

**Joint Report by the Committee for the Assessment of a Study Direction on the
Assessment of the Study Direction**

1. The expert shall provide an assessment in the scale of four points about each aspect in general and a concise comment, that describes the identified positive factors, deficiencies, recommendations for improving quality, possible threats, as well as provide information about the facts or materials that prove the assessment made.

2. The grade in points mainly indicates the compliance with the aims and objectives that have been set.

Scale of Assessment

No.	Explanation of the assessment of the study direction	Assessment (points)
1.	In the context of the criterion to be assessed, the study direction is on an excellent level. The performance is described by an excellent assessment in all issues subject to the particular criterion. Also on this, the highest level of the assessment, some minor deficiencies could be detected in connection with the assessment criterion, for the elimination of which major improvements are not required	4
2.	In the context of the criterion to be assessed, the study direction is on a good level, complies with all requirements. Strong points dominate, and significant deficiencies are not detected. The deficiencies that have been detected can be easily eliminated	3
3.	In the context of the criterion to be assessed the study direction meets the minimum requirements. The performance is described by a comparatively high proportion of deficiencies and significant shortcomings with respect to the specific indicator. Detailed planned long-term actions are required to eliminate these shortcomings, as well as stakeholders' support and additional resources	2
4.	In the context of the criterion to be assessed, the study direction does not meet the minimum requirements, significant deficiencies prevail	1

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Name of institution of higher education or college College of Business Administration (CBA)

Name of study direction Law Science

Study programmes of the relevant study direction Legal Assistant

Date of external assessment visit

18th – 19th October, 2016

I. Management of the Study Direction

1.1. Is the inclusion of study programmes of the relevant study direction well-grounded? Is there any succession in the study programmes of various levels? Are the codes and types of study programmes relevant?

4	<p>There is only one study programme in this study direction that CBA is entitled to offer and it is „Legal assistant“, therefore inclusion of the study programme in study direction is well-grounded.</p> <p>CBA doesn't offer higher level programmes.</p>
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1.2. Has the analysis of the strong and weak points, opportunities and threats of the study programme been performed in high-quality? Have the internal and external conditions for the development of the study direction been assessed unbiasedly?

2	<p>The self-assessment report gave an impression that CBA is perhaps one of the best higher education establishments in Latvia, however the SWOT analysis was formal. During the on-site visit it was clear that there are serious weak points that were not properly addressed. For example, problematic aspect is the employability of CBA graduates in the actual profession of legal assistants. After meeting with CBA administrative staff and employers it seemed that CBA graduates do not work as legal assistants, but instead work in other jobs. In minutes of the CBA Council meetings there were no questions about weak points and no plan how to overcome that.</p> <p>The analysis of the strong and weak points exists in self-assessment documents, but there is no even vision what to do in the future to improve the quality of study process. Annual discussions on the study direction and study program's positive, negative features, changes, development plans and possibilities, continuous operation of inner self-evaluation and quality improvement are announced but during experts visit in CBA the experts team checked the Board meeting minutes and it was evident that study process quality question in this and previous year was not included for discussion and decision.</p> <p>The strong points in SWOT included a number of potentially strong points that are thought about, partly implemented or in progress (such as possibility for students to participate in Erasmus+ programme etc.) whereas the weak points don't touch the really weak points such as library resources, outdated course material etc.). The appearance of the analysis is not evenly balanced.</p>
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1.3. Have the demands of the labour market taken into consideration in planning the development of the study direction and in its implementation?

2	<p>There is a regulation of Cabinet “Regulations regarding the State Standard for First Level Professional Higher Education” that defines the strategic objectives of a programme of college, such as: [...] to prepare a student for work in a specific profession, promoting the improvement of him or her as a mentally and physically developed, free, responsible and creative personality.</p> <p>They have to a certain extent taken into account the demands but CBA does intend to cater more for the individual needs of a diverse and scattered distance learning auditorium with different expectations towards their studies. The main scope is not to prepare specialists for the profession of a 'Legal Assistant' in the Latvian market but rather to give a good first insight into the legal system of Latvia. However with the courses taken, the graduates could possibly work as 'Legal Assistant' if they wished.</p> <p>In Self-assessment is said: „In order to perform prospective assessment of the field of study from the aspect of interests of the Republic of Latvia, the Sustainable Development Strategy of Latvia up to the year 2030 (<i>Latvia 2030</i>) was used as a guideline pinpointing the key challenges in the sphere of the higher education as one of the labour demand and supply correlation solving directions recommending to increase the supply of the first level (college) higher professional education“. During the visit it was confirmed that the main scope is not to prepare the client for the profession of a 'Legal Assistant' in the Latvian market but rather to give a good and first insight into the legal system of Latvia. It is up to graduates to decide to take or not possibility to work as 'Legal Assistant' in Latvia.</p> <p>CBA targets students, who wish to gain some legal knowledge, but do not actually want to work as legal assistants. While the experts' team has no doubt that labour market finds legal education useful for professionals working in other professions, this is not the subject of this assessment. The subject of this assessment is to assess, whether CBA graduates are able to work as legal assistants. Thus, our evaluation is whether demands of labour market for legal assistants are taken into consideration.</p> <p>That being said, this criteria to some extent is fulfilled, as available study courses correspond to the professional standard of „legal assistant“. Thus, a student who wants to become a legal assistant, could in fact do so through CBA study programme. Experts' team main concern however is the evaluation (tests, exams etc.) of students within these study courses. Legal assistants need to have a very strong knowledge of relevant law fields in order to meet the</p>
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	expectations on labour market. After reviewing some of the student exams on site visit, the team must conclude that the difficulty level of evaluation should be much higher. As graduates of CBA acquire a state recognized diploma, they must be able to demonstrate knowledge in the level that is required in the profession standard of legal assistants.
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1.4. Is the management of the implementation of the study process effective for reaching the aims set for the study direction? Is it democratic, with clearly defined obligations and responsibility of the administrative staff, the academic staff, and students?

