Expert group joint opinion

Evaluation Procedure: Assessment of Study Field

Higher Education Institution: University of Latvia

Study field: Information and Communication Sciences

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

The study field of Information and Communication Science (ICS) has an important role in both the academic work of developing the scientific discipline and preparing professionals who work in communication and information-related professional sectors, which include mass media, businesses, libraries, and many other entities.

The study field is well-managed, with clear and reasonably ambitious goals for development. It exhibits certain ambitions for internationalisation, which are evident in international cooperation and participation in the Erasmus+ exchange scheme, but in the absence of immediate plans for study programmes in English, more attention should be placed on the internationalisation of its current educational offering. New approaches to communicating the strengths of the study programmes to local audiences should be tried out – including approaches involving the graduates, employers, and other stakeholders – to communicate the strengths and key values of the offered study programmes. The administrative structure of the study field is clear, but it should explore new ways to include students and employers in the relevant committees or councils assigning them more precise roles.

The quality assurance system is adequate, and significant progress can be observed since the previous accreditation in this regard. The relevant documentation has been produced and/or made available online, although more information about the measures within the quality assurance system should be published. The procedures for the development and review of study programmes feedback mechanisms have been defined, and a system of annual reporting exists.

A system to determine the financial resources required for the implementation of the study field and the relevant study programmes is in place. Funds needed to implement the study programmes come from the state budget and tuition fees, and the expenses include the financial support the faculty staff need for research-related activities. Investments in the development of study quality and research of the study are being made. The resources available to students and faculty staff are adequate, including auditoriums, multimedia facilities, software, a library, and databases. A standard system and procedures for upgrading and purchasing the material, and informative, methodological, and technical resources are in place. Procedures exist for the attraction of highly skilled teaching staff for the ICS and its study programmes. The selection and recruitment process of candidates for elective posts and acting staff is transparent and takes place according to the relevant regulations. Career advancement and the renewal of staff successfully take place under these conditions. The Human Resources Development Plan for 2022-2027 is a key instrument that sets individual goals for the staff members and tracks their performance. Qualification improvement processes for the faculty staff also take place. The workload is split between teaching and research duties, which is good from the perspective of research integration in the study process but creates burnout risks. Students are provided with academic support, career development support, and psychological support.

The ability to attract and support good academic staff have created pre-conditions for high-quality research output. The faculty staff regularly participates in research projects, publishes their works, and organises and attends scientific events. The research activities are in line with the strategies on the UL and FSS levels. University- and faculty-level policies promote the research activity of the academic staff. The publishing record of the academic staff involved in the study field is solid, although it would be advisable to put more emphasis on quality, rather than quantity of publications. The results of the research projects are being integrated into the study content. Students also are given opportunities to participate in research projects, although their willingness and capability to do so, naturally, differs considerably.

The study field has strong ties with local institutions of various kinds, including professor councils,

employers of graduates, and research institutions in other entities. It organises summer school in digital humanities, hosts the UNESCO Chair on Media and Information Literacy and engages in many other inter-institutional activities.

The development of international academic ties takes place, and the study field has accumulated a broad network of local and international partners. They participate in international scientific conferences, work on joint projects and engage in other activities together with other research institutions. However, a lot of unrealized potential exists in international relationships. Participation in some of the key international organisations, most notably "iSchools," is yet to bear fruit.

The study field has shown good progress in implementing many of the recommendations that were drafted during the previous accreditation. Others are in process, which is understandable given the short time that has passed since the previous accreditations. However, the study field needs to keep working on implementing the rest, with a particular emphasis on long-term recommendations.

ICS encompasses two departments at the FSS and offers two bachelor's and two master's level study programmes. The Department of Communication studies hosts the bachelor's study programme "Communication studies" and the master's study programme "Communication science." The Department of Information and Library Studies develop the bachelor's study programme "Information management" and the master's study programme "Librarian science and information." These all have mostly clear goals and learning outcomes and are aimed at preparing professionals for the job market in the respective industries, but at the same time offer academic education, which recognizes the importance of research skills.

The bachelor's study programme "Communication studies" is the most popular one. It offers two sub-programmes: "Business communication" and "Media studies," which allows it to adjust to the demands of the labour market. The demand for students in communication-related industries, which generally is a good sign, contributes to the dropout rate and risks negatively impacting the quality of the acquired education, because students may not be able to pay full attention to their studies. The employers interviewed as part of the preparation of this report were generally positive about the graduates of this programme though, but they noted insufficient creativity skills. The study programme generally is well-managed, with new courses introduced and the existing ones updated regularly and utilising feedback from employers and students themselves.

