dedicated section for foreign language instruction, where courses specifically focus on language acquisition and assessment, the other courses that claim the knowledge or fluency in at least two foreign languages do not contribute effectively to measuring language proficiency.

In light of these considerations, the Expert Group recommends either excluding language acquisition-related outcomes from courses not primarily focused on language learning or integrating language knowledge enhancement elements into courses that are directly related to these outcomes. This adjustment will clarify the achievement of course outcomes and ensure they are consistent with the broader study programme objectives.

The Expert Group concludes that the study programme's methods contribute effectively to achieving its aims. However, refining the link between course outcomes and language proficiency will further strengthen the study programme's structure and ensure clarity in outcome measurement.

2.2.4.

The internship component of the "Translation and Language Technology" study programme at Ventspils University of Applied Sciences is designed to effectively bridge theoretical knowledge with practical application, aligning closely with the study programme's learning outcomes. Scheduled for the 7th semester and valued at 30 credit points, the internship is a core element to enhance students' professional translation competencies. The internship structure, including its planning, organisation, and supervision, adheres to the guidelines set forth in Regulation No. 481 of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Latvia and is overseen by the study programme director to ensure its alignment with study programme objectives (Annexe:3-8_appendix_prakses_nolikums_EN).

The internship tasks, which include translating significant texts, interpreting business conversations, and participating in research projects, are intensively designed to correspond with the study programme learning outcomes. These tasks foster essential skills such as translation accuracy and research capabilities, thus reinforcing the practical relevance of the internship. Additionally, VUAS offers substantial support in securing internship placements, including opportunities through Erasmus+ for international experience, and provides comprehensive guidance on all aspects of the internship process. This structured approach ensures that the internship effectively contributes to the student's professional development, making it a valuable component of their academic and career preparation.

The results of interviews with employers, students, and the study programme director reveal that the study programme's internship component is effectively aligned with labour market demands and current industry requirements. The above-mentioned agreement is attested to through Annexe 2.14 – List of Cooperation Agreements. Employers play an active role in the internship process, ensuring that it remains relevant and beneficial for both students and the field. Notably, as the graduates mentioned during the interviews, some of them have secured employment with the companies where they completed their internships, reflecting the successful integration of internship experience into career opportunities. Employers view the internship as a valuable means of identifying and recruiting future professionals. This close collaboration with the labour market highlights the effectiveness of the internship opportunities and their organisation, confirming that the study programme is well-positioned to meet industry needs and support students' professional development.

The internship component of the "Translation and Language Technology" study programme at Ventspils University of Applied Sciences, scheduled during the 7th semester with a weight of 30 credit points, is vital to reinforce the theoretical knowledge students have gained with practical experience. As per the internship regulations, the primary tasks include translating specialised texts (minimum 70 pages), interpreting business conversations, and contributing to research projects within the Faculty of Translation Studies (Annex 3.8, Internship Regulations, Sections 2.3.1 - 2.3.8).

While these tasks provide substantial translation practice and align with translation-related learning outcomes, they place a considerably greater emphasis on translation than on interpreting skills. The interpreting tasks, limited mainly to interpreting business conversations, may not sufficiently cover the breadth of skills required for a professional interpreter, such as simultaneous interpreting in diverse settings or advanced consecutive interpreting techniques. This imbalance is also reflected in the course offerings, which are predominantly translation-oriented as noted in Section 2.2.1. Consequently, students aiming to acquire the dual qualification of "Translator and Interpreter" may have limited opportunities to apply and develop interpreting-specific skills during their internships.

To better align the internship with the dual qualification objectives, it is recommended that the study programme integrate a broader range of interpreting-focused tasks within the internship experience. This could include additional consecutive or simultaneous interpreting practice, either within the internship or through dedicated partnerships with organisations requiring interpreting services. Such adjustments would provide students with valuable hands-on interpreting experience, ensuring

balanced skill development across both translation and interpreting competencies essential for the dual qualification.

2.2.5.

Not Applicable.

2.2.6.

The evaluation of final theses for the bachelor's study programme "Translation and Language Technology" at Ventspils University of Applied Sciences reveals an alignment with current industry trends and the evolving demands of the translation field. The topics students choose reflect a keen awareness of technological advancements and practical applications relevant to modern translation practices. During the on-site visit, the Expert Group reviewed a BA thesis titled "The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim" Translation of Game-Specific Lexis from English into Latvian and its Analysis. This thesis addresses the increasingly relevant field of video game translation. The analysis of game-specific lexis, as well as the comparison of linguistic elements in both English and Latvian, demonstrates its alignment with the study programme's focus and objectives, underscoring its academic significance. In the Expert Group's opinion, the selection of thesis topics reflects the study programme's proactive approach to meeting industry demands, particularly in fields that require specialised knowledge, such as video game translation. By focusing on emerging technological trends and domain-specific terminology, the study programme ensures that its graduates are well-prepared to compete in the job market. The relevance and quality of these topics highlight the academic rigour of the study programme.

However, considering the study programme's aimed qualification in both translation and interpreting and depended on the bachelor's thesis syllabus (annexe 3.7), the final thesis component seems more heavily oriented towards translation-related competencies. The bachelor's thesis syllabus confirms that learning outcomes, such as justifying translation choices, applying translation theories, and conducting translation-focused research, emphasise skills relevant primarily to the translation profession. Although these competencies align with the qualification of a translator, there is a limited focus on interpreting-specific skills, such as live interpretation methodologies or performance in real-time linguistic scenarios, within the final thesis framework.

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

Conclusions:

The bachelor's study programme "Translation and Language Technology" at Ventspils University of Applied Sciences is well-structured, adhering to national regulations and aligning with industry needs and academic trends. It effectively combines theoretical knowledge and practical skills, preparing students for the labour market through courses that address modern translation challenges, such as machine translation and specialised fields like marketing texts. However, some areas require further refinement, such as aligning language proficiency levels with course titles to ensure curriculum consistency. Additionally, while the study programme offers dual qualifications in translation and interpreting, it demonstrates stronger compliance with the professional standards for translation than for interpreting. The limited number of distinct interpreting courses may affect the balance between these competencies, potentially resulting in a greater emphasis on translation skills. To achieve equal compliance with both professional standards, the VUAS could consider expanding interpreting-specific course offerings and integrating more interpreting-focused internship tasks. Addressing these adjustments will enhance the study programme's overall coherence, ensuring it meets its educational objectives and remains professionally relevant across

both fields.

Strengths:

The study programme "Translation and Language Technology" at Ventspils University of Applied Sciences exhibits several notable strengths.

1. The curriculum is accurately crafted to adhere to national regulations and industry standards, ensuring its relevance and comprehensive coverage of essential areas.
2. The study programme effectively integrates theoretical knowledge with practical skills, reflecting a strong alignment between course content and industry needs. Notably, the study programme's emphasis on student-centred learning is a key strength.
3. Diverse teaching methods, including practical activities, individual and group work, and role-playing simulations, contribute to a dynamic and engaging learning environment. This approach supports students in developing vital translation/interpreting skills and aligns with the study programme's aims and learning outcomes.
4. The well-structured internship component offers valuable real-world experience and strong connections to the labour market, enhancing the study programme's effectiveness. However, while the internship provides robust opportunities for translation practice, it currently offers fewer tasks specific to interpreting.

Weaknesses:

Despite these strengths, there are areas for improvement within the study programme.

1. A notable concern is the misalignment between some language study courses' prerequisites and their intended proficiency levels. Specifically, the discrepancy between the language proficiency required for certain courses and the actual proficiency levels taught suggests a need for clearer course descriptions and adjustments to better align with expected outcomes.
2. Furthermore, while the study programme offers a range of interpreting courses, there is a perception of limited variety in distinct interpreting training, potentially affecting the balance between interpreting and translation skills.
3. Lastly, the focus on research skills within the curriculum is somewhat limited, with only a small portion of the study programme dedicated to developing these skills. Enhancing the research component and ensuring more substantial coverage could improve the study programme's ability to meet its research-related objectives effectively.

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

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

2.3. Resources and Provision of the Study Programme

Analysis

2.3.1.

The resources and provision of the bachelors study programme "Translation and Language Technology" correspond to the ones required for the study field. Informative, technical and material provision of VUAS is described in the second chapter, part 3 "Resources and Provision of the Study Field", subsection 1.3.2. and 1.3.3. No other specific resources are needed for this study programme. Lectures, practical classes and examinations are held at VUAS in Ventspils, Inženieru

street 101.

In addition, the Expert Group would like to highlight the use of modern CAT tools in the study process. CAT tools are provided free of charge to students throughout their studies in cooperation with employers and through a cooperation agreement with companies such as Phrase and translation management system Bureau Works (<https://en.venta.lv/faculty/tulkosanas-studiju-fakultate>).

Study provisions include modern lecture rooms, equipped with a multimedia projector or an interactive whiteboard and a computer in each lecture room, computer classrooms, a library with a large reading room, as well as simultaneous interpretation booths and software for the remote interpreting training. Although the simultaneous interpretation booths are in working condition and usable, they are outdated and it is recommended to consider replacing them with modern ones. VUAS library has access to scientific literature on translation studies, language learning, intercultural communication, and various linguistic issues. Library grants access to various databases. Library staff organise training courses on how to use these databases and regularly inform students and the teaching staff of any database additions. During Expert Groups on-site interviews students affirmed that resources provided by the library are sufficient. University resources also include necessary network services, such as the university's website.

2.3.2.

Not Applicable.

2.3.3.

The study programme is funded by the state budget and student fees. The state subsidy per student is EUR 1630.11, and in addition, the state pays EUR 251.98 per budget student for scholarships and social needs (SAR, p. 83). Funds cover staff salaries, equipment updates, and library resources, provided documents to Expert Group proves that available funding is sufficient for the full implementation of the study process of the study programme.

In 2023, 119 students were enrolled in the Translation and Language Technology study programme, which is 52.89% of the total FoTS enrolment. The tuition fee for students in the study study programme was set at EUR 1700 per year. The revenue was distributed on average as follows: 91% state subsidy and 9% tuition fees. (SAR, p. 84).

Expenditure is divided into four main groups, with the average share of each expenditure item relative to the total study programme expenditure. The breakdown of eligible expenditures for the study programme is: salaries, including taxes, 83%, scholarships 14%, goods and services 3%, other expenditures 0.04% (SAR, p. 84).

The same proportion of students is used to calculate the amount of expenditure eligible for the study programme, 52.89% (SAR, p. 84).

The study programme requires 108 students to reach the breakeven point (SAR, p. 84). During the onsite visit in discussion with the study programme director, the Expert Group noted that in 2024 summer student admission even more students were enrolled in to the Translation and Language Technology study programme than in 2023, demonstrating the popularity, stable growth and promise of the study programme.