2	<p>The CBA`s structure scheme (page 13 in self-assessment report) illustrates the organisation and hierarchy within CBA however without clarifying the composition and election structure of bodies. It seems that administration, staff and students are in good relationship, but management of studies, staff research, study courses improvement, assessment of qualification thesis should be better and closer to state formal regulations concerning studies in first level higher professional education study programme, especially in Law. The study programme should be turned to: 1. to prepare a student for work in a specific profession; 2. to promote the acquisition of knowledge and skills; 3. to create motivation for continuing education and provide an opportunity to prepare for obtaining the second level professional higher education and the fifth level professional qualification. There were no evidence of fulfilment of the mentioned above objectives. The self assessment report gives reference to Bologna process, but during the visit there were no evidence that CBA owner, academic staff, alumni are involved in motivation of students to continue their education in the second professional higher education level.</p> <p>The presentations of administrative and academic staff gave the experts` team an impression that the cooperation between the parties concerned is in a good level. Compliments to the study programme director Signe Hušeka, as the expert team was given an impression that CBA aims to improve its programme and any deficiencies in the study programme can be corrected.</p> <p>Study process has been clarified and stepped up and restructured lately to be more effective and transparent. Administration, staff and management are operable and interactions with students representatives given but the whole structure needs to be tested and reviewed in due course because some changes have been made only recently, for example, the implementation of Moodle with all its assets or the ERASMUS application.</p> <p>Site visit shows that leading of study direction is based only on CBA owner decisions without clearly defined obligations</p>
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	for academic and administrative staff, and students. There are no local legal acts ensuring obligations. There is doubt of democratic implementation of study direction.
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II. Resources and Provisions of Study Directions

2.1. Are the financial resources sufficient for the implementation of the study programmes of the relevant study direction? Is the control over their use and sustainability ensured?

1	<p>Although CBA as a private institution is entitled to make profit, it is not clear to what extent CBA law student tuition fees go towards expenses in the law study direction. Owner of CBA implied that all tuition fees go towards study expenses. However, from the numbers provided to the team this was not evident. In order to assess the financial resources for the particular study direction, the exact distribution of expenses between the study directions, as well as distribution of income between the study directions is needed. The experts' team asked for this information during the visit, but the information was not provided. We were only provided a distribution of expenses for the whole college. Expert team does not understand, how is the academic staff paid at least the minimum required by law, if there are as many as 30 academic staff in law study direction alone and the total annual expenses on academic staff for CBA are only 17 640 EUR.</p> <p>As well there is no evidence of financial support for staff research, Erasmus+ development. There is no evidence how financial resources are used especially for study programme Law.</p> <p>As CBA is a private enterprise with different entities, money is freely shifted towards where it is needed. Control and sustainability depends on owner's (board) decision. There was no evidence of boards' meeting reports/minutes improving the decision making process for budget. It makes doubt for sustainability.</p>
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2.2. Is the professionalism of the academic staff of the institution of higher education or the college involved in the implementation of the study direction sufficiently high for implementing high quality studies in the view of professional qualification in the respective field and the didactics of higher education? Is this professionalism appropriate for implementing study programmes of the relevant study direction? Do the members of teaching staff have sufficient level proficiency in English or in other foreign languages to prepare and implement a study programme or separate parts thereof in a foreign language?

2	CBA hires quality staff of all sorts of professions to include in the program, many of those being practitioners and / or lecturers in other institutions. The academic staff involved in implementation of study direction mostly is from different
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	<p>branches of science (economics, psychologists, philosophes etc.) not from legal science therefore experts` team has a doubt of implementation of professional standards of legal professions. The input and participation from scholars and practitioners of different science fields somewhat blurs the necessary focus on the essentials of law that have to be taught primarily.</p> <p>The study programme is not implemented in English or other foreign languages. Meeting with academic staff left an impression that only some of staff speak English language. However, to some extent this criteria is fulfilled.</p>
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2.3. Do the descriptions of study courses, study materials, informative base, including library resources, comply with the aims of the study programmes to be implemented in the respective study direction, their type, particularly distance learning, and a language? Are any resources planned for expanding the library resources (acquisition of literature and subscribing electronic data bases)?

2	<p>The descriptions of study courses in programme Law are not annually updated. However e-learning equipment has been implemented. Video courses are partly available There is outdated literature and regulations in Law, for instance, in the course description for "Administrative law. Administrative procedure".</p> <p>There are no future plans of CBA to expand library resources at all. CBA agreements of using another libraries are old (two libraries doesn't exist at all – Library of Academy of Police and Academic Library). The shelves with some elderly books in Law shown during the visit can't be regarded as a library. There were only words from staff that in the future the acquisition of literature and subscribing electronic data bases is planned. But only one offered data base EBSCO is not enough for studies in Law even in the first level study programme. There is no evidence that students know and use mentioned data base.</p> <p>Library resources according to the library stamps are rarely used by the students, what indicates lack of interest in additional legal knowledge. The use of Riga Graduate School of Law (RGSL) library resources by CBA students is questionable as it requires proficient knowledge of English (RGSL library contains mostly English books in specific legal spheres, e.g., tax law, sport law, commercial law, maritime law which covers only a part of CBA programme), hence, the "high level" literature on Law written for students that gain knowledge and master legal profession in English.</p> <p>It seems interesting that students are provided with textbooks made for study purposes, which, as emphasised by the staff, provide students with easily understandable prebuilt summaries of particular courses. However, academic staff should promote students to read other authors in order to gain more in depth understanding of the particular field of law. For example, we were told by Dr. Fila and Mr. Nerets that recent prof. Schewe books on</p>
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	EU law are too complicated for students. For experts` team this sounded as an excuse of not having updated course descriptions, rather than a real reason. Even though this is a first level professional higher education, the profession of legal assistant require students to have an understanding in the respective fields of law. To have an understanding it does not mean to understand only the very basics of the law. For this reason the most up-to-date literature should be one of the sources of literature, as it includes references to newest case law and doctrinal sources, even if it is considered to be “complicated”. In any case, it is academic staff responsibility to help students to understand aspects of law, even if they seem complicated.
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2.4. Are the methodological and informative provisions for the study direction, including a library, periodicals, and electronic resources, sufficient for implementing studies based on contemporary scientific findings and requirements for the professional field and for developing scientific research? Do they comply with the provisions of regulatory enactments that regulate the respective profession?