The master's study programme "Communication science" utilises the same approach to specialisation and offers the sub-programmes "Business communication" and "Media studies." While the logic behind this decision may be the same as that regarding the bachelor's programme, it is not a given that this approach works equally well. This is evidenced by the fluctuating levels of student enrollment during the past years, which, coupled with dropout, signals the fragility of the study programme. The contents of the study programme and the qualification degree are based on the up-to-date research results, conducted by the academic faculty. The students are involved in supervising bachelor students' course projects.

The academic bachelor's study programme "Information Management" offers an education that is highly sought-after by various memory institutions, such as libraries and archives, but it could be equally valuable to many other organisations that work with information. The lack of appreciation for this study programme in the private sector, along with the sad reality that the state-funded memory institutions do not offer high salaries could drive away some of the potential students from the good study programme. Increasing the desirability and public visibility of this study programme is one of the long-term challenges for the management of the programme. The teaching staff of the programme is highly qualified, but for the sake of strengthening international integration, the academic staff of the study programme should pay more attention to publishing research works in high-quality international journals, too.

The academic master's study programme "Librarian Science and Information" also has an important role in providing academic knowledge, skills, and competencies as well as satisfying the demand of the job market. Students who enrol in this programme are not only those who have graduated from

the "Information management" programme but also those who have created professional careers in memory institutions without previous education in the relevant studies, and master's studies in this field help them to advance their careers further. The number of students could be higher, though, although a recent upward trend in enrollment can be observed. The contents of the study programme are topical, and a strong link with practitioners and stakeholder institutions (such as the National Library of Latvia) is being maintained in it. The teaching staff is highly qualified, but relatively many of them are primarily affiliated with other departments, rather than the Department of Information and Library Studies. While this can be interpreted as a welcome signal of interdisciplinarity, it also raises questions about the strength of the department as the centre for the development of library science as a separate scientific discipline.

I - Assessment of the Study Field

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1.1 Management of the Study Field

Analysis

The goals of the study field "Information and Communication Science" (hereinafter – ICS) are defined according to the University of Latvia (hereinafter – UL) Strategy 2021 – 2027 (Self-Evaluation Report (hereinafter – SER, p. 18). They relate to the six UL development directions. In addition, the ICS study field goals also correspond with the strategy of the UL Faculty of Social Sciences (hereinafter – FSS) (SER, p. 19). Moreover, it is emphasised that the formulation of the goals is also grounded in the conclusions and recommendations of the last evaluation by an expert group, which concluded that the goals were clearly defined, but just conditionally attainable. The SER substantiates that the currently formulated goals are well balanced out among the ULs, the Faculty and the current external situation in society and industry, and are achievable, executable, and measurable. It is stated that the UL and UL's ICS study field's study programs are the flagship and exemplary content programs, their graduates work in various prominent institutions, and the academic staff are leading in both research and study areas. Detailed analysis of comparing the UL ICS programmes to similar programmes in Latvia is provided and the unique strengths and characteristics are listed. For example, "The bachelor's study programme "Information Management" and the master's study programme "Library Science and Information" are not offered by any other higher education institutions of Latvia." (SER, p. 21). Moreover, the SER mentions that the UL and study field follow the Nordic study model, but also emphasises the importance of interdisciplinarity, which is exemplary in the US. This is evidenced by the provision of sub-programmes (such as „Business communication" and „Media studies") to the students. In addition, the SER states on page 21 that according to the data from October 1, 2021, 66% of all students at the Faculty, study in the ICS study field. This displays the interest in this study field from the student perspective. However, in addition to the student opinion, it is stated that they are in demand in the labour market as well, based on employer recommendations. These statements were evidenced during the expert group's meetings with the students, graduates and employers. In addition, the study field and the programmes are designed to adhere to various international and national legal documents, requirements and procedures. The international perspectives and standards are mentioned as aspects used for benchmarking, but also as ambitions for further strengthening the internationalisation of studies. Upon the expert group's meeting with the management representatives, the experts received information that the UL is in an intensive collaboration with international partners from the European University consortium/ alliance. This is certainly a path for diverse opportunities in creating mutual study content, academic staff and student exchanges, and cooperating on research activities. The Dean of the Faculty mentioned during the meeting that at this point the Faculty did not have immediate plans for creating new programs in English. However,