Facilities for the implementing study programme are well equipped - lecture rooms are equipped with the needed IT equipment and licenced teaching and practical professional translation tools like Moodle, Phrase, Trados, XTRF are provided during the study process, as well classrooms are suitable for implementing the lecture in remote or hybrid mode - in case the lecturer is abroad or some students can't attend the lecture.

In light of the above, the Expert Group concludes that the study programme exceeds the minimum number of students and is cost-effective.

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

Conclusions:

Study provision, informative provision, material and technical provision and also financial provision comply with the conditions for the implementation of the study programme and indicate the possibility of ensuring that learning outcomes are achieved.

Strengths:

1. A well-developed learning management system "Moodle" is an additional resource for the implementation of the study programme.
2. Access to modern professional translation tools and translation management system XTRF.
3. The bachelor's study programme "Translation and Language Technology" is above the breakeven point regarding student amount.

Weaknesses:

1. The interpreting booths require modernization to meet current industry standards and enhance their functionality.

Assessment of the requirement [6]

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The study provision, informative provision, material, technical provision are compliant with the conditions for the implementation of the study programme and ensuring the achievement of learning outcomes.

2.4. Teaching Staff

Analysis

2.4.1.

Taking into account the information provided in the VUAS Self Assessment Report (SAR, p.84) as well as the insights gained during the on-site visit, Expert Group concludes that the "Translation and Language Technology" study programme at VUAS boasts a highly qualified faculty with a strong blend of academic expertise and practical industry experience. This ensures that students receive a comprehensive education that equips them with the necessary research skills, theoretical knowledge, and practical competencies.

Key faculty members are renowned authorities in the field of translation. Their guidance and mentorship are invaluable to students. Professors actively engage students in research projects, fostering a hands-on learning experience. Lecturers bring practical industry insights to the classroom, having established successful careers as translators and interpreters. The study programme benefits from a generational change, with experienced faculty members passing on their knowledge to newer generations. For example, one Associate Professor has taken over the translation studies courses previously taught by a Professor, while an Assistant Professor has assumed the terminology courses previously taught by a Professor. This continuity ensures that students receive a consistent and high-quality education.

The faculty's language skills align with the Republic of Latvia Cabinet Regulation No. 157 (adopted on the 8th of March 2022), demonstrating their proficiency in the state language and foreign

languages. The study programme's teaching staff also meets the qualifications outlined in Article 39 of the Law on Higher Education Institutions concerning academic staff of professional study programmes.

The study programme's success is further enhanced by the involvement of guest lecturers from other higher education institutions and industry companies. This ensures that students are exposed to diverse perspectives and stay up-to-date with the latest industry trends. However, according to the SAR and annexes 2.15. (Statistical data on the teaching staff and the students from abroad) and 2.17. (Statistical data on the incoming and outgoing mobility of the teaching staff) as well as on-site visit, more guest lecturers could be invited. The employers are eager to contribute in this field, as discussed during the on-site visit. Additionally, several faculty members are actively involved in companies within the translation sector, strengthening the study programme's connection to the industry and ensuring that the curriculum remains relevant and practical.

Based on the SAR and the on-site meeting with the academic staff of VUAS, the Experts Group found that the internationalisation of academic staff is implemented through participation in international scientific conferences in Latvia and abroad, involvement in the work of scientific committees of international conferences and the organisation of international scientific conferences. At the same time, the Experts Group noted that some of the proactive faculty representatives have relatively low research contributions which are planned to be changed with the introduction of a new motivational system.

The SAR (Annexe: 2-10_pielikums-appendix_latviesu-valoda_latvian-language) includes a confirmation that the state language proficiency level of all teaching staff involved in the implementation of bachelor's study programme "Translation and Language Technology" complies with the requirements of Official Language Law. The SAR also provide information on the English language knowledge (Annexe: 2-11_pielikums-appendix_anglu-valoda_english-language) Rector's certificate stating that the English language proficiency level of all teaching staff involved in the implementation of the bachelor's study programme "Translation and Language Technology" is at least level B2. English language proficiency level of teaching staff is stated in their resumes annexed to the self-evaluation report of the Field of Study.

In summary, the "Translation and Language Technology" study programme at VUAS is taught by a highly qualified and experienced faculty, providing students with a comprehensive education that prepares them for successful careers in the field of translation and language technology. The study programme's emphasis on practical experience, industry connections, and a strong academic foundation ensures that students develop the skills and knowledge necessary to excel in their chosen field.

2.4.2.

Based on the SAR and the on-site meeting with the academic staff of VUAS, the "Translation and Language Technology" study programme at VUAS has experienced significant changes in its teaching staff since 2021. These changes have involved the addition of new, highly qualified specialists, including industry representatives, which has positively impacted the quality of the study programme.

One notable change is the introduction of lecturer Aiga Bādere, who teaches the "Language Technology" and "Introduction into Computer-aided Translation" courses. Bādere brings valuable professional experience to the study programme, as detailed in her CV. Another significant addition is lecturer Rūta Maltisova, who teaches the "Practical Management of the Translation Project" course. Maltisova's previous experience as a project manager at the translation agency "Nordtext" provides students with practical insights into the industry.

To ensure that students have as many face-to-face classes as possible, especially in practical fields, the study programme has consolidated certain study courses related to the English-Russian-German specialisation. These courses are now primarily taught by lecturers based in Ventspils.

The infusion of new teaching staff with industry backgrounds has significantly improved the quality of the study programme. These lecturers are well-versed in the practical needs of the translation field and the requirements of the labour market. Additionally, several of the new teaching staff, including Aiga Bādere, Rūta Maltisova, Karīna Dinsberga, and Sandija Skudra, are VUAS graduates who have successfully transitioned into academic roles. This reflects a successful generation of lecturers who are contributing to the excellence of the study programme.

2.4.3.

Not Applicable.

2.4.4.

The Expert Group found that the academic staff of "Translation and Language Technology" have different levels of research activity, which was also reflected in the meeting with the Dean of the Faculty during the visit and with the lecturers themselves. Some of the lecturers are very active researchers, as can be seen in Annexe 2.13, which lists publications in both Scopus and Web of Science databases. However, there are some lecturers that we would classify as leading lecturers in the study programme "Translation and Language Technology", who have not been very active in research in recent times and are mostly in publications until 2018.

It should be noted that in the curricula vitae of the SAR (Annexe: 2-9_CV_Tulkošanas_virziens_EN), the list of publications is not always listed or updated. It is also noteworthy that the format of the CVs varies widely so that the most useful information needed for quality study programme delivery is not disclosed. There is no doubt that the lecturers teaching translation-related subjects in the study programme "Translation and Language Technology" have practical experience in translation and interpretation. It was mentioned several times during the meeting at the VUAS that an incentive system has been set up for the teachers, which will contribute to an increase in the number of publications, as promised by the teachers themselves.

2.4.5.

During the meetings on-site, the Experts Group was assured that collaboration among academic staff is a cornerstone of the "Translation and Language Technology" study programme at VUAS. The study programme prioritises the selection of faculty members with strong scientific and professional competencies, fostering a collaborative environment.

Based on the information provided in VUAS Self Assessment Report (SAR, p. 87) formal and informal events organised by VUAS promote interaction and knowledge sharing among faculty members. The involvement of lecturers from different faculties in the study programme ensures a diverse range of perspectives and experiences. Faculty members from various fields contribute to the study programme, sharing their expertise and discussing current issues in forums such as the Study Programme Council, Faculty Council meetings, seminars, and employer meetings. Lecturers collaborate closely to ensure a well-structured curriculum, coordinating topics and assessment mechanisms to avoid overlaps and ensure a comprehensive learning experience.

VUAS organises various social events, such as weekly coffee breaks and end-of-semester gatherings, to foster informal communication and camaraderie among faculty members.

The study programme "Translation and Language Technology" maintains a favourable student-to-lecturer ratio of 6:1 (SAR, p.88), allowing for individualised attention and high-quality instruction. It's important to note that this ratio may be even more favourable when considering the fact that students from other VUAS study programmes may also participate in some courses. During the on-site visit it was noted the "Translation and Language Technology" study programme at VUAS benefits from a collaborative and supportive environment among its academic staff. This collaboration enhances the quality of education and provides students with a positive learning experience.

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

Conclusions:

The study programme boasts a highly qualified faculty with a blend of academic expertise and industry experience, ensuring students receive a comprehensive education.

The study programme has successfully transitioned from experienced faculty members to newer generations, maintaining a high level of instruction.

All teaching staff meet the required language proficiency levels in both the state language and English, ensuring effective instruction.

The study programme actively involves guest lecturers from industry companies, fostering strong connections to the translation sector and ensuring curriculum relevance.

While some faculty members have a strong research record, there's room for improvement in research output among others. A new motivational system is planned to encourage increased research activity.

Strengths:

1. The study programme benefits from a mix of experienced and newer faculty members, providing students with a combination of seasoned knowledge and fresh perspectives.
2. Faculty members have strong ties to the translation industry, ensuring the curriculum remains relevant and practical.
3. The study programme fosters a collaborative atmosphere among faculty members, leading to enhanced teaching and learning experiences.
4. The study programme maintains a favourable student-to-lecturer ratio, allowing for individualised attention and support.

Weaknesses:

1. Limited internationalisation of academic staff might deprive students of international experience. While some faculty members participate in international conferences, there is room for further expansion of international collaborations.
2. Some faculty members have lower research outputs compared to others. Implementing a new motivational system could encourage increased research engagement.
3. CVs should be standardised, focusing not on personal achievements or hobbies, but specifically on the competencies required by the study programme.

Assessment of the requirement [7]

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The qualification of all members of the academic staff complies with the requirements of the regulatory enactments, which are set for the bachelor-level study programmes (based on (CVs, SAR, Latvian legislation, and internal VUAS documents in annexes).

2.5. Assessment of the Compliance

Requirements

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The study programme fully complies with the State Education Standard (Annexe 3.3_atbilstiba izglitiba standartam_ENG) available only in Latvian at <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/342818-noteikumi-par-valsts-profesionalas-augstakas-izglitiba-standartu>.

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

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

According to the Cabinet regulations No 305. Section 19. The minimum amount of credit points in the bachelor study programme for awarding one qualification is 240 ECTS. However, VUAS plans to award two qualifications - interpreter and translator. In the Expert Group's opinion, only one qualification can be obtained after four years of study (full-time). To obtain the second qualification, students should continue their studies in order to obtain knowledge, skills and competencies characteristic of the second qualification at least for one or even two semesters. The second option could be that students choose one of the qualifications (either translator or interpreter) by selecting the relevant module from the limited electives, and upon completion of studies they would obtain one of the mentioned qualifications. For a qualification of interpreter to be awarded, it is recommended to increase the number of study courses devoted to the development of consecutive translation and interpreting skills. The third option could be to award only the qualification of the translator.