2	Methodological and informative provisions are partly sufficient for implementing studies. Study materials have to be freshened up, literature recommended has to be amended and updated and the in-house library fully re-stacked with workable, not outdated material, be it in e-form or printed version. There is no evidence that in CBA is developing real scientific research of students and academic staff. For more comments see also p. 2.3 in this report
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2.5. Are library opening times convenient for students, and do its services, equipment, arrangement facilitate independent studies?

2	<p>The library doesn`t have opening hours because library is situated in the corridor behind the transformative doors. The premises of the existing book shelves can not be regarded as a serious level library. There is no person responsible for Library; Study Support Centre is responsible for exchanging of books. Also there is no library with reading rooms, PC, etc. See p.2.3 of the experts` report.</p> <p>As long as CBA students have access to RGSL library, the opening times of this library are convenient.</p>
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2.6. Is the support by the administrative and technical staff sufficient to ensure that study outcomes are reached?

3	CBA is a client oriented institution and support is given by owner and staff where support is needed, but from the viewpoint of requirements for first level professional education – support is not sufficient because not only technical equipment works to result but also academic staff with their input to study process that
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	<p>is not in sufficient level (not updated course descriptions, literature, normative acts, case studies materials, no research planning etc).</p> <p>Moodle seems to be an efficient tool to ensure student-academic staff communication during the study process. Experts` team also was given the impression that the technical staff offers sufficient help to students.</p>
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2.7. Do the material technical provisions for the study direction, for example, specific laboratories, equipment, studies, comply with the requirements of the study programmes to be implemented in the framework of the study direction and to the development level of contemporary technologies? Are the study premises equipped with sufficient number of electricity outlets for students' portable computers?

3	<p>Study work is organised in distance learning mode. The infrastructure seems to be sufficient to organize and support students in the distance learning. Electronic equipment is in place and workable. There is no computer lab as of now because students are enrolled in a distance learning course and work from home. For contact hours mainly the facilities of the RGSL are in usage. Their classrooms are fully equipped. There is necessity for a new CBA lecture room for contact lessons that should be equipped with the necessary gadgets, to use Moodle or any other available system, for example, Hangouts to create virtual classrooms for face to face tuition, working on papers, sharing and commenting literature and court rulings etc.</p> <p>This seems to be most important as the face to face contact hours at CBA are not obligatory but a voluntary option which is quite unusual in distance learning. If the students can't travel they need to have frequent contact hours in a virtual environment, meaning more that just sharing information through Moodle.</p> <p>It seems that the technical infrastructure is sufficient if we keep in mind that this is a distance learning study programme. CBA should keep improving Moodle and add more study materials and study methods (such as recorded and real time online lectures and seminars) to improve the quality, as Moodle is the most important tool for distance learning.</p>
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III. Scientific Research and Scientific Research or Creative Work of Academic Staff and Students

3.1. Is the organisation and institutional structure of scientific research or creative work effective?

2	<p>Organisational and institutional structure of scientific research is a point of need because it seemed that there is very limited scientific research in CBA both from the academic staff and students. Research and publications done by the academic staff</p>
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	<p>mostly include only participation in conferences (such as Daugavpils University conference), but it is not always clear if anything is actually published from this participation. Furthermore, the team doubts that these publications are always accessible to students, as conference materials are rarely published online. The team did not find these materials available in RGSL library. CBA should consider promoting academic staff to publish more and particular - in online accessible sources such as <i>Jurista Vārds</i> or other law journals that are accessible through databases. Some of teachers/lecturers have the last scientific publication on 2011 or 2013 and there is no plan for scientific research for academic staff in future.</p> <p>Although it is a professional first level higher education study programme, students should be required to perform scientific research. To some extent this is fulfilled in the qualification thesis. However, experts` team was not able to review, how well students are evaluated during writing and defending of this thesis. CBA should implement mandatory recordings of all defence presentations of qualification thesis, so that the effectiveness of this process can be evaluated in next accreditation. Furthermore, this is also important in case where a dispute arises between a student and CBA regarding the qualification thesis defence. Without recording it is very difficult to conduct review of such proceedings in case of an appeal.</p> <p>There should be at least one person of administrative staff responsible for research of academic staff and students.</p>
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3.2. Are the resources allocated for research appropriate for the needs? Is the research (creation) work of the academic staff, including participation in scientific conferences or activities of artistic creation, planned in and paid for from the budget of the institution of higher education or the college?

2	<p>There is no significant input for research work or conferences for students or academic staff: the table nr.2 in self-assessment report shows in 2016 for all CBA staff qualification improvement there is 2108 EUR but for conferences and seminars 3600 EUR. It is insufficient.</p> <p>As well there is no plan for research, there is no action from owner and administrative staff to ask and involve academic staff in research.</p>
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3.3. Is the research (creation) work of the students, including participation in scientific conferences or activities of artistic creation, planned in and paid for from the budget of the institution of higher education or the college?

2	<p>In time of visit in CBA experts` team had no impression that CBA prepares or gives to students opportunities for serious</p>
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	<p>possibilities in scientific work. There is no evidence that students are motivated to take part in conferences or research activities.</p> <p>It seems that CBA has recently started to include support to student research and because of this experts` team expects improvement on this level in the next accreditation. The only research activities students perform at this stage seems to be in relation to their qualification thesis, some of which are published in student`s research article (shown only for 2016).</p>
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3.4. Are topics of the scientific research work or creative work of the academic staff relevant and related to the content of the study direction in the respective study programmes?