the staff shared brief observations regarding some intentions to perhaps offer a new programme in English. This is a plausible idea, considering the internationalisation strategy and goals, regardless, the staff need to agree on its vision and the feasibility of the current ideas regarding the programme. Moreover, the expert group received information on very clear goals for the human resources development strategy, including individual development plans and some qualification training. This is of high importance and significance for the academic and administrative staff. The SWOT analysis has been conducted by the two departments that provide studies of ICS: the Department of Information and Library Studies and the Department of Communication Studies of FSS. The SWOT has been organised based on various perspectives, as stated in sub-chapter 2.1.2. of the SER. The SWOT analysis lists some highly important strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. The strengths (1-16) mentioned in the SER on pages 26-27 are something that the ICS representatives should certainly continue using. There are some really important weaknesses listed, too, such as the need for stronger internationalisation, student motivation to participate in research activities, low financial motivation for the academic staff, and similar. The opportunities related to the weaknesses as well. The UL and FSS should discuss these aspects and should consider possible and well-thought-out solutions. Meanwhile, the SER provides some good propositions for the prevention measures and puts them into the field development plans. However, some of them (for instance, "Consistent work with students, involvement in research projects and organisation of student conferences" (pg. 29) as the means to work on student engagement in the research work) could and should be more concrete and measurable. The threats are quite similar to the ones experienced in various higher education institutions in the EU. Overall, the SWOT includes the analysis of the content of the study programmes, feedback from the students and the employers, academic faculty selection and renewal, funding sources, material resources, research activities, and strategic and study field developments. The analysis of these areas has contributed to developing the proposals for operational improvements, as well as implementing them. The study field development plan is in harmony corresponding to the study field's development goals.

Section 2.1.3. of SER describes the administration structure on the UL and FSS levels, providing detailed information on what roles and responsibilities each structure or position plays in the ICS management processes. The development of the study field and the decision-making processes seem to be in place and effective. The expert group had the opportunity to talk to the student council upon the introduction to the material resources. The student council seemed to be well-prepared, active and motivated. The student's voice is certainly heard and overall, students are highly satisfied with the various aspects, including the quality, the learning environments, and the peer teaching. Certainly, everyone is waiting for the new modern building, which was introduced to the expert group, and the interdisciplinary possibilities. However, during the experts' meetings with students and employers, the expert group was not able to meet someone who was a member of some relevant committee or group. The students were also vague in stating that they know exactly which of the students are the members of committees or councils. Thus, a more proactive role of students and employers is expected, as it relates to participating in the decision-making processes. It is also not fully clear how autonomous are study programme directors in making decisions or receiving adequate financial or administrative support. This comment was included by the previous expert group. The question was repeated during this evaluation, but no clear or specific answer was provided by the study programme directors. Therefore, it is of high importance that they are provided with the necessary tools to make relevant decisions autonomously and receive any type of adequate support. During the visit, the expert group was provided with the information that the Dean of the FSS has regular meetings with the programme directors and certainly, this is an appropriate venue to discuss relevant, aforementioned, matters. Nevertheless, upon the meetings with the teaching staff, it was communicated that there is support for the faculty provided, which is necessary for working on teaching and educational work. This included personal development plans, and the possibility to take a sabbatical leave for the necessary creative research work. Moreover,

according to the management representatives, significant changes have been implemented after the previous expert visit, relating to support for research activities, human resources strategy development, and individual self-development training (including writing, presentation, and language skills).

The system of student admission, recognition of the study period, professional experience, prior formal and non-formal education and assessment of student achievements and learning outcomes are described in SER in great detail. On the other hand, later in SER on page 140, it is stated that on average 22% of students drop out after the first semester in the bachelor's programme "Information Management". This fact was discussed during the meetings with various groups and some insights were considered. They included the reconsideration of the title of the programme or better communication of and about the programme in order to provide more clarity as well as disseminate the information on its values and possibilities after graduation. Overall, students and employers emphasised the need for more attention put into the marketing and communication of the programmes. Certainly, the Young Professional schools were mentioned as being among the better examples of marketing and communication. Also, Latvia's National Library and the Archive are good resources for various types of collaboration – such as internships, future work, employer feedback, and similar. Overall, student admission to undergraduate and graduate studies follows an efficient system, as well as the recognition of the acquired experience. Not directly related to the admission process, the marketing and communication about the "Information Management" programme should be reconsidered.