The Expert Group also recommends that the study programme enhance the research skill development components at the appropriate level throughout the curriculum, thus guaranteeing the achievement of the established learning outcomes.

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The descriptions of the study courses and the study materials have been prepared in the Latvian language, in which the study programme is implemented, and they comply with the requirements set forth in the Law on Higher Education Institutions. The literature sources are suggested to be reviewed, including more than one or two textbooks in the List of Mandatory (Basic) Literature. It is also recommended to reconsider the form of the final assessment of the study courses, giving priority to an examination (rather than a test) for core study courses (e.g., the study course "The Language of Science and Research Methodology", "Text Analysis", "Principles of Text Production", "Introduction into Computer-Assisted Translation"). The Expert Group recommends revising course descriptions to make adjustments between the language proficiency required for certain courses and the actual proficiency levels taught.

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

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

There is a technical issue with the number of Latvian credit points and ECTS that describe the volume of the study programme. The credit points should be displayed by the Latvian CP system and the ECTS CP system. At the moment, they are displayed as the same amount.

Each study course (pp. 2-5 of the diploma supplement in the Latvian language). According to the Latvia credit point system, 1 Latvian credit point (CP) corresponds to 1.5 ECTS credit points (<https://aic.lv/en/izglitiba-latvija/kreditpunktu-sistema>). Maybe the following situation is a result of the decision in regards to the transition from Latvian CP to ECTS that is stated in SAR (SAR, p. 76) as follows: "The study courses are expressed in CP, where 1 CP = 1 ECTS = 25 academic hours". However, it should be admitted that there is a risk of misunderstanding.

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

- 7 7 - At least five teaching staff members with a doctoral degree are among the academic staff of an academic doctoral study programme, at least three of which are experts approved by the Latvian Science Council in the respective field of science. At least five teaching staff members with a doctoral degree are among the academic staff of a professional doctoral study programme in arts (if applicable).

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

- 8 8 - The teaching staff members involved in the implementation of the study programme are proficient in the official language in accordance with the regulations on the level of the official language knowledge and the procedures for testing official language proficiency for performing professional duties and office duties.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The declaration by the VUAS Rector (Annexe 2.10) certifies that teaching staff members involved in the implementation of the study programme are proficient in the official language in accordance with Cabinet Regulation No 157 of 8 March 2022 "Regulations Regarding the Extent of the Knowledge of the Official Language and the Procedures for Examining the Proficiency in the Official Language".

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

According to the CVs provided in Annexe 2.9 of the SAR, the teaching staff members who are involved in the delivery of the study courses that are implemented in English have at least a B2 level of English. This is also certified by the declaration of the VUAS Rector (Annexe 2.11).

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

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

The study agreement (Annexe: 2.5) shall indicate only one qualification to be obtained upon completion of studies pursuant to Cabinet Regulation No 70 of 23 January 2007 "Mandatory Provisions to be Included in the Study Agreement"

(<https://likumi.lv/ta/id/152072-studiju-liguma-obligati-ietveramie-noteikumi>; available only in Latvian).

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The agreement between VUAS and Riga Technical University (RTU) stipulates that in the event of termination of the implementation of the study programme at VUAS, students of VUAS are provided with the opportunity to continue their studies in RTU study programme of the study field "Translation" (Annexe 2.3). It should be noted that bachelor and master study programmes of RTU will soon be implemented only in the English language. In this regard, the Expert Group recommends VUAS conclude other agreements if possible.

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Pursuant to the Declaration of VUAS Rector No 1-10.1/134 (Annexe 2.4), the students are guaranteed compensation for losses if the study programme is not accredited or the study programme's licence is revoked.

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

Assessment of the requirement [8]

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

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

The study programme partially complies with the requirements stipulated in the Law on Higher Education Institutions. The issue is raised towards awarding two qualifications within a minimal study programme duration time, which would be sufficient for awarding one qualification (240 ECTS).

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

Conclusions:

The study programme "Translation and Language Technology" balances theoretical knowledge with hands-on practical skills in translation. Its curriculum has been thoughtfully designed to keep up with the growing demands of the translation industry and job market. The study programme's student-focused teaching approach and the integration of modern tools like computer-assisted translation (CAT) technologies help keep the study programme relevant and of high quality. The fact that updates are continuously made in response to feedback from employers, students, and other stakeholders shows the study programme's commitment to staying modern and practical.

The expert group considers the evaluation of Average appropriate due to the identified shortcomings, particularly the uneven emphasis between the dual qualification offered - Translation and Interpreting. While the study programme demonstrates strong performance in translation-focused areas, the limited opportunities for students to develop interpreting skills to a compatible level impact the overall balance and comprehensiveness of the qualifications.

The Experts Group believes that addressing these issues, especially achieving a better balance between translation and interpreting, would enable the study programme to meet the criteria for a Good evaluation.

Strengths:

1. The study programme is highly responsive to the needs of the translation industry, although it places less emphasis on interpreting. It equips students with up-to-date skills, including the ability to work in two foreign languages and use modern translation technology.
2. Teaching methods are varied, incorporating practical exercises, simulations, and innovative techniques like gamification. This creates a more engaging and interactive learning environment for students.
3. The involvement of guest lecturers and faculty with direct industry experience ensures that the curriculum is practical and aligned with real-world needs.
4. The study programme gives students free access to modern translation tools, such as Phrase and Trados, which strengthens their professional skills and makes them competitive in the job market.
5. The internship component offers students the chance to apply their knowledge in real-world settings, giving them valuable industry experience that aligns closely with their learning outcomes.

Weaknesses:

1. Some courses require language skills that do not fully align with what is being taught, leading to potential confusion. Course descriptions need to be more explicit about actual language proficiency levels.
2. While the study programme offers qualifications in both translation and interpreting, the balance of courses does not fully support students who want to develop interpreting skills to the same extent as translation skills.
3. The curriculum places limited emphasis on research, which could be expanded to better equip students for independent research and align more closely with the study programme's objectives.
4. Student enrollment and graduation rates have been somewhat unstable, which may reflect issues in student engagement or aspects of the study programme structure that need improvement.

Evaluation of the study programme "Translation and Language Technology"

Evaluation of the study programme:

Average

2.6. Recommendations for the Study Programme "Translation and Language Technology"

Short-term recommendations

1. Introduce a suite of interpreting-focused courses that mirror the depth and breadth provided in translation courses. This approach will ensure that interpreting is not relegated to secondary importance, creating a more robust and market-responsive skill set for students.
2. In the study programme, align the course titles and descriptions more clearly with the language proficiency levels. Specifically, for general language courses that teach competencies up to an A2 level, there should be a smooth transition to higher-level courses. Alternatively, business language courses should accurately reflect the appropriate language proficiency level for specific purposes, such as A2 or B1.
3. Ensure in the study programme, a logical alignment between the research-dedicated course and the intended outcome, and goals.
4. To enhance compliance and alignment with national standards, the Expert Group recommends structuring the study programme into distinct "Translation" and "Interpretation" tracks, ensuring that an equal number of courses are dedicated to translation and interpretation that would support a balanced curriculum. This would enable students to select a primary focus and dedicate their studies to one qualification whilst covering foundational elements of both fields. An equitable mix of translation and interpreting-focused courses would equip students more effectively for both professional paths, meeting the standards for achieving the "Translator and Interpreter" designation.
5. Revise the literature sources, including more than one or two textbooks in the List of Mandatory (Basic) Literature. It is also recommended to reconsider the form of the final assessment of the study courses, giving priority to an examination (rather than a test) for core study courses (e.g., the study course "The Language of Science and Research Methodology", "Text Analysis", "Principles of Text Production", "Introduction into Computer-Assisted Translation").
6. Either exclude language acquisition-related outcomes from courses not primarily focused on language learning or integrate language knowledge enhancement elements into courses directly related to these outcomes.
7. In the diploma supplement, fix a minor technical issue in the same number of the Latvian credit points and ECTS that describes the volume of the study programme (240 CP, 240 ECTS) and each study course. Interpreter qualification specificity aspects.
8. Regularly review and update CVs to ensure they reflect the most recent academic and scientific achievements.
9. Implement the planned motivational system to encourage increased research activity among faculty members.
10. In the expert opinion, the VUAS must choose one of the three options for the recommendation to implement in the study programme: 1st - Align the study programme in accordance with the Law on Higher Education Institutions regarding the qualifications obtained. Following the law, students cannot obtain 2 qualifications after graduating from one study programme. Thus, there has to be a distinction between translators and interpreters and it can be done by implementing 2 sub-programmes, for example; 2nd - Implement more study courses of interpretation that would provide more in-depth knowledge of the study specificity, thus prolonging the study period for one or two semesters; 3rd - Leave only one qualification - translator. The Experts Group considers this to be a recommendation that should be resolved before VUAS applies for the accreditation of the study field "Translation".

11. The aim and the title of the study programme need to be updated to cover and include the interpreter qualification specificity aspects.

Long-term recommendations

1. It is important to ensure and maintain the attractiveness and develop a strategy in order to stabilise the indicators of study programme stability due to the decrease in graduates and increase in student dropout rates.
2. Establish awards and incentives to encourage teaching staff to innovate in curriculum design and study environment organisation (innovative teaching methods, approaches etc.), thus recognising and rewarding those members who consistently achieve high teaching performance and student satisfaction.
3. Simultaneous interpreting booths need to be modernised to be more in line with today's realities.
4. Encourage faculty members to participate in international research projects and conferences.
5. Implement a metrics mechanism to regularly evaluate the quality, impact, and productivity of research at the Faculty of Translation Studies.
6. Develop joint industry-academia labs where students and teaching staff (researchers) can work on industry-relevant projects.
7. Explore opportunities for faculty exchange programmes with partner universities.
8. Conclude other agreements with another accredited higher education institution in case the implementation of the study programme is terminated.
9. Create a mentorship programme for early-career faculty members to connect them with experienced international researchers.
10. Create a dedicated team (representing teaching staff, students, and industry) to promote the scientific achievements of the Faculty of Translation Studies through social media and academic networks, thus enhancing global reputation and attracting collaboration partners.

II - "Translation and Terminology" ASSESSMENT

II - "Translation and Terminology" ASSESSMENT

2.1. Indicators Describing the Study Programme

Analysis

2.1.1.

The professional master study programme "Translation and Terminology" complies with indicators, conditions and criteria of the study field of "Translation". The length of the implementation of the study programme, which is 1 or 2 years for full-time studies, is evaluated as sufficient for acquiring the necessary skills and way of thinking to enter the labour market.