2	<p>Academic staff is mainly practitioners and it affects the research work. In self-assessment report (p. 158-167) could be found only 5 lecturers with research publications in legal science (J. Dinsberga 2016; R. Fila 2013; V. Nerets 2015; N. Ozoliņš 2013; V. Ulmane 2013).</p> <p>Academic staff as practitioners has a focus on practically oriented conferences, papers published at conferences etc. Some of it might have an impact in the practically oriented studies of the students.</p>
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3.5. Are topics of the scientific research work or creative work of the students relevant and related to the content of the study direction and respective study programmes?

2	<p>The process of scientific research work of students is at initial stages only. The experts` team was provided by Students Research Article 2016 but this material couldn`t be consider as students` research work. This book is compilation of students` qualification works. To the limited extent student`s research is conducted, it seems to relate to the content of the study direction.</p>
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3.6. Have research outcomes been published in internationally available and reviewed editions (exhibitions, shows, performances, etc.) and used in practice?

1	<p>The publication of research outcomes is not performed according to international academic standards but that would probably be asked for too much for first level professional higher education.</p>
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3.7. Is the study programme linked to related grants or projects?

1	<p>There is no evidence from CBA that CBA has any project or grant.</p>
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3.8. Other comments, if any, with regard to the implementation of science-based studies in the framework of the study direction.

Research seems to be a reasonably new topic with staff and students. There have not organised any scientific conference for students or academic staff since last accreditation. It is starting to evolve and it remains unclear where it may go quantity and quality wise. The higher education institutions of college level of education in the past had the distinct impression that scientific research was not their concern.

There should be a significant increase in the number of academic publications of academic staff, preferably in sources that are accessible to students such as *Jurista Vārds* or other academic journals available through databases. The qualification thesis defence process should be recorded, so that it can be reviewed during accreditation.

IV. Cooperation and Internationalisation

4.1. Do the students in the study direction have the possibility to acquire separate study modules, study courses, or take a traineeship (fully or partially) in the study programmes of other Latvian institutions of higher education or colleges?

2	<p>The study is a distance learning only study. If students would choose to take courses and modules elsewhere, the acquired credits would be transferred according to the Bologna principles as administrative staff has assured. Currently CBA has no procedure in place how this administrative process would be tackled. No such case and no materials concerning the approval process according to Bologna principles have been presented by CBA.</p> <p>This is not emphasised by the college, but there could not be problems to do so.</p>
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4.2. Are there any possibilities to acquire separate study modules, study courses or take a traineeship (fully or partially) in the study programmes of foreign institutions of higher education or colleges, for example, are there any cooperation agreements concluded on implementing joint study programmes or study modules, exchange of the academic staff?

2	<p>Possibilities are not on a working level. International cooperation, language skills, mobility of students and staff as well as the availability of Erasmus+ grants, have to be stepped up considerably and immediately but it is not possible at the moment of accreditation. There is mentioned some agreement for cooperation with different institutions in self-assessment report but most of them are not for legal assistant programme. There are no joint study programmes or modules, or agreement for taking a traineeship.</p>
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4.3. Is the exchange of the academic staff and the implementation of other cooperation projects taking place?

2	<p>There is no exchange of academic staff or cooperation projects at all. For example, Erasmus+ mobility for academic staff. This is</p>
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	<p>a question about strategy and priority to develop competencies and experience of staff.</p> <p>CBA is starting to plan activities for Erasmus+ mobility programme.</p>
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4.4. Is the international mobility of students, the implementation of ERASMUS and other cooperation projects ensured?

2	<p>CBA doesn't have any international mobility of students and academic staff. Based on words – CBA is waiting for joining Erasmus+ project from 2017 but there was no documents/ evidence shown improving this.</p>
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4.5. Does the cooperation with employers' organisations and other partners of cooperation leave any impact upon the implementation of the study direction?

2	<p>There is some cooperation with employers for traineeship, but no cooperation to improve study direction and programme Law in it. During the meeting with employers it was concluded that some of them are CBA lecturers, some are potential not existing employers that prevent to get full assessment of CBM cooperation with employers and their point of view in connection of skills of legal assistants which they must have in the labour market in Latvia.</p> <p>Those employers who participated in the meeting were mostly self-employed or small employers who objectively can not offer comprehensive internship opportunities for students.</p>
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4.6. Other comments, if any, regarding the management of the study direction and cooperation with Latvian and international partners.

2	<p>The cooperation with international partners on a working level is poor. It was mentioned that sometimes foreign visiting lecturers come to CBA, but of course there is always room for improvement. CBA must develop cooperation with foreign higher education institutions in international level and employers in internship aspects.</p>
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V. Quality Assurance and Guarantees

5.1. Does the quality assurance policy, its development and publicity, assessing, whether and to what extent comply with the following requirement: "Institutions of higher education and colleges shall develop policy for quality assurance, which shall be publicly available and form a part of the institution's strategic management? Internal stakeholders shall develop and implement this policy, by applying appropriate structures and processes, and by involving external stakeholders."?

2	<p>Annual discussions on the study direction's and study program's positive, negative features, changes, development plans and possibilities, continuous operation of inner self-evaluation and quality improvement are announced but during experts visit in CBA by checking the Board meeting minutes the experts team did not find evidence that study process quality question in this and previous year was included for discussion and decision.</p> <p>The quality assurance policy should be improved. It isn't enough only to prepare a questionnaire for employers or to put on the internet self-assessment report for one year. Quality assurance at CBA needs institutionalization, structure and administrative attendance (e.g. evaluation procedures etc.). There should be created a system how to evaluate work of lecturers, content of study courses, cooperation with employers etc.</p>
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5.2. Does the development and approval of study programmes, continuous monitoring of the quality of study programmes, comply, assessing whether and to what extent with the following requirement: "An institution of higher education or a college shall establish mechanisms for the development and approval of study programmes. The programmes shall be developed in a way to make them comply with the aims that have been set, *inter alia*, the intended study outcomes. The qualification to be acquired in the programme shall be clearly defined and explained, and it shall refer to the correct level in the national qualifications infrastructure of higher education and, thus, also to the qualifications framework of the European Higher Education Area."?