Section 2.1.5. of SER explains in great detail the developed and clearly defined methods, principles and procedures for assessing the achievements of students, as well as other relevant aspects. Upon the meeting with the academic staff and students, it was confirmed that the needs of the students and the relevance of assessment methods and procedures for achieving the aims of study programmes are well analysed. The Study field applies adequate and useful techniques and procedures, which correspond to the study process, as it relates to the evaluation of achieving the aims of study programmes and the needs of students.

As noted in SER page 49, UL has developed its own Unified Computerized Plagiarism Control System, which is regularly updated. This system checks for any type of plagiarism in the student's academic papers, and theses. Instances of plagiarism have been reported in the bachelor's study programme "Communication Science" and appropriate decisions have been made. Overall, the UL, FSS and the ICS study field employ all of the necessary means to ensure academic integrity.

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

The ICS study field holds strong ambitions of developing European-level studies and emphasises the possibilities present in the European university alliance. The goals of the study field are well-defined and the ICS representatives have paid careful attention to making sure, based on the previous evaluation, that the goals are attainable and measurable. The internationalisation perspectives are well documented in various resources, although the reality does not yet foresee clear internationalisation aims, as it relates to the studies. There are no immediate plans to develop programs implemented in English. However, a strong emphasis, in such a case, should be put on the internationalisation at home aspects. Moreover, the faculty has implemented a clear strategy for human resources development. As it relates to the management of the study field and its marketing, a more precise and accurate strategy, including the graduates and social partners (employers) should be developed and implemented to offer some stronger communication regarding the strengths and key values of the programmes. A well-written SWOT analysis of the field is provided. The UL and FSS management should consider the listed weaknesses and opportunities and should make some adequate decisions. The ICS field has a clear and well-described administrative structure. However, students and employers should be included in relevant committee or council

work with more precise roles and responsibilities as well as opportunities. Also, the study programme directors and the heads of the sub-programmes should be provided with a clearer support system (including administrative and financial) and more freedom as well as flexibility in making decisions.

Strengths:
1. Significant changes implemented after the previous expert visit, relating to the support for research activities, human resources strategy development, and individual self-development training (including writing, presentation, and language skills).
2. Ambition to develop European-level studies.
3. Strong European university alliance, and collaboration with international partners, which offers various opportunities.
4. An adequate human resources development strategy, the possibility to take sabbatical leaves.
5. Well-constructed SWOT analysis of the field.
6. The entire administrative structure, including concrete roles and responsibilities, is introduced.
7. Strong cooperation with the National Library of Latvia and the National Archive.

Weaknesses:
1. Internationalisation is UL's and FSS's priority, but it is still hard to fully identify the main vision and strategy of this study field.
2. Graduates and social partners are not entirely or to the best of their potential involvement in the marketing and communication processes.
3. The prevention measures for the weaknesses, threats and opportunities of the SWOT are not sufficiently concrete or measurable.
4. No clear testimonies of students and employers were gathered to find out about their experiences participating as committee or council members and acting equally in the decision-making processes.
5. It is still unclear what concrete administrative and financial support the study programme directors and the heads of the sub-programmes receive.

1.2. Efficiency of the Internal Quality Assurance System

Analysis

The quality assurance system is well established. The quality policy is publicly available. The internal quality assurance system is based on the strategic goals of UL. The whole system is regularly being improved with the goal of contributing to the achievement of the aims and learning outcomes of the study field and the study programmes. This can be seen in the changes that have been made in the last two years. Namely, since the last assessment procedure, significant progress can be seen in this area. UL created and published the Quality Management Handbook (2021), which is a detailed and systematic manner that describes the tasks of all key bodies within the university, provides an overview of key documents as well as an overview of all activities, in accordance with the quality policy, within the quality assurance system. The aforementioned manual will be equally useful to all those who are involved in the quality assurance system in a certain way, but also to those who are just getting to know the system and want to learn more about it. Although both students and graduates are involved in the quality assurance system, during the meetings it was shown that they do not know enough about what the quality assurance system entails so it is recommended that FSS devote much more time to educating all important stakeholders about the quality assurance system and how each of them can contribute to these processes. The manual will certainly be useful for them.