The education classification code of the study programme 47227 (227) complies with Latvia's Cabinet of Ministers regulations no. 322 Regulations on the classification of education in Latvia, where it is determined that the thematic group of Humanities and Art includes the thematic field of Humanities, which includes the group of language studies and study programmes.

2.1.2.

According to the VUAS Self Assessment Report (SAR, p. 90), the title of the professional master study programme is "Translation and Terminology" with education classification code 47227 with the last 3 numbers (227) standing for language studies and study programmes according to the classification of Latvian education which can be accessed here: <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/291524-noteikumi-par-latvijas-izglitiba-klasifikaciju>. According to SAR p.91, there is a double qualification given after graduating as it is a professional master study programme - translator and terminologist.

In accordance with the SAR p. 90, the aim of the study programme is to train highly qualified, creative and competitive specialists in the field of translation and terminology, who can use the theoretical knowledge in translation and terminology and integrate this knowledge into practice to plan, organise, control and implement projects in the field of translation and terminology or to participate in their implementation individually or in team, as well to evaluate, analyse and give suggestions for the development of the effectivity of the translation and terminology process.

According to the information provided in the SAR pp.91-92, the admission requirements of this study programme differ based on the length of the study programme chosen - for 1 or 2 years. For the 1 year study programme, the admission requirements are first-cycle higher education in the field of linguistics and literary studies and knowledge of Latvian at least level C1, as well as knowledge of English and the language of a second foreign language (German, French, Spanish, Russian) at least at level B1/B2.

However, The Expert Group notes, in accordance with Section 57, Point 4 of the Law on Higher Education Institutions, that the admission requirements for the master's study programme specify that applicants must have a professional bachelor's degree in linguistics or literary studies. This is because completing the one-year master's study programme is not feasible for those with an academic bachelor's degree (typically a three-year programme), as the combined length of first- and second-cycle education must total at least five years. The Expert Group considers this an important aspect that must be taken into consideration.

For the 2-year study programme admission requirements are - first-cycle higher education in fields other than linguistics and literary studies, 2 years of experience in the field and at least level C1 knowledge of Latvian, as well as knowledge of English and a second foreign language (German, French, Spanish, Russian) at least at level B1/B2. It is not clear why there are higher requirements of involvement in the study programme of 2 years than in the 1-year study programme. It has to be changed. The admission requirement of having a degree in linguistics and literary studies shall not be excluded from admission requirements of the 2-year study programme as it is important to have the possibility to admit to this study programme students who have prior academic education (of three years) in this study field.

It has been stated in the SAR p.91, that after successful completion of the studies, students are awarded a Professional master's degree in Translation and Terminology. According to the SAR pp.91-92, the study programme for the length of 1 year requires gathering 60 ECTS, and for the 2-year study programme 123 ECTS. The implementation language of the study programme is Latvian. The title, code, degree and qualifications to be obtained from the study programme, aims, objectives, learning outcomes and admission requirements are interrelated. The duration and scope of the study programme implementation as well as the implementation language, are reasonable and justified.

2.1.3.

There has been a substantial amount of changes made within the study programme. Based on the information provided within the SAR pp.95-98, there has been an adaptation from the study programme "Translation of LSP (Language for Special Purposes) texts" to the new professional standard "Translation. Professional Qualification Requirements for a Translator and Terminologist".

There has been a change in:

1. The name of the study programme changed from the Professional master's study programme "Translation of LSP texts" to the Professional master's study programme "Translation and Terminology".

2. The language of the study implementation has been changed from Latvian (working language combinations English-Latvian, small amount German-Latvian, French-Latvian) to Latvian (working language combinations English-Latvian, small amount German-Latvian, French-Latvian, Russian-Latvian).

3. Admission requirements have been updated to fit both types of study lengths:

Entry requirements for the 1-year version: Admission is open to citizens of the Republic of Latvia and holders of a passport issued by the Republic of Latvia, holders of permanent residence permits and foreigners who have completed the following education: first cycle higher education in linguistics and literary studies and knowledge of Latvian at least at C1 level, and knowledge of English and a second foreign language (German, French, Spanish, Russian) at least at B1/B2 level.

Entry requirements for the 2-year version: Admission is open to citizens of the Republic of Latvia and holders of a passport issued by the Republic of Latvia, holders of permanent residence permits and foreigners who have completed such education: first cycle higher education in a discipline other than linguistics and literary studies and at least 2 years' work experience in the field of linguistics and literary studies, knowledge of Latvian language at least C1 level, knowledge of English at least at B2 level, a second foreign language (Spanish, knowledge of a second foreign language (French, German or Russian) at least at B1/B2 level.

4. Degree and professional qualification has been changed from Professional Master's degree in Translation of LSP texts and professional qualification as a translator to Professional Master's degree in translation and terminology; professional qualifications as translator and terminologist.

5. Study programme variants changed from Full-time - 1 year and 5 months (implementation language Latvian) 60 ECTS to Full-time - 1 year (implementation language Latvian) 60 ECTS and Full-time - 2 years (implementation language Latvian) 80 ECTS to Full-time - 2 years (implementation language Latvian) 123 ECTS.

In the Expert Group's opinion, it is not exactly clear why the full-time study programme in Latvian has to be 123 ECTS. It was described during the on-site visit that the reason is to be able to still allow students the ability to attend and benefit from having access to the study courses and their content that was chosen to be included in the updated study programme. However, based on the Law on Higher Education Institutions, Chapter I, General Provisions that states - full-time studies is a type of studies which corresponds to 60 credit points per academic year, it would be advised to remain within the standard of 120 ECTS and those students who are interested to take an extra course can do so individually.

There has been an adaptation of the study programme to the new professional standard "Translation. Professional qualifications for translators and terminologists". The following changes have been made to the titles and content of the study courses:

1. The title of the study course "Translation of Criminal Law Texts, EN-LV" has been changed to "Translation and Terminology of Texts in Criminal Law, EN-LV"; terminology topics have been added to the study course content (see detailed course content in the course description in annexe 3.7.).

2. The title of the study course "Translation of Medical Texts, EN-LV" has been changed to "Translation and Terminology of Medical Texts, EN-LV"; terminology topics have been added to the study course content (see detailed course content in the course description in annexe 3.7.).

3. The title of the study course "Translation Work Management I" has been changed to "Translation and Terminology Management"; terminology topics have been added to the study course content (see course description in annexe 3.7. for detailed course content).

4. The study course "Translation Work Management II" has been replaced by the study course "Translation of Legal Texts and Legal Terminology, EN-LV", with terminology topics added to the

study course content (see detailed course content in the course description annexe 3.7.).

5. The study course "Translation of Administrative Texts" has been replaced by the course "Adaptation of texts in plain/easy-to-read language, LV", a new study course introduced on the basis of the recommendations of the "European Master in Translation" (EMT) network of masters study programmes.

6. The study course "Translation of documents of international organisations" has been replaced by the study course "Text in a multilingual environment: aspects of translation and terminology, EN, DE-LV / EN, FR-LV / EN, ES-LV / EN, RU-LV " (a separate study course in each second foreign language), the content of which has been adapted to the new standard "Translation. The content of the study course is detailed in the study course description.

7. The study course "Technology in the translation of branch texts, EN-LV" has been replaced by the study course "Language for special purposes, terminology and terminography, EN, DE, RU, LV "; the study course content has been adapted to the new standard "Translation. Professional qualification requirements for translators and terminologists" (see detailed study course content in the course description in annexe 3.7.).

8. The study course "Legal Linguistics" has been replaced by the study course "Introduction to Digital Humanities". This study course has been introduced to equip students with skills relevant to the requirements of the modern market.

According to the Expert Group, the changes are reasonable, responsive to changes in the environment and support the development of the study programme.

2.1.4.

Based on the information provided in the SAR p.102, the study programme plays a key role in the training of high-level professionals in translation and terminology, because it has been developed according to the requirements of the professional standard "Translation. Professional qualification requirements for a translator and terminologist". According to the forecasts developed by the State Employment Agency on the demand for professions in Latvia, which can be accessed here: <https://proгноzes.nva.gov.lv/lv/profession>, reflect the demand for specialists in legal, social and cultural affairs and related affairs is growing rapidly.

Objective data on student employment will be available starting from graduates of the academic year 2024/2025, as in June 2025 the first graduation ceremony is expected for students studying in the new professional master's study study programme "Translation and Terminology". Based on the data provided in Annexe 3.2. Table 5, the number of students enrolled in this study programme over the last five years has ranged from 21 to 30 from the state budget and private funding combined. The Annexe 3.2. Table 3 reflects the number of students graduating has increased in the last academic year (2023/2024) and is the highest in the reporting period at 9. The number of dropouts has increased due to the Covid-19 pandemic. As Table 4 shows, the dropout levels have varied from 0 to 12 within the last couple of years. In the last academic year of 2023/2024, it was 10, which is rather high. The reasons for dropping students are mostly attributed to the pandemic, deteriorating mental and physical health and personal reasons such as students changing their residence, having financial problems or choosing to pursue a different career leading to interruption of their studies. Students' questionnaires also indicated an inability to combine studies with work. In the Expert Group's opinion, the provided data and justification of the study programme are sufficient and well-based.

2.1.5.

Not applicable.

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

Conclusions:

The professional master's study programme "Translation and Terminology" complies with the "Translation" study field. The study programme title, code, degree, professional qualification, and learning outcomes are logically connected. The curriculum's structure, objectives, and admission requirements are clearly designed, though there is some inconsistency in admission standards between the 1- and 2-year study programmes that should be addressed. The study programme has undergone several updates to align with the new professional standard, focusing on terminology and translation. The changes, such as updates to study course titles and content, have been well-reasoned and support the study programme's goals of producing competitive and capable professionals. However, in the Expert Group's opinion, it is not exactly clear why the full-time study programme in Latvian has to be 123 ECTS. It would be advised to remain within the standard of 120 ECTS and those students who are interested in taking an extra study course can do so individually. As the study programme is new, no direct employment data is available, which makes it difficult to evaluate the study programme's actual impact on graduate employability. The relatively high dropout rates in recent years, attributed to the pandemic and personal reasons, raise concerns about student support mechanisms.

Strengths:

1. The study programme prepares specialists with in-depth knowledge within the field.

Weaknesses:

1. There is an inconsistency in admission requirements, which needs to be clarified.
2. The relatively high dropout rates in recent years.

2.2. The Content of Studies and Implementation Thereof

Analysis

2.2.1.