2	<p>CBA does not have a serious plan or strategy how to develop CBA as higher education institution and private company as well. Control and repercussion mechanisms have to set up more diligently. A survey from time to time wouldn't be sufficient.</p> <p>Not only monitoring and quality development systems have to be in place, but they should also be conducted effectively. CBA can implement certain courses to move towards business specialization; however the profession standard of legal assistant must be kept in mind. If consultations with employers are used, CBA should ask the opinion of employers that hire legal assistants.</p> <p>There ought to be CBA regulations on study process quality: methodical work with administrative and academic staff and students; unit or at least one person from administrative staff is responsible for quality of study process; quality of study process should be planned annually; inner examination (assessment) of study process quality should be introduced; in examination (assessment) of study process quality should be involved administrative and academic staff, alumni, employers; to introduce real questionnaire to get feedback about quality of study process and its results from employers, alumni, society.</p>
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	Otherwise these consultations could lead to programme development, which is not consistent with the profession standard.
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5.3. Does the ensuring of a student-centred study process, the assessment of students' performance comply, assessing whether and to what extent with the following requirement: "The institution of higher education or the college shall ensure that the study programmes are delivered in a way that encourages students to take an active role in the developing the study process, and the assessment of students shall reflect this approach."?

2	<p>There is no information that students have any active role in developing study programme Law. Students feedback, complaints management, contentment, other input do take place but not in a clearly structured way that would lead to a 'hand in hand ' approach between students and institution.</p> <p>Students informed experts` team that there are questionnaires and that sometimes their assessment on certain elements of study process is taken into account. It does not seem that there is a more advanced system in place to enable students to take active role in the study process. To some extent this could be an issue with student's inactivity due to the distance learning. Perhaps CBA has to consider some additional ways to promote student activity not only financing of student's parliament.</p>
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5.4. Do the rules of admission, studying and graduation, procedures, their publicity and compliance, comply, assessing whether and to what extent, with the following requirement: "The institution of higher education or the college shall consistently apply pre-determined and published regulations covering all phases of the student "life cycle" - –student admission, progression, recognition, and conferring the degree."?

3	System is in place but there are no published requirements for student's progression and recognition.
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5.5. Do the mechanisms for recruiting academic staff and their continuous professional development comply with, assessing whether and to what extent, with the following requirement: "An institution of higher education or a college shall assure themselves of the competence of its teaching staff. Fair and transparent mechanisms shall be used in staff recruitment and professional development."?

2	<p>There is no formal and practical information how the academic staff recruitment and quality assessment process is organized.</p> <p>Although the quality and availability of academic staff is usually connected to the remuneration available to academic staff members, especially in private education institutions, it is evident that almost all law related academic staff members do not practice law in any of the special law professions or regularly publish in recognized legal literature. That being said, expert team cannot subjectively evaluate staff members, but instead</p>
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	<p>point to certain criteria and recruiting mechanisms in place. It has to be further developed.</p> <p>There should be created a document/strategy for academic staff competence's development.</p>
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5.6. Does the management of study information: acquisition of data and use thereof in decision taking comply with, assessing, whether and to what extent the following requirement: "The institution of higher education or the college shall ensure that it collects, analyses, and uses information necessary for effective management of study programmes and other activities."?

2	<p>There are results of questionnaires for employers and graduates but it is under doubt whether they are taken into attention for developing CBA.</p> <p>It was mentioned that CBA management has been acquainted with similar distance learning institutions in other institutions in Latvia and abroad. Furthermore, there seems to be cooperation with graduates and employers to some extent.</p>
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5.7. Does the public published information about the activities of the institution of higher education or the college, the content of information, ways of disseminations and feed-back from society comply, assessing whether and to what extent with the following requirement: "An institution of higher education or a college shall inform about its activities (study programmes including). Information shall be clear, accurate, unbiased, relevant, and easily available."?

2	<p>CBA has a website with some relevant information about college, study programmes, admission rules, and the self-assessment report for one year, etc. There is no information on academic staff, owners, board, and students' activities. It is more used like a marketing tool.</p>
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5.8. Does the periodic external quality assessment comply, assessing whether and to what extent comply with the following requirement: "An institution of higher education or a college shall conduct periodic external quality assurance."?

2	<p>In the self-assessment report (p.26) is mentioned that internal quality system has been introduced in CBA but there was no evidence in practice how does it work and work at all. It seems that there is no other external quality assurance in place, other than accreditation, consultations with employers, graduates and other parties.</p>
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6. The implementation of recommendations received during the previous accreditation, if any.

2	<p>Almost all of the recommendations have been addressed - minority of them sufficiently, a majority with ongoing endeavours and some in planning or application stages.</p> <p>CBA has implemented previous recommendations to some extent, however due to the recommendations sometimes being very general it is difficult to properly assess their implementation. Examples: development and usage of elearning is met by implementing Moodle, the question of ,internationalization‘ was met by implementing a course and trying to make links for student and lecturer exchange, avail of grant and mobility systems (ERASMUS) is still in the making.</p> <p>Please see also information on point 21 in the experts’ report.</p>
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VI. Assessment of a Study Programme

Legal Science

(name of study direction)

Law (code 41380)

(name and code of study programme of relevant study direction)

Note: in the case that the study programme is implemented in several languages, in several forms of studies, particularly as distance learning and at branches, each criterion shall be assessed with regard to each version of the implementation of the study programme.