The procedures for the development and review of the study programmes are regulated by the relevant UL normative acts and QA system (SER, p. 58). From the self-evaluation report, but also

from meetings with all key stakeholders, it can be concluded that the entire quality system is actively involved in all study development processes, which is extremely important, and the higher education institution is definitely encouraged to keep all of the mentioned procedures in the future as well.

The mechanism developed for the submission of student complaints and suggestions is effective, and students are informed about such opportunities. At the university level, they adopted the document Order of Submitting and Examining Proposals and Complaints of the Students which specifies the form of the submission of proposals and complaints. Other documents, such as the Procedure for the organisation of study course examinations at the University of Latvia, the Regulation on graduation examinations at the University of Latvia, the Procedure for Granting an Academic Leave of Absence in the UL, the Code of Academic Ethics of the UL, allow students to file complaints as well (SER, pp. 62-63). The most important role in this process is played by the heads of study programs, however, during the visit, information was obtained that complaints are actually very rare and that they have not received any anonymous complaints from this study direction. Students are also available to go to the council or the vice-rectors to address the issues. Students are usually complaining about organisational issues, such as schedule overlapping.

A system of annual reporting exists. The system ensures continuous improvement and development of the study field and the relevant study programmes (Self-evaluation report, 2022, p. 51). Various activities are implemented for updating study programmes, including surveys of employers and partners, focus group discussions, student surveys about the study course quality and organisation of the study process, surveying graduates and students about the quality of study programmes etc. (Self-evaluation, 2021, p. 52). Changes in survey conduction were made in accordance with the recommendations from the last assessment process – they have updated and shortened survey questionnaires and ensured the availability of survey results to students and their representative organisations, and methodology for effective use of survey results has been made (SER, p. 66). The annual quality mechanisms, which include the evaluation of the Study field, study programmes and work of the teaching staff, are the most important factors to ensure the internal quality of the study field (Self-evaluation, 2021, p. 52). The internal audit is also a substantial quality control mechanism. All processes are clearly announced. UL and FSS have rules and procedures that everyone has to follow to meet all the quality strategic goals they have set. Students and graduates are actively involved in the QA system. One of the evaluation methods includes evaluating the teacher's work by students, which is mandatory for all UL students. At the same time, the students themselves do not see anything wrong with the fact that the survey is mandatory, they state that it is short and easy to fill in, and they do not think that the mandatory completion affects the quality of the way of filling out the questionnaire, and subsequently the results. The institution needs to think about presenting to students some evaluation reports or any information about survey results.

The last assessment procedure showed that there is a need to improve the way of human resources data collection. Based on that, in addition to teacher evaluation by students and colleagues, each teacher is required to make an annual development plan, the implementation of which is supervised by study programme managers. At the same time, teachers are asked to list the skills they think they lack so that FSS can then organise workshops and additional training for employees in that area (for example, ENG learning, project writing and improving digital skills). With the goal of personnel development, they brought the FSS Human Resources Development Plan to 2027 – a strategy for personal development and evaluation of employees. The teachers found the peer-evaluation process very useful.

The information published on the website of the FSS provides applicants and students with important information about their activities, including the programmes offered. Information is published in English and Latvian. However, it is recommended to publish a lot more information about the quality assurance system on the official website, especially the key results that are achieved on an annual basis.

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

The quality assurance system is well established, and significant progress can be seen since the last assessment procedure. The quality policy is publicly available. The Quality Management Handbook was created and published in 2021. The procedures for the development and review of the relevant study programmes of the study field and feedback mechanisms have been defined, however, it is necessary to inform all stakeholders about the results of the conducted surveys and to make the results publicly available. Information about study programmes is available on the official website, but it is recommended to publish more information about the quality assurance system, especially the key results that are achieved on an annual basis.

Strengths:
1. Quality Management Handbook and prescribed procedures for the quality assurance system
2. FSS Human Resources Development Plan
3. System of annual reporting

Weaknesses:
1. The official website contains insufficient information regarding the measures within the quality assurance system.

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

   Quality assurance system is well established, significant progress can be seen since the last assessment procedure. Namely, among other things the Quality Management Handbook was created and published in 2021, which will certainly further contribute to the development of the quality assurance system and the study programs themselves.