The aim of the master's study programme in "Translation and Terminology," as outlined in the study programme description, is to cultivate highly skilled, innovative, and competitive professionals in the fields of translation and terminology (SAR, p. 90). The study programme is relevant and structured to ensure that graduates can effectively translate theoretical knowledge into practical applications and manage translation and terminology projects. These aspects were highlighted during Expert Groups on-site visit interviews with the study programme director and students, who shared their experiences of participating in various projects (e.g., a biology-themed translation project, an IATE project). The objectives of the study programme align with the current needs of the translation industry, which increasingly demands professionals with a strong theoretical background as well as practical project management capabilities. The study programme's focus is on preparing proficient translators and terminologists by achieving the defined learning outcomes. Additionally, the study programme enhances digital literacy, analytical thinking, and teamwork skills, ensuring that graduates are well-prepared to adapt to the dynamic nature of the translation industry.

The study courses (Annexe: 3-7_piel_Kursu_apraksti_EN_26.07..docx) within the study programme provide a theoretical foundation that is further applied in specialised contexts, enabling students to gain a deeper understanding of both the linguistic and technical aspects of translation. For example, the study course "Translation Theories and Text Linguistics" equips students with essential theoretical knowledge about translation processes, strategies, and linguistic principles, which are crucial for understanding complex texts and varied cultural contexts. The "Computer-Aided Translation" study course introduces them to the latest technological tools and software used in the

industry, enhancing their technical proficiency and ability to work efficiently on large-scale projects. Meanwhile, the study course "Translation of EU Legal Acts" focuses on the practical application of translation in the legal domain, helping students develop the skills needed to handle specialised legal terminology and adhere to the regulatory frameworks of the European Union. The study course "Translation and Terminology Management" integrates these elements by teaching students how to manage and harmonise terminology across different texts and projects, ensuring consistency, accuracy, and quality in professional translation work. This combination of courses ensures that students are theoretically informed and practically competent to meet the diverse and evolving demands of the translation profession. Additionally, study courses in research, creative work, and management studies contribute to a comprehensive educational approach, equipping students with a diverse skill set needed for professional practice. The integration across various domains (such as legal, medical, and technical translation) supports different career paths for students.

The learning outcomes stated in the study programme encompass essential competencies, including translation studies, terminology management, information technologies, project management, and research (SAR, p.91). These competencies are directly aligned with the study programme's objectives and reflect a commitment to developing professionals who are capable of independent research, practical application, and critical analysis in the field of translation and terminology. Additionally, the study programme's emphasis on adhering to relevant laws, regulations, and professional standards ensures that graduates are prepared to meet both academic and professional expectations.

The study programme content (Annexe: 3.6; Annexe: 3.4) is closely aligned with the current labour market demands by preparing graduates for positions in state administration, international organisations, and EU institutions, while also equipping them with modern translation technologies and project management skills. This alignment is essential in meeting the needs of a competitive and globalised labour market, where multilingual proficiency and technological integration are increasingly important.

During the interviews, the Expert Group inquired about the emphasis of the Language for Specific Purposes (LSP) study courses, particularly questioning why legal-themed study courses, such as "Legal Linguistics, Translation of European Union Legal Acts," "Translation of Legal Texts and Legal Terminology," and "Editing LSP Texts," were more prominent than study courses focusing on other areas, such as the translation and terminology of medical texts. In response, the study programme director clarified that this focus aligns with labour market demands, where there is a strong need for translators specialising in legal fields, and the study programme ensures that students acquire the necessary skills to work in a variety of sectors.

The study programme complies with national regulations and professional standards, fulfilling the seventh level of professional qualification (PQL 7) requirements as defined by the Latvian Qualifications Framework (LQF 7). This alignment with national standards and professional requirements is detailed in Annexe 3.4, which outlines the study programmes adherence to the professional standard for translators and terminologists (Annexe: 3-4_APPENDIX_profession-standart_en_TT).

The Expert Group has identified some inaccuracies in the documents regarding the number of credit points for the 2-year professional master study programme. In Annexe 3.3, the volume of the study programme is 120 ECTS. In the VUAS Self Assessment Report (SAR, p. 100 and p. 106 in English), the volume of the study programme is 120 ECTS. However, elsewhere in the SAR, in the diploma supplement and in Annexe 3.6 (the plan of the study programme), the volume of the study programme is 123 ECTS, which is higher than required according to Cabinet Regulation No 305 of 13 June 2023 "Regulations regarding the State Standard for Vocational Higher Education" (available only in Latvian at <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/342818-noteikumi-par-valsts-profesionalas-augstakas-izglitiba-standartu>). This discrepancy should be corrected to comply with the requirements set forth in Cabinet Regulation No.

305 of 13 June 2023, which mandates a maximum of 120 ECTS for such study programmes.

Furthermore, the 1-year professional master's study programme currently lacks Part C (Free Elective Study Courses), which is a mandatory component according to Section 6 (4) of the Law on Higher Education Institutions. It is recommended that the study programme structure be amended to include this component, thereby ensuring legal compliance and providing students with opportunities to broaden their academic and professional competencies.

The reviewed documentation highlights several prerequisite issues within the study programme. Particularly, the admission criteria for the MA study programme stipulate that applicants must possess a first-cycle higher education in fields other than linguistics or literary studies, two years of relevant experience, C1-level proficiency in Latvian, and knowledge of English and a second foreign language (German, French, Spanish, or Russian) at the B1/B2 level (SAR, p. 91). However, study courses such as "Text in a Multilingual Environment: Translation Aspects (EN, DE-LV)" demand higher proficiency levels, such as C1-C2 in English and B1/B2 in German, in addition to prior translation experience. As a result, students who meet only the minimum proficiency requirements (e.g., C1 in English, B1 in German, Spanish, French, or Russian) may be at a disadvantage compared to those with higher proficiency levels (C2 or B2), potentially affecting their ability to meet study course outcomes. Additionally, the study programme does not offer structured opportunities for students to improve their language skills to the necessary level, leaving gaps in language development. Similar concerns exist in other study courses, such as "Text in a Multilingual Environment: Translation Aspects (EN, FR-LV)", "Text in a Multilingual Environment: Translation Aspects (EN, ES-LV)", and "Text in a Multilingual Environment: Translation Aspects (EN, RU-LV)", where French, Spanish, and Russian are the second languages.

Another issue involves the vague prerequisites for some study courses (Annexe: 3-7_piel_Kursu_apraksti_EN_26.07..docx) which could disrupt the overall coherence of the study programme. For instance, the "Translation and Terminology Management" study course requires "good knowledge of at least one foreign language," "good computer skills, basic knowledge of translation memory or CAT tools, and translation experience." The term "good knowledge" is imprecise, leading to potential inconsistencies in how prepared students are. Additionally, the phrase "at least one foreign language" creates ambiguity, as students with proficiency in languages, e.g., Spanish, may find it challenging to have their skills assessed accurately if the lecturer is not proficient in that language, e.g., in Spanish. In some cases, such as in the study course Introduction to Digital Humanities, the prerequisite of a "bachelor's degree in the humanities or translation studies" is too general, as it is already part of the MA study programmes admission requirements. More detailed study course prerequisites would provide greater clarity.

In light of these issues, the Expert Group recommends revising the language proficiency requirements to ensure fairness for all students. The study programme could introduce elective or supplementary study courses to help students improve their second language proficiency to the required levels. Alternatively, study course syllabi prerequisites should be updated to specify a consistent, precise language proficiency level necessary to achieve study course outcomes. Overall, study course prerequisites should be precise and informative to enhance the coherence and interconnectedness of the study programme and the clear possibility of achieving the set outcomes.

2.2.2.

The master's study programme in "Translation and Terminology" at Ventspils University of Applied Sciences is designed to ensure that the degree is awarded based on the latest advancements and contributions in translation studies and terminology. As specified in Annexe 3.6, the study programme includes study courses that focus on research, creative work, design work, and management. In the 60-credit study programme, 9 credits are allocated to this area through study courses like "Translation and Terminology Management, LV" (3 credits) and "Principles, Methods of Research Work and Course Paper, LV" (6 credits). For the two-year master's study programme, a

total of 12 credits is dedicated to this section, encompassing the aforementioned study courses and an additional 3-credit study course, "Adaptation of Texts in Plain/Easy-to-Read Language, LV" (3 credits).

The curriculum offers study courses such as "Translation Theories and Text Linguistics," "Computer-Aided Translation," and "Translation and Terminology Management," which are aligned with the latest scientific developments in translation and terminology research. These study courses provide students with foundational knowledge and current research-based insights, ensuring the degree reflects contemporary scientific achievements in the field. The study programme's tasks emphasise achieving learning outcomes consistent with Level 7 of the European Qualifications Framework (SAR, p.90), which requires mastering advanced knowledge and skills in translation and terminology, as well as engaging critically with scientific research and applying it to professional contexts. A significant focus on research is evident in the requirement for a master's thesis as the final assessment component.

Furthermore, the study programme adheres to the professional standard for translators and terminologists, as outlined in Annexe 3.4, ensuring that the learning outcomes and degree criteria are grounded in both scientific accomplishments and professional requirements. This adherence aligns the study programme with the Level 7 qualifications of the Latvian Qualifications Framework (LQF 7). The curriculum also integrates modern translation technologies and contemporary research trends, such as computer-aided translation tools and project management, which are crucial for understanding and keeping pace with advancements in the field.

2.2.3.

The implementation methods used in the master's study programme "Translation and Terminology" aim to support the attainment of the study programmes' learning outcomes by integrating theoretical knowledge with practical skills. As outlined in the syllabi provided in Annexe 3.7, the study programme combines lectures, seminars, practical assignments, independent research, and project-based learning to ensure a comprehensive educational experience. For example, the "Translation Theory and Text Linguistics" study course includes both lectures and practical classes, allowing students to apply theoretical concepts to real-life translation scenarios. This combination of methods ensures that students understand translation theories and critically analyse and apply them in practical contexts. Similarly, study courses such as "Computer-Aided Translation" focus on hands-on training with various CAT tools, fostering practical skills in translation technologies that are essential for professional practice.

The study programme demonstrates a commitment to student-centred learning principles by incorporating various interactive and participatory methods. The study courses, such as "Adaptation of Texts in Plain/Easy-to-Read Language," emphasise active student participation through practical assignments and workshops. These methods enable students to take an active role in their learning, allowing them to explore specific interests within the field of translation and terminology and develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Student-centred learning principles are observed by encouraging students to participate in discussions, problem-solving activities, group work, and terminology projects, which promote a deeper understanding of the learning content. To meet students' learning style preferences (visual, auditory, kinesthetic, reading/writing), the teaching staff deliver presentations, uses visuals, and offer practical assignments and projects to be performed individually or in groups.