Scale of Assessment

No.	Explanation of assessment of study programme	Assessment (points)
1.	In the context of the criterion to be assessed, the study programme is on an excellent level. The performance is described by an excellent assessment in all issues subject to the particular criterion. Also on this, the highest level of assessment, some minor deficiencies could be detected in connection with the assessment criterion, for the elimination of which major improvements are not required.	4
2.	In the context of the criterion to be assessed, the study programme is on a good level, complies with all requirements. Strong points dominate, and significant deficiencies are not observed. The deficiencies that have been detected can be easily eliminated.	3
3.	In the context of the criterion to be assessed, the study programme meets the minimum requirements. The performance is described by a comparatively high proportion of deficiencies and significant shortcomings with respect to the specific indicator. Detailed planned long-term actions are required to eliminate the shortcomings, as well as stakeholders’ support and additional resources.	2
4.	In the context of the criterion to be assessed the study programme does not meet the minimum requirements, significant deficiencies prevail.	1

1. Does the content of the study programme and the degree, professional qualification or the degree and professional qualification to be conferred comply with the name of the study programme?

2	<p>Students (said by owner and students) study for their own needs in business or other activities, but not for joining market as legal assistants. Study programme is more like self-education courses not higher education of first level. Graduates could probably work as 'Legal Assistants' in reality they use the qualification as intermediate stage, complementary study or necessary information for business purposes</p> <p>While the study courses and name of the programme correspond to the professional qualification legal assistants, in reality it seems that CBA targets students that do not want to work in this profession, but instead gain some legal knowledge in addition to another profession. While this is fine, it is required that graduates of this study programme are actually able to work as legal assistants. That being said, the list of courses and professional qualification complies with the name of the programme.</p>
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2. Are the admission rules of the study programme appropriate for the aims and objectives of the study programme?

3	<p>There are the admission rules for legal assistant programme but they are very common. There are no conditions for specific subjects of centralized examinations (for example, history, and foreigner language).</p>
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3. Does the content of the study programme comply with the aims and objectives set for the study programme?

2	<p>There is mentioned in self-assessment report (p.28) the aim of the program – to train high level associate lawyers by using advantages of distance education study format. The programme is based on professional standard of legal assistant but the content of the study programme complies with the aims and objectives to some extent, as there are numerous of courses which support business specialization, however greater attention should be directed towards law and skills needed in practice.</p> <p>This criteria to some extent is fulfilled, as available study courses correspond to the professional standard of „legal assistant“. Thus, a student who wants to become a legal assistant, could in fact do so through CBA study programme. The main concern however is the evaluation (tests, exams etc.) of students within these study courses. Legal assistants need to have a very strong knowledge of relevant law fields in order to meet the expectations on labour market. After reviewing some of the student exams on site visit, experts` team must conclude that the difficulty level of evaluation</p>
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	<p>should be much higher. For example, if a student in an administrative law exam is asked to name some examples of normative acts (normatīvs akts) in public law and then writes „Krimināltiesības“ as the answer, he clearly lacks knowledge of fundamentals of theory of law to complete the particular study course and work as a legal assistant. Even if the student was active during course and some answers to other questions were correct, to award such student with a positive mark in the particular exam, gives a false impression to this student about his level of understanding of the law. As graduates of CBA acquire a state recognized diploma, they must be able to demonstrate knowledge in the level that is required in the profession standard of legal assistants.</p> <p>Furthermore, experts` team is not confident that online tests, where student has 90+ minutes to complete such tests are a good way how to assess student`s knowledge. If they are conducted online, they should have a very small amount of time in which to complete these tests (so that it is impossible to search for answers) or consider using questions in form of solving a case study (kāzuss), where the implementation of theory is tested. As this is a professional study programme, case studies should be used more often.</p>
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4. Does the content of the study programme comply with the degree, degree and professional qualification or professional qualification (standard of profession) to be conferred, as well as to the requirements of the qualifications framework?

2	<p>The content of the study programme complies to a sufficient extent but it clearly is client oriented and attractive for students who wish to acquire a broad overview on Latvian legal practice rather than for students who want to take up the profession of a 'Legal Assistant'. Only few of the programme students are planning to work as legal assistants (as mentioned in commissions` meeting with administrative board and owner of CBA only 5% of graduates work in profession), they looked to this education more like self-education courses.</p> <p>A substantial amount of credits are used in numerous of courses that are not law related. While some of these courses are acceptable to ensure a more business oriented specialization, more credits should be spent on law courses. Some study courses, which are essential for legal assistant of any specialization, such as, legal theory/legal analysis, legal interpretation methods and constitutional law could use more study time and credits.</p>
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5. Does the content of studies in the programmes of academic and doctoral studies comply with the most recent findings in the respective branch of science?

	This criteria is not applicable.
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6. Does the students' workload in the acquisition of the study programme comply with the work of 40 academic hours per one credit point?

	This criteria is not applicable.
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7. Is the traineeship in professional study programmes related to the theoretical part and complies with its content? Has the organisation and the management of traineeship been developed in a study programme (if it is a professional study programme) in compliance with the aims of the study programme? Have the objectives of the traineeship been clearly defined, and are instructions and rules accessible and controlled?

2	<p>A system seems to be in place: there are two traineeships in study programme. Both of them are related with theoretical part of study programme. Students seem to be allowed to get their traineeship at their own liking. They have to pass a control test procedure afterwards though. There remains the issue of students outside Latvia who are allowed to get training in foreign institutions, where are other law systems.</p> <p>But there was an exception mentioned by director of programme (who is responsible for implementation of study programme) when student lives abroad and there wasn't possibility to take traineeship in Latvia. This traineeship was replaced with "very difficult" test. It means CBA freely interprets regulation of Cabinet Nr. 141 (Article 4).</p>
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8. Is the plan of the study programme and the content of study courses, and modules of high quality, and comply with the aims and objectives of the study programme and the planned study outcomes?