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

   Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

   The quality policy is publicly available. The internal quality assurance system is based on the strategic goals of UL. The whole system is regularly being improved with the goal of contributing to the achievement of the aims and learning outcomes of the study field and the study programmes.

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

   Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

   The higher education institution has clearly prescribed procedures for the development and internal approval of the study programs of the higher education institution/college, as well as the supervision of their performance and periodic inspection thereof has been developed. All procedures are explained in detail in the quality manual.

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

Students are informed about the learning outcomes to be achieved at the programme level and at the level of study courses, including their link with the assessment system and the number of credit points (Quality Manual, p. 46) and all procedures for the evaluation of student's results' have been developed and published.

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The UL and FSS have developed internal procedures for assuring the qualification of the academic staff. In addition to the mentioned procedures, since the last assessment procedure, the FSS Human Resources Development Plan until 2027 was adopted in order to improve teachers' qualifications even more.

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

Every year the UL and FSS conduct evaluations and analysis of all the mentioned segments of the university, from students and teachers to graduates, with the aim of further developing the quality of the study programmes.

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The quality assurance system at UL and FSS is well established and all procedures of the internal quality assurance system, including those that contribute to improvement, development, and efficient performance of the study field, have been developed.

1.3. Resources and Provision of the Study Field

Analysis

Based on the information gathered by the experts during the on-site visit and provided in the self-assessment report, experts conclude that UL has developed a system to determine the financial resources required to implement the study field and the relevant study programmes. The system of the UL for financing the study field and the related study programs are based on the Law on Higher Education Institutions, Cabinet of Ministers Regulations No. 994 (12.12. 2006) "Procedures for Financing Higher Education Institutions and Colleges from the State Budget," Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No. 445 (5.07.2016) "Regulations on Remuneration of Teachers," and other external and internal regulatory enactments. The SER mentions that considering the specifics of studies and available resources and the norms for remuneration of teaching staff (Norms for Planning and Accounting of Academic Staff Workload), which are binding for all faculties of the UL by order of the Rector, the management of the ICS UL direction may establish different norms in coordination with the Vice-Rector of the relevant area.

To provide the necessary funds for the process of studies, the UL uses the state budget subsidy (considering the base funding, level of the programme and field of study) from the Ministry of Education and Science and tuition fees. According to the SER and discussions with the faculty

teaching staff, part of the funding allocated to the faculty is also directed to research activities of the academic staff – both for scientific activities, participation in international projects, publication of scientific articles, preparation of international project applications, organisation of scientific events at the UL and implementation of scientific activity development projects. As mentioned in the SER (p. 72), investments in the development of study quality and research of the study field consist of UL investments, study activity investments; investments in science attracted from international, national and university project calls. Thanks to the investments mentioned above, the UL can subscribe to databases relevant to the social sciences and update computer equipment and software needed for teaching. The investments have enabled the improvement of the facilities of the Multimedia Studio, which is an invaluable tool for developing the skills of future professionals in the field of communication.

The funding has also enabled the creation of new master's level courses in digital humanities and social sciences, which are taught in the master's study programmes "Library and Information Science" and "Communication Studies". These programmes have been well received by current students and graduates, who appreciate the acquired knowledge.

The University has also considered the recommendations of the previous accreditation expert group and has developed and implemented the Strategic Plan for Attracting Financial Resources to the study field. As mentioned in the SER (p. 72), the plan foresees participation in the UL project calls (4–7 times per year), submission of project applications for Latvian Council of Science Fundamental and Applied Research Programme and National Research Programme tenders (2–3 times per year); submission of project applications to international scientific research project calls (1–2 per year).

Increasing the motivation of teaching staff to engage in fundraising for the development of the quality of studies and research is also envisaged in the FSS Human Resources Development Plan until 2027, which includes measures for academic, scientific, and administrative work, cooperation with the society and standard/systemic measures.