Furthermore, the study programme's structure offers flexibility by providing one-year and two-year options, accommodating students with different academic backgrounds and professional aspirations. This flexibility aligns with student-centred learning by allowing learners to choose a pathway that best meets their needs and career goals.

Many study courses within the study programme, such as "Translation of EU Legal Acts" and "Editing LSP Texts," incorporate a significant number of practical classes where students engage in

translation tasks that simulate real-world challenges. The study course syllabi show a clear focus on practical engagement, which is crucial for developing the hands-on skills needed for translation and terminology work in professional settings.

The study programme includes regular assessments such as exams, tests, practical assignments, and presentations, which provide continuous feedback to students. This feedback mechanism allows students to reflect on their progress and make necessary adjustments to their learning strategies. Study courses like "Computer-Aided Translation" and "Translation of Legal Texts and Legal Terminology" utilise formative assessments to guide students' development, helping them refine their skills and understanding over time (study course syllabi).

The discussions with the teaching staff, students and graduates during the on-site visit have also demonstrated that the FoTS ensures student-centred learning by creating a flexible and interactive environment where students are actively involved in their own learning process that is facilitated and supported by the teaching staff who provide various learning opportunities, continuous feedback and ongoing (summative) assessment. The Expert Group considers that the use of various teaching methods, assessment types, digital tools and resources (e-learning environment Moodle) contribute to the achievement of the aims and learning outcomes of the study courses and the study programme.

2.2.4.

The master's study programme "Translation and Terminology" offers two types of internships: one worth 9 ECTS credits and another worth 30 ECTS credits, as outlined in the internship syllabus. Students can engage in practical experience through a choice of internships in various companies or organisations, which must be approved by the Faculty of Translation Studies Council (Annexe: 3-8_appendix_TT_EN - Internship regulations). Internships are structured to ensure that students apply theoretical knowledge in real-world contexts and develop their professional skills in translation and terminology. The provision of internships is facilitated by a comprehensive process that involves the selection and approval of internship placements, development of individual internship plans in consultation with university and company supervisors, regular documentation and self-assessment by students through an internship diary, and preparation and defence of an internship report (Annexe: 3-8_appendix_TT_EN, and annexe: 3-7_piel_Kursu_apraksti_EN_26.07..docx.pdf - internship syllabus).

The organisation of the internship is structured effectively to ensure alignment with the study programme's objectives. The Internship Regulations detail the responsibilities of both the university and company supervisors in coordinating and overseeing the internship process. Each internship is guided by two supervisors: one from the university and one from the company. The university supervisor is responsible for coordinating the internship tasks, monitoring progress, and evaluating the final internship report (Annexe: 3.8, syllabus). The internship tasks are designed to ensure they are directly related to the learning outcomes of the study programme. The learning outcomes include demonstrating advanced knowledge in translation and linguistics, applying problem-solving skills, working independently and in teams, and developing professional and research competencies. The internship complies with the relevant regulatory enactments of the Republic of Latvia (Cabinet Regulation No 481 of 29 August 2023; available only in Latvian at <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/344976-praks-es-organizes-anaskartiba-profesionalas-izglitibas-programmas>). According to the Internship Regulations, the internship is organised in accordance with national laws and the standards governing the professional qualification for translators and terminologists (Annexe: 3.8). The study programme also aligns with the requirements for internships in higher education by ensuring that students receive appropriate supervision, have clear learning outcomes, and complete the necessary documentation for assessment. The internship defence is organised according to institutional and national guidelines, with a grading system based on a 10-point scale and a structured defence process (Annexe: 3-8_appendix_TT_EN).

Expert Group considers the internship component of the master's study programme "Translation and Terminology" at Ventspils University of Applied Sciences as effectively organised, well-aligned with the learning outcomes, and compliant with the relevant regulatory requirements. The study programme provides comprehensive opportunities for students to gain practical experience and develop professional skills in a structured and supportive environment. This structure ensures that the internship serves as a valuable part of the educational experience, contributing to achieving the study programme's learning outcomes.

2.2.5.

Not Applicable.

2.2.6.

During the on-site visit, the Expert Group was handed the master's thesis for review. The thesis titled "Military Terminology and Text Analysis in the NATO Standard ATP-3.12.1 Military Engineering Tactical Doctrine" clearly aligns with the professional master's study programme "Translation and Terminology" at Ventspils University College. The topic is relevant to the field of translation and terminology, particularly within the specialised domain of military engineering, reflecting the study programme's emphasis on preparing students to handle complex translation tasks in technical and specialised contexts. The thesis not only addresses translation theory but also incorporates language for specific purposes (LSP), which is a core focus of the study programme.

In Expert Group's opinion, the relevance of the final thesis topic is further underscored by its contribution to both academic and professional fields. By creating a glossary of military engineering terms and identifying gaps in Latvian military terminology, the thesis provides practical solutions to real-world translation issues, aligning with the study programme's objective of equipping students with the skills necessary for professional translation work. Additionally, the integration of modern translation technologies and the interdisciplinary approach taken in the analysis enhances the relevance of the topic, ensuring that the final thesis corresponds effectively to the study outcomes and goals of the study programme.

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

Conclusions:

The master's study programme "Translation and Terminology" at Ventspils University College is well-aligned with its objectives, ensuring that the content of the study courses is complementary, addressing both theoretical and practical aspects of the field. The study programme equips students with essential translation, terminology management, and technological skills, reflecting current industry demands and trends. Additionally, the curriculum is structured to ensure that the learning outcomes contribute to professional readiness, while also complying with the professional standard.

Strengths:

1. The study programme is closely aligned with the demands of the translation industry, preparing students for a wide range of professional roles in state administration, international organisations, and EU institutions. The focus on legal, medical, and technical translation caters to industry-specific needs, making graduates competitive in the job market.
2. Study courses such as "Computer-Aided Translation" ensure students are proficient in the latest translation tools, enhancing their ability to manage complex projects efficiently, which is essential in

a technology-driven field.

3. The study courses provide a balanced mix of theoretical knowledge and practical application. For example, the "Translation Theories and Text Linguistics" study course equips students with the foundational theoretical knowledge needed to approach translation challenges, while practical study courses such as "Translation of EU Legal Acts" focus on real-world application.

4. The study programme's alignment with the Latvian Qualifications Framework ensures that graduates meet the qualifications and standards necessary for professional practice.

Weaknesses:

1. Some study courses, such as "Text in a Multilingual Environment", have vague prerequisites regarding language proficiency. Students with only the minimum required levels may struggle to meet the study course outcomes, and the study programme does not provide structured opportunities to improve language skills to the necessary levels.

2. Certain study courses, such as "Translation and Terminology Management", list prerequisites like "good knowledge of at least one foreign language" without clearly defining the proficiency level. This lack of specificity can result in inconsistencies in student preparedness.

3. The study programme does not offer structured pathways for students to improve their proficiency in second languages, which could be crucial for students needing to meet higher language expectations for certain study courses.

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

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Despite the minor shortcomings in the syllabi of the study courses (the vague prerequisite of the language proficiency level) the content of the study programme addresses both theoretical and practical aspects of the translation field and is based on the latest research and achievements in the field of Translation Studies and Terminology.

2.3. Resources and Provision of the Study Programme

Analysis

2.3.1.

The professional master's study programme "Translation and Terminology" study facilities include modern lecture rooms, equipped with a multimedia projector or interactive whiteboard and a computer, modern computer classrooms, all the necessary professional software available to practise translation and terminology management, and a library with a large reading room. The VUAS library has access to scientific literature on terminology and translation studies, interpreting, language learning, intercultural communication and various linguistic issues. The Expert Group confirms that most of the available textbooks, manuals, translation dictionaries phrasebooks and other teaching and learning materials, as well as the library's subscriptions to journals and the library's databases, are up-to-date and meet the needs of the study programme. The library provides access to various databases. The library staff organises training courses on how to use these databases and regularly informs students and teaching staff of any additions to the databases. During the Expert Group on-site visit interviews with students, they confirmed that the resources provided by the library are sufficient. University resources also include necessary network services, such as the university website.

The Expert Group therefore concludes that the criterion is fully fulfilled.

2.3.2.

Not Applicable.

2.3.3.

The professional master's study programme "Translation and Terminology" leverages a combined funding model, utilising both state budget allocations and student tuition fees. VUAS receives from the state EUR 1630.11 per student per one budget place together with state budget subsidy for student scholarship and social needs EUR 251.98 per student per one budget place, as well as the tuition fee revenue (calculated according to the actual tuition fee for each study programme) (SAR, pp. 116-117). To support the study process, VUAS as a regionally important university also receives support from the municipality. Approximately 75% of total study programme funding is spent on teaching and administrative staff salaries, with the remaining 25% spent on utilities and university maintenance costs.

To reach the breakeven point the study programme needs 25 students in total. According to the SAR, p. 117, in 2023, 30 students were studying in the "Translation and Terminology" study programme, which made up 13.33% of the total number of all FoTS students. The professional master's study programme "Translation and Terminology" has a tuition fee of EUR 2270 per year (SAR, p. 117). The average income is divided as follows: state subsidy 70% and tuition fees 30%.

Taking into account the information mentioned above, the Expert Group concludes that the funding available for the study programme "Translation and Terminology", the sources of funding and the use of funding ensure full implementation of the study process and the study programme has the minimum number of students, which ensures the cost-effectiveness of the study programme.

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

Conclusions:

Based on the information provided in the Self Assessment Report and its annexes, Expert Groups on-site visit interviews with representatives of the VUAS and a tour of the faculty premises, the Expert Group concluded that the library resources, material and technical provision of professional master's study programme "Translation and Terminology" complies with the requirements of the accreditation standards and are in line with the planned learning outcomes. VUAS has established a well-equipped and comfortable study process for students. Financially, the study programme is healthy in terms of budget balance, with a positive outlook.

Strengths:

1. VUAS ensures access to the most popular subscribed databases as well as regularly purchasing the necessary literature sources.
2. The study programme has reached a sufficient level of popularity and attracts the prescribed number of students to make it financially cost-sustainable.

Weaknesses:

None.

Assessment of the requirement [6]

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

VUAS provides the professional master's study programme "Translation and Terminology" with all the necessary tools and resource material, technical as well as informative base for successful implementation of the study programme.

2.4. Teaching Staff

Analysis

2.4.1.

Based on the information provided in VUAS Self Assessment Report (SAR, pp.118-122) The "Translation and Terminology" study programme at VUAS has a highly qualified teaching staff with strong academic credentials and practical industry experience. The faculty members possess the necessary qualifications and expertise to effectively deliver the content of the study programme and prepare students for successful careers. Five faculty members hold doctoral degrees, demonstrating their advanced academic achievements, several lecturers have worked as translators, interpreters, or terminology project managers in the private sector, providing them with valuable practical insights.