2	<p>In some cases the plan of study programme is without logical planning (commerce law and labour law are on the 1st semester). During the visit experts' team asked the staff members, why commercial law course is before general civil law course and was told that it is because of CBA commercial law specialization.</p> <p>This is one of the reasons why students were showing general lack of understanding in the fundamentals of law in some of the exams we viewed and during our interview with students in the visit. Courses should be structured in a logical way to ensure that law courses are taught starting with general law courses (i.e. legal theory, civil law, constitutional law) to special (commercial law, labour law). Otherwise it is not possible to effectively learn special law courses, because students lack the general knowledge necessary to understand the specific law elements.</p>
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9. In the case that the study programme is implemented in the form of distance learning, are there any specially structured study materials, an individualised pace of learning intended in the organisation of the study process, particularly an organised assessment of study achievements, as well as the use of diverse technical and electronic means of communication?

2	The distance learning is the only one way of study process. Students and academic staff use the Moodle platform. Communication is very individual and organized good. Students can use video clips in Moodle platform and materials of CBA, but it seems that they are not updated annually. For example, materials in Labour law and EU law are out of date.
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10. Do the admission requirements comply with reaching of study outcomes and does the admission of students proceed in accordance with the approved procedures and criteria?

3	Admission requirements are very overall. There are only conditions for secondary education with centralized examinations. See also p.2.
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11. Is there any possibility to recognise prior non-formal education and professional experience, and is it used?

2	Students mentioned that this is a problem: there was difficulties to recognize non-formal education of IT course. The student had to take the study course of programme without reorganization of non-formal education. That being said, while recognition mechanism should be in place, it also should be noted that the non-formal education must comply with CBA and legal assistant profession quality standards.
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12. Do the final theses or other indicators prove that the study outcomes have been reached? Is this approved by the graduates of the study programme and employers?

2	<p>There are no strong evidences of reaching study outcomes. Qualification theses are evaluated by commission which is composed against the regulation of Cabinet. The experts` team was provided with minutes 05.06.2015. Nr.04-03/15-027, minutes 21.01.2015. Nr.04-03/14-208 (four members), minutes 21.01.2016. Nr. 04-03/16-033 and they shows that structure of qualification exam commissions was formed contrary above mentioned requirements, which request. „the head of the Council and at least half of the composition of the Council shall be representatives of professional organisations or employers in the field.“There can not be situation that commission is composed from four members, because it is contrary to Article 14 of regulations of Cabinet Nr. 141 (adapted 20 of March 2001.) where is said “The Council for the State final examination shall comprise the head of the Council and at least four members of the Council. That means in commission must be five members.</p> <p>It is difficult to assess if a proper mechanism of evaluating students is in place, if there are no recordings of the defence procedures of the thesis.</p>
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	Graduates' preparedness to work in the labour market of Latvia as a legal assistant may be questioned from the point of view of competitiveness, because study programme more looks like similar to self-education not first level of higher education
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13. Does the development, approval and update of programmes take place in accordance with the procedure approved by the management of the study direction?

2	Development and update of study programme needs improvement. There is no special procedure for development of study programme.
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14. Does the planning and supervision of the learning (study) process, the acquisition of the programme and quality control take place in accordance with the procedure approved by the management of the study direction?

2	There is no special procedure for planning and supervision of study process. No input of employers for evaluation of the study process. Supervision process needs improvement. Procedure has to be better institutionalized and monitored.
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15. Does the development, update and use of study course descriptions take place in accordance with the procedure approved by the management of the study direction?

2	The development of updating and using of study course descriptions are doubtful. All study courses should be actualized once per year (mentioned during meetings) but there is no control of that. For example Labour Law course description is not upgraded as minimum for 2 years because it contains outdated literature. The course descriptions should be updated annually by also adding the newest literature.
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16. Is the professionalism of the academic staff of the institution of higher education or the college involved in the implementation of study programme sufficiently high for the implementation of high quality studies, in the view of professional qualification in the respective sector and didactics of higher education? Do the faculty members have sufficient level proficiency in English or in other foreign languages to prepare and implement a study programme or a separate part thereof in a foreign language?

2	<p>The professional level of academic staff seems to be rather high but academic staff involved in implementation of study direction mostly is from different branches of science (economics, psychologists, philosophes etc.) not from legal science.</p> <p>Study programme is not implemented in English or other foreign languages but meeting with academic staff made the experts' team an impression that only some of staff speaks English language.</p>
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	Didactical training has not so far taken place but is planned and language skills are only in part present. Only some of the academic staff would be able to communicate in English which would be an obstacle in the unplanned internationalization process.
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17. Is the methodological and informative provision of the study programme, including library books, periodicals and electronic resources, sufficient for implementing studies based on relevant scientific findings and requirements of the professional field and for the development of scientific research? Does it comply with the provisions of regulatory enactments that regulate the respective professions? Is the mandatory literature included in course descriptions available at the library in sufficient quantity?

2	Study programme is carried out by e-learning. In CBA is not enough resources for study programme, only the hand-out CBA books are always available to students in a book shelves in the hall. Other literature is available in RGSL library, but only in limited amount. Data bases are not used, students use municipal libraries near the residential area. There are not enough resources for study programme.
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18. Do the material technical provisions for the study programme, for example, specific laboratories, equipment, studios, comply with the requirements of the study programme to be implemented in the framework of the study programme and the development level of contemporary technologies?

3	For e-learning study programme technical support is sufficient. Moodle platform can be considered as good technical support for e-learning students. But for another support should be some improvement (see for example p. 2.7.).
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19. Does the compliance and improvement of the infrastructure, informative and technical provision necessary for the implementation of programmes proceed in accordance with the procedure approved by the management of the study direction?

2	There is no procedure or plan for realization of legal assistant programme. Study process organization is satisfactory, but CBA must have a development plan for the study programme "Legal assistant".
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20. Is the study programme sustainable in view of the employment of graduates?

1	The study programme is not sustainable. The focus of the program is not aiming at producing a 'Legal assistant' as such but graduates could work as legal assistant' if they choose (as mentioned by owner of CBA only 5% of graduates work in profession).
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	The study programme is organized more like self-education courses not higher level education, it raising doubts about its competitiveness.
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21. The implementation of recommendations (if any given) received in the framework of the previous accreditation of a study direction (if any) or licensing the study programme.

2	<p>CBA has implemented previous recommendations to some extent, however due to the recommendations sometimes being very general it is difficult to properly assess their implementation.</p> <p>For example, recommendations given in the previous accreditation of a study direction about including in programme Law study course International public law is not done. The explanation that European law is now included in programme is not justified. And it does not meet the requirements concerning studies in First level higher professional education study programme Law.</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>The profession standard „legal assistant” includes the study course „International Public Rights” (as seen in the site: http://visc.gov.lv/profizglitiba/dokumenti/standarti/ps0215.pdf); this course has to be included in this study programme; There is no separate study course but some articles are included in different study courses (such as: Commercial Law). Recommendation is implemented partly;</i> - <i>The self-assessment of the study direction and study programme „Legal science” has to be completed each academic year; the last self-assessment report of the CBA study programme refers to academic year 2011/2012; http://www.bvk.lv/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/talmacibas-studiju-programma-jurisprudence-un-tiesibu-zinatnes-pasnovertejums.pdf . The last and only one publicly available self-assessment report is for 2015. Recommendation is implemented formally.</i> - <i>Taking into account the peculiarities and specifics of the CBA distance learning programme „Legal science” in its implementation, it should be necessary to take intermediate tests as well in the study courses. CBA has tests for evaluating students` knowledge but tests are very easy. CBA doesn` t check the real knowledge of students; there is a doubt of fulfilling the requirements for a qualification of legal assistant. Tests should be updated to show the real knowledge of students. Recommendation is implemented partly.</i> - <i>The video lecture materials have to be renewed and updated in shorter periods of time (once in two years). Formally recommendation is implemented but video materials are not for all study courses and not for all study courses` themes.</i> - <i>The CBA needs with a target to optimise the study process and to raise the quality of the study direction and study programme, a regular and closer linkage and permanent communication with the graduates of the study programme. It is difficult to evaluate implementation of this recommendation: communication with graduates is mentioned</i>

only in self-assessment report as refers to the questionnaire. Questionnaire is without date and year. Implementation is formal.

- *In the optional part of this study programme, according to experts, should have more courses related with the legal science (for example, taxation and financial rights, insurance rights, etc.).* This recommendation is not implemented.
- *The experts admit that the CBA should select its speciality direction of the study programme „Legal science”, which taking into account the optional study courses, would ensure an acquisition of specific legal sciences.* For example, CBA has a specialization in Commercial Law but it hasn't implement the bases of Civil Law. Commercial Law should be after Civil Law. Recommendation is implemented partly.
- *Signe Huseka, the study programme manager, should stay in Latvia for a longer time in order to provide a more efficient management of this study direction and programme.* As far experts' team has information, this recommendation is implemented.
- *The CBA should improve the IT resources and their usage potential at the college, including an Access to various data bases.* Access is possible from students' home or RGSL but students' don't use this possibility.
- *The potential of students' self-government should be attracted and used more in the organization of the study process and its update.* There is little impact of students' self-government to legal assistant programme as students' self-government started to work only this autumn. Recommendation is not implemented;
- *The CBA should use the offers and resources by the ERASMUS according to its potential and especially for the academic staff and the administrative staff.* It's still open for implementation. The external decision for joining ERASMUS+ is planned for March 2017

22. Recommended measures and tasks to be mandatorily performed for eliminating the deficiencies and shortcomings that have been detected for the improvement and development of the study programme.

Statement:

The experts' team recommends to accredit the study direction Legal Science of College of Business Administration for a period of 2 years and lists the following recommendations that have to be implemented until the next accreditation: The recommendations have to be put in a development plan with strict dedication, timeframe and responsible persons.

Recommendations:

All recommendations are to be understood in the context of comments expressed in other sections of this expert's report.

- 1) to develop 7 years strategy for CBA and legal assistant programme officially confirmed by board of CBA;

- 2) to establish internal quality assurance system including evaluation, assessment of materials etc. have to be institutionalized according to the development plan for study direction in Law;
- 3) to develop the strategy of improving and supporting academic staff's scientific development, including support for scientific paper publications. To identify responsible person for academic staff and students research development;
- 4) to develop strategy how to improve students' scientific work (organize conferences, study works as researches e.t.c.);
- 5) to develop methodological paper for students' scientific works and/or doing a qualification thesis how to do a scientific work in legal science;
- 6) to create and publish requirements for student's progression and recognition (see point. 5.4.);
- 7) to create a strategy for academic staff training and development;
- 8) urgently update library resources inhouse. Get students to use different books, databases, court rulings. They need to learn that for practice;
- 9) urgently review the curriculum to come to a logical course piling (e.g. civil law first, then specialized law fields);
- 10) urgently update all study materials and lists of recommended literature;
- 11) to supplement C (free choice) part of programme with more options of study courses for legal science;
- 12) review and adapt process of traineeship so that a controllable and sufficient training (practice) in Latvia can be achieved for all students;
- 13) to step up internationalization and mobility;
- 14) upgrade tests for checking students' knowledge;
- 15) the qualification thesis defence process should be recorded, so that it can be reviewed during accreditation to ensure that methods and complexity of student evaluation is up to the requirements set in legal assistant profession standard;
- 16) to cooperate with employers (during study process and assessment) that actually employ legal assistants (such as attorneys at law) to see what they expect from CBA students and graduates;
- 17) to arrange a lecture room for contact lessons equipped with the necessary gadgets;
- 18) any other recommendations that were implied in the study direction and study programme assessment, but is not mentioned in this paragraph.

23. Other information, comments by the committee for the assessment of a study direction or an individual expert.

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