Faculty members have published research papers in translation and terminology, contributing to the study programme's knowledge base. However, recently not all leading staff members have been active researchers. During the on-site visit discussions, the Experts Group was informed that the teachers plan to be more active in this field. This is particularly important for an MA study programme.

Based on the information provided in the VUAS Self Assessment Report (SAR, p. 118) and on-site visit meetings, many lecturers are active members of professional organisations, such as the Latvian Association of Interpreters and Translators, and participate in industry-related projects and initiatives. All teaching staff members meet the required language proficiency levels in both the state language and foreign languages. The SAR (Annexe: 2-10_pielikums-appendix_latviesu-valoda_latvian-language) includes a confirmation that the state language proficiency level of all teaching staff involved in the implementation of the master's study programme "Translation and Terminology" complies with the requirements of Official Language Law. The SAR also provides information on the English language knowledge (Annexe: 2-11_pielikums-appendix_anglu-valoda_english-language) Rector's certificate stating that the English language proficiency level of all teaching staff involved in the implementation of the master's study programme "Translation and Terminology" is at least level B2. English language proficiency level of teaching staff is stated in their resumes annexed to the self-evaluation report of the Field of Study.

The teaching staff's qualifications align with the specific requirements of the "Translation and Terminology" study programme, ensuring that students receive a high-quality education. Faculty members possess the necessary research skills, theoretical knowledge, and practical experience to effectively guide students in developing their own research projects and applying their knowledge in real-world translation and terminology tasks.

According to the VUAS Self Assessment Report (SAR, pp.119-121), the curriculum is formed by the latest research and industry trends. Faculty members actively participate in scientific conferences, publish research papers, and contribute to the development of professional standards in the field of translation and terminology. This ensures that students are exposed to the most current developments in the field and are equipped with the skills needed to succeed in their careers.

Beyond their academic and professional accomplishments, the teaching staff also demonstrates a strong commitment to student development, which was clearly demonstrated during the on-site visit. They are dedicated to providing students with personalised guidance, mentorship, and support. Faculty members are available to students outside of regular class hours, offering additional assistance and answering questions. They also encourage students to participate in research projects, internships, and professional development activities.

Based on the Self Assessment Report (SAR, pp. 119-121) and information gained during the on-site visit meetings with the VUAS representatives, the Experts Group makes a conclusion that the study programme focuses on fostering a supportive and collaborative learning environment that is evident in the interactions between faculty members and students. Regular feedback sessions, one-on-one meetings, and group discussions provide opportunities for students to share their thoughts, seek clarification, and receive constructive feedback. This open and supportive atmosphere helps students to feel engaged and motivated in their studies.

2.4.2.

Based on the information provided in the VUAS Self Assessment Report (SAR, pp. 121-122) and Expert Group meetings during the on-site visit, VUAS master's study programme in translation has undergone some exciting changes to its academic staff. The "Translation and Terminology" study programme, formerly known as "Translation of LSP Texts", now boasts a team with a renewed focus on diverse languages and specialisations.

To fill the gaps left by retired lecturers, new qualified professionals have been recruited to the study programme. These new staff members have been equipped with translation skills in German and English, as well as terminology.

However, the study programme is not only changing but also innovating. New subjects have been introduced, such as "Text in a Multilingual Environment", taught by guest lecturers with impressive qualifications. A recent PhD graduate offers translation skills in Spanish, while a native speaker brings a wealth of experience in translation from Russian. A highly experienced tutor and a French translator also contribute to the study programme, as well as a German lecturer who draws on her experience in translating from/to German.

According to the SAR, one thing remains constant: the high standards for selecting lecturers. VUAS prioritises education, qualifications, and practical experience when building its faculty. They ensure lecturers stay up-to-date through research and methodological development. This focus on quality is reflected in student surveys, where they praise the involvement of expert lecturers in the field.

2.4.3.

Not Applicable.

2.4.4.

The faculty has published research on translation, including monographs, articles, and anthologies. The lecturers have been involved in various projects, such as "Teachers in the Distance," and have contributed to the development of professional standards. The faculty members hold positions in organisations like the Latvian Association of Interpreters and Translators and the Latvian Association of Applied Linguistics. Several lecturers have served as translators, authors, and members of award juries, demonstrating their practical expertise. The expert group observed that the academic staff of the "Translation and Terminology" study programme have varying levels of research activity. This disparity was evident in discussions with the faculty dean and the lecturers themselves. While some lecturers are highly active researchers, as evidenced by their publications in Scopus and Web of Science (see Annex 2.13), others, particularly those associated with the "Translation and Language Technology" program, have seen a decline in research activity in recent years, with most publications dating back to before 2018.

The expert group noted that the curricula vitae provided by the academic staff (Annex 2-9_CV_Tulkošanas_virziens_EN) often lack a complete or up-to-date list of publications. Furthermore, the inconsistent format of these CVs hinders the assessment of the lecturers' qualifications and experience relevant to the study programme delivery. Despite these shortcomings, it's clear that the lecturers teaching translation-related subjects possess practical translation experience. The university has implemented an incentive system to encourage increased research output, which the lecturers themselves have expressed confidence in.

2.4.5.

As indicated in the VUAS Self-Assessment Report (SAR, pp. 122-123) and in the data collected during the on-site meetings with the stakeholders of the VUAS master's degree study programme in Translation, the study programme is characterised by a collaborative approach between academic staff and an interdisciplinary environment. Such collaboration is vital to guarantee the success of the study programme and to guarantee students receive an excellent learning experience.

VUAS-sponsored events, both formal and informal, facilitate communication and knowledge sharing among the teaching staff. The interdisciplinary cooperation is evidenced by the participation of lecturers from different disciplines in the sharing of experiences through channels such as curriculum councils and faculty council meetings.

Lecturers collaborate to develop and improve the content of study programmes, thereby ensuring curricular coherence and consistency. This cooperation extends beyond formal meetings and is reflected in informal events such as weekly coffee breaks and festive gatherings. These events provide an opportunity for teachers to interact, exchange ideas, and network. The commitment to collaboration is evidenced by the presence of ten lecturers with academic and professional experience and the focus on individual attention to students.

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

Conclusions:

The teaching staff of the "Translation and Terminology" study programme at VUAS possesses a high level of expertise, both academically and professionally. Many faculty members hold doctoral degrees or/and have extensive experience in the field, ensuring that students receive a comprehensive and relevant education.

While not all leading staff members have been actively involved in research recently, there is a clear intention to increase research output. This is particularly important for a master's study programme, as it contributes to the knowledge base and keeps faculty members at the forefront of their field.

The staff members are actively engaged in the translation and terminology community through their involvement in professional organisations and industry-related projects. This helps them stay connected to current trends and best practices.

All teaching staff members meet the required language proficiency levels in both the state language and foreign languages. This ensures that they are qualified to teach the study programmes courses effectively.

The teaching staff demonstrates a strong commitment to student success. They provide personalised guidance, mentorship, and support, fostering a collaborative and supportive learning environment. This approach helps students feel engaged and motivated in their studies.

Strengths:

1. The teaching staff at VUAS "Translation and Terminology" study programme possesses strong academic credentials, practical industry experience, and a commitment to student development.

2. The study programme focuses on the latest research and industry trends, ensuring that students are equipped with the most current knowledge and skills.
3. The study programme fosters a collaborative and supportive learning environment through regular feedback sessions, one-on-one meetings, and group discussions.

Weaknesses:

1. Not all teaching staff members have been actively researching or publishing their research results. Quite a few publications in indexed journals.

Assessment of the requirement [7]

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The qualification of all members of the academic staff complies with the requirements of the regulatory enactments, which are set for the master-level study programmes (based on (CVs, SAR, Latvian legislation, and internal VUAS documents in annexes).

2.5. Assessment of the Compliance

Requirements

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

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

In the SAR (except p. 100 and p.106), in the diploma supplement and in Annexe 3.6 (the plan of the study programme), the volume of the 2-year study programme is 123 ECTS. According to Section 30 of Cabinet Regulation No 305 of 13 June 2023 "Regulations regarding the State Standard for Vocational Higher Education", the volume of the Master study programme shall comprise at least 60 ECTS. However, it is necessary to take into account the number of credit points that are allowed to be obtained within one academic year. Section 1(8) of the Law on Higher Education Institutions prescribes that 60 ECTS can be obtained in full-time studies in one academic year (i.e., a 2-year study shall account for 120 ECTS). If an extra three credit points remain, the duration of studies should be increased.

The 1-year study programme does not include Part C (Free Elective Study Courses) at all, which is compulsory according to Section 6 (4) of the Law on Higher Education Institutions (<https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/37967>).

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Based on the analysis of the compliance of the study programme with the professional standard provided in Annexe 3.4_profession-standard-en_TT, the study programme complies with the professional standard "Translator and Terminologist" as of 12 December 2023, (<https://registri.visc.gov.lv/profizglitiba/dokumenti/standarti/2017/PS-284.pdf>; available only in Latvian).

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The descriptions of the study courses and the study materials have been prepared in the Latvian language, in which the study programme is implemented, and they comply with the requirements set forth in the Law on Higher Education Institutions. It is recommended to update course syllabi prerequisites, specifying a consistent and precise language proficiency level that is necessary to achieve the learning outcomes of the study courses.

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The sample of the diploma and its supplement (provided in Annex 3.1) comply with the procedure according to which state-recognised documents of higher education are issued (Cabinet Regulation No 202 of 16 April 2013

(<https://likumi.lv/ta/id/256157-kartiba-kada-izsniedz-valsts-atzitus-augstako-izglitiba-apliecinotus-dokumentus#piel1&pd=1>; available only in Latvian). There is only a minor technical issue in the same number of Latvian credit points and ECTS that describe the volume of the study programme (60 CP, 60 ECTS for one implementation variant and 123 CP, 123 ECTS for the other implementation variant) and each study course. According to the Latvia credit point system, 1 Latvian credit point (CP) corresponds to 1.5 ECTS credit points (<https://aic.lv/en/izglitiba-latvija/kreditpunktu-sistema>). Maybe the following situation is a result of the decision in regards to the transition from Latvian CP to ECTS that is stated in SAR (p. 106) as follows: "The study courses are expressed in CP, where 1 CP = 1 ECTS = 25 academic hours". However, it should be admitted that there is a risk of misunderstanding.

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

- 7 7 - At least five teaching staff members with a doctoral degree are among the academic staff of an academic doctoral study programme, at least three of which are experts approved by the Latvian Science Council in the respective field of science. At least five teaching staff members with a doctoral degree are among the academic staff of a professional doctoral study programme in arts (if applicable).

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

- 8 8 - The teaching staff members involved in the implementation of the study programme are proficient in the official language in accordance with the regulations on the level of the official language knowledge and the procedures for testing official language proficiency for performing professional duties and office duties.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The declaration by the VUAS Rector (Annexe: 2.10) certifies that teaching staff members involved in the implementation of the study programme are proficient in the official language in accordance with Cabinet Regulation No 157 of 8 March 2022 "Regulations Regarding the Extent of the Knowledge of the Official Language and the Procedures for Examining the Proficiency in the Official Language".

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

According to the CVs provided in Annexe 2.9 of the SAR, the teaching staff members who are involved in the delivery of the study courses that are implemented in English have at least B2 level of English. This is also certified by the declaration of the VUAS Rector (Annexe: 2.11). Moreover, the teaching staff that deliver the study courses that are implemented in languages other than English (such as, e.g., Latvian, German, French and Russian) have a proficiency level of a corresponding foreign language at the level of C1/C2.

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The sample of the study agreement (Annexe: 2.5) complies with the mandatory provisions to be included in the study agreement stipulated in Cabinet Regulation No 70 of 23 January 2007 "Mandatory Provisions to be Included in the Study Agreement" (<https://likumi.lv/ta/id/152072-studiju-liguma-obligati-ietveramie-noteikumi>; available only in Latvian).

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The agreement between VUAS and Riga Technical University (RTU) stipulates that in the event of termination of the implementation of the MA study programme at VUAS, students of VUAS are provided with the opportunity to continue their studies in the RTU professional Master study programme "Technical Translation and Terminology" (Annexe: 2.3). However, it should be noted that the Master study programme of RTU will soon be implemented only in the English language. In this regard, the Expert Group recommends VUAS conclude other agreements if possible.

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Ventspils University of Applied Sciences offers a safety net for students in its translation study programmes. If the master's study programme in "Translation and Terminology" loses accreditation or has its licence withdrawn due to university actions, students will be compensated for their losses if they opt not to continue in another study programme. This policy

ensures financial protection and provides security for students facing unexpected changes in their academic paths. The studied document - "Declaration of VUAS Rector No 1-10.1/134" (Annexe 2.4) outlines a comprehensive framework for managing the impact of study programme discontinuation on students, ensuring that their educational progress and financial arrangements are handled effectively. The agreements between VUAS and its partner universities (RTU, RAT, DU), as presented in Annexe 2.3, reflect a well-organised and collaborative approach to managing academic study programme discontinuations. These agreements prioritise student welfare by ensuring continued educational opportunities and establishing clear legal frameworks for the universities' obligations. They firmly commit to academic continuity and institutional cooperation within the Latvian higher education system.

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

Assessment of the requirement [8]

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

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

The study programme partially complies with the State Education Standard (Annexe 3.3_APPENDIX_TT_ENG) available only in Latvian at <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/342818-noteikumi-par-valsts-profesionalas-augstakas-izglitiba-standartu>. the volume of the 2-year study programme is 123 ECTS. According to Section 30 of Cabinet Regulation No 305 of 13 June 2023 "Regulations regarding the State Standard for Vocational Higher Education", the volume of the Master study programme shall comprise at least 60 ECTS. However, it is necessary to take into account the number of credit points that are allowed to be obtained within one academic year. Section 1(8) of the Law on Higher Education Institutions prescribes that 60 CP can be obtained in full-time studies in one academic year (i.e., a 2-year study shall account for 120 CP). If an extra three credit points remain, the duration of studies should be increased.

The 1-year study programme does not include Part C (Free Elective Study Courses) at all, which is compulsory according to Section 6 (4) of the Law on Higher Education Institutions (<https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/37967>).

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

Conclusions:

The study programme "Translation and Terminology" shows a strong connection to both national and international standards in higher education and translation studies. It successfully blends theoretical knowledge with practical skills, preparing students well for careers in translation, terminology management, and related fields. The curriculum is well-rounded, incorporating modern translation technologies and project-based learning, making it highly relevant to the current needs of the labour market.

Strengths:

1. The study programme is tailored to the current demands of the translation industry. It equips students with crucial skills in translation, terminology management, and the use of computer-assisted translation (CAT) tools, making them competitive in both national and international job markets.
2. Students gain proficiency in using modern translation technologies, such as CAT tools like Phrase and Trados, which are essential for professional work in the translation field.
3. The curriculum includes valuable practical components, such as internships and project-based learning. These allow students to apply what they've learned in real-world settings, enhancing their employability after graduation.
4. The teaching staff are highly qualified, with several members holding doctoral degrees and having extensive experience in the industry. Their active involvement in research and professional activities ensures that the study programme stays current with the latest trends and practices.

Weaknesses:

1. The study programme claims different credit point limits in different documentation (123 ECTS and 120 ECTS).
2. There is a misalignment between the admission criteria and the actual language proficiency required for some courses. This could lead to challenges for students, and clearer language proficiency requirements should be introduced.
3. In recent years, the study programme has seen higher dropout rates, partly due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This indicates a need for stronger student support systems to help improve retention.
4. The 1-year study programme currently lacks the mandatory Part C (Free Elective Study Courses), which is a legal requirement in Latvia. This needs to be rectified to provide students with more flexibility in their learning pathways.

Evaluation of the study programme "Translation and Terminology"

Evaluation of the study programme:

Good

2.6. Recommendations for the Study Programme "Translation and Terminology"

Short-term recommendations

1. The study programme documentation should be reviewed and revised to address the inconsistency in the total credit points. While the Self-Assessment Report consistently indicates a volume of 120ECTS for the 2-year study programme, other documents, such as the diploma supplement and Annexe 3.6, reflect a total of 123 ECTS.
2. It is recommended that the 1-year study programme structure be amended to include C Part (Free Elective Study Courses), thereby ensuring legal compliance and providing students with opportunities to broaden their academic and professional competencies.
3. Revise the language proficiency requirements to ensure fairness for all students. The study programme could introduce elective or supplementary courses to help students improve their second language proficiency to the required levels. Alternatively, course syllabi prerequisites should be updated to specify consistent, precise language proficiency levels necessary to achieve course outcomes. Overall, course prerequisites should be precise and informative to enhance the coherence and interconnectedness of the study programme and the clear possibility of achieving the set outcomes.

4. Eliminate the inconsistencies that exist in the admission requirements of the study programme.
5. Consider expanding the study programme of guest lecturers to provide students with exposure to a wider range of industry experts and perspectives.
6. Implement a standardised CV format for all faculty members to ensure that relevant information for study programme delivery is clearly presented.

Long-term recommendations

1. Ensure the development of strategies and practical ways to decrease dropout rates of the students in the study programme. One way could be through pre-introduction in VUAS organised open days to introduce students to the expectations of the study programme.
2. Establish awards and incentives to encourage teaching staff to innovate in curriculum design and study environment organisation (innovative teaching methods, approaches etc.), thus recognising and rewarding those members who consistently achieve high teaching performance and student satisfaction.
3. Encourage and support leading faculty members to engage in research activities, possibly through incentives or collaborative projects.
4. Implement a metrics mechanism to regularly evaluate the quality, impact, and productivity of research at the Faculty of Translation Studies
5. Develop joint industry-academia labs where students and teaching staff (researchers) can work on industry-relevant projects.
6. Create student research grants (in cooperation with Ventspils Municipality) that allow Master students to lead their own projects (in collaboration with national and international partner institutions, and industry representatives) under the mentorship of the FoTS. The results of research projects could be integrated into the Master Thesis as well as further developed in the Doctoral Thesis.
7. Encourage collaborations between VUAS faculties, creating interdisciplinary teams to address complex scientific issues in compliance with the VUAS Development Strategy for 2021-2027, thus also contributing to the national priority areas.
8. Create a dedicated team (representing teaching staff, students, and industry) to promote the scientific achievements of the Faculty of Translation Studies through social media and academic networks, thus enhancing global reputation and attracting collaboration partners.
9. In the long term perspective the teaching loads and the level of remuneration of the teaching and administrative staff should be improved.

III - Assessment of the Requirements for the Study Field and the Relevant Study Programmes

III - Assessment of the Requirements for the Study Field and the Relevant Study Programmes

Assessment of the Requirements for the Study Field

Requirements	Requirement Evaluation		Comment
R1 - Pursuant to Section 5, Paragraph 2.1 of the Law on Higher Education Institutions, the higher education institution/ college shall ensure continuous improvement, development, and efficient performance of the study field whilst implementing its internal quality assurance system:	Fully compliant		VUAS ensures continuous improvement, development, and performance of the study field in the implementation of its internal quality assurance system. The shortcomings highlighted in the section should be understood as recommended steps for further improvement of the quality assurance of studies.
R2 - Compliance of scientific research and artistic creation with the level of development of scientific research and artistic creation (if applicable)		Partially compliant	A more detailed (specific) plan of actions in the research area along with the deadlines set in the Study Development Plan of the FoTS could ensure the full correspondence and coverage of the development of the scientific potential of the study field in compliance with the VUAS Development Strategy for 2021–2027. The contribution of the teaching staff to the scientific publications is inconsistent (only some members are active in this process). There is a lack of joint publications with international cooperation partners and shortage of joint publications with the students.

Requirements	Requirement Evaluation		Comment
R3 - The cooperation implemented within the study field with various Latvian and foreign organizations ensures the achievement of the aims of the study field.		Partially compliant	VUAS has strong partnerships with local Latvian institutions, such as universities, employers, and municipalities. These partnerships actively support student internships, curriculum development, guest lectures, and career placements. These activities directly contribute to achieving the aims of the study field by aligning educational outcomes with industry needs and ensuring practical learning experiences. While VUAS has some international partnerships, especially through Erasmus+ and the EMT network, the extent of international cooperation is limited. There is no cooperation through other frameworks abroad, except Erasmus. There is no comprehensive strategy for internationalisation, and student mobility is low. Without a structured approach to expanding international partnerships, the potential for broader international collaboration is underutilised. Joint research initiatives with local businesses and international institutions are limited.
R4 - Elimination of deficiencies and shortcomings identified in the previous assessment of the study field, if any, or implementation of the recommendations provided.	Fully compliant		While some challenges remain such as fully integrating the French language into the curriculum due to external factors the university has made notable progress in addressing the majority of the recommendations. The measures taken demonstrate a proactive and structured approach to continuous improvement, ensuring that the study programmes meet both academic standards and the evolving needs of students and employers. Given these actions, in Expert Groups opinion VUAS has fully complied with the requirement to eliminate deficiencies and implement recommendations, thereby addressing the shortcomings identified in previous assessments.

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	Translation and Language Technology (42227)	Not relevant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Partially compliant	Average
2	Translation and Terminology (47227)	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Partially compliant	Good

The Dissenting Opinions of the Experts

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