UL has identified the infrastructure resources and the material and technical provisions required for implementing the study field, and they are available. There are spacious rooms available to accommodate a wide range of audience sizes. Students are provided with university Wi-Fi to use their computers for studying. Students can connect to electricity in the audio studios. In addition, the Lecture-rooms are fully or partially equipped with multimedia projectors, computers, and sound equipment. The faculty has two fully equipped computer rooms with all the necessary software for the study process. In the computer rooms, students have access to MS Office (Word, Powerpoint, Excel, Teams, etc.), IBM SPSS Statistics, Adobe Creative Cloud (Premiere, Photoshop, InDesign, etc.), Nvivo, Gephi, Protégé, MultiTes, and UCINet software. For the acquisition of specialised courses, such as multimedia skills, there is a specialised Multimedia Studio with all the necessary equipment not only for filming and sound recording but also software for editing multimedia content, where students can work not only on weekdays but also on weekends. A professional video engineer is hired to ensure technical support to the students. In 2024, it is planned to move to new premises - the House of Letters, located at the Academic Centre of the University of Latvia (on the Tornakalns campus), where the rooms will be smaller, but this will not interfere with the study process. The layout of the premises has been thought through to ensure their suitability for the study process. In addition, the new premises will be better suited for people with disabilities, if necessary, e.g. wheelchair users. The new premises will include a larger Multimedia Studio with technical facilities.

The improvement of the informative and technical provision follows the development needs of the study programmes. The teaching staff and students have access to all the necessary resources. Overall, students are satisfied with the accessibility of the necessary materials. Students have no complaints about the lack of resources, particularly the materials needed for acquiring theoretical knowledge or developing study works. The library's resources and databases are available to students and meet the needs of their study fields, and the library is accessible 60 hours a week. In cooperation with the Information Technology Department of the University, the Library provides free

online access to the University e-resources repository http://dspace.lu.lv. According to the SER (page 82), a total of 42 e-resource platforms are available at UL in 2022 (both ebook platforms: VLeBooks, ProQuest Ebook Central, and e-journal databases: Cambridge Journals Online (archive available until 31.12.2018), Emerald eJournals Premier (archive available until 22.04.2020.), JSTOR I–XII, XIV, XV and Life Sciences Collections, HeinOnline, Oxford Journals Online, Sage Journals, ScienceDirect, SpringerLink Contemporary Journals, Taylor & Francis Social Science & Humanities Library, Physical Review Journals, Westlaw, Wiley Online Library E-Journals Full Collection and separately purchased e-journals, and Lursoft Newspaper Library News.lv, reference resources – LETA online news, LETA Archive and Nozare.lv, Letonika, tools – SAGE Research Methods, Passport, Orbis, Overleaf Commons, MarketLine, mixed–format databases – ClinicalKey, Culturethèque, European Pharmacopoeia, LVS Latvian Standards Online Reading Room, OECD iLibrary, ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global, ScienceDirect, Scopus, UpToDate, Web of Science Core Collection).

Communication students have access to a wide range of databases that allow them to use sources used by communication professionals daily, such as access to the LETA news agency's databases, including its archive. A standard system and procedures exist for improving and purchasing the material, informative, methodological, and technical provisions in place, and it is seen as efficient and well-established. Librarians provide the necessary training often enough, especially at the beginning of a new academic year, to introduce new students to the library's possibilities and support in the study process. Specialised training is also available for master's students and teaching staff. The library has books available to read on-site or take home. Books in limited supply can be taken home for the night - the so-called "nightly subscription". The library's collection is supplemented by funds allocated to the faculty and funding from the Students' Council, contributing part of its co-financing to the library's resources.

Based on the information available to the experts, it is concluded that the ICS teaching staff and students are provided with the necessary information and communication technology solutions and software. Everyone can access MS Office 365 and its cloud services, such as MS Forms, One Note, Sway, MS Teams, etc. The University provides Office 365 cloud service OneDrive in the amount of 1TB for storing data during the study process, both students and staff. In addition to MS Office 365, students and staff are provided with software such as SPSS, Question Pro, Autodesk, MathWorks MatLAB, Esri ArcGIS, etc. If distance learning is required, both MS Teams and Zoom are used. The University also provides technical support, if needed, for lecturers or students using specific applications. Considering that the university is more and more actively implementing the Moodle system for placement of study materials and communication between teaching staff and students, the BigBlueButton video system, which is an open-source web-based online video conferencing system that is easy to use from the Moodle environment, is also used in the study process. In the Moodle e-learning environment, courses have been created, and students have access to the necessary study materials and activities. All study field courses have a Moodle e-learning environment. According to the teaching staff, the use of this environment is not mandatory, but it is desirable. The meeting with the manager of the Multimedia Studio was beneficial in terms of gaining an in-depth insight into the principles of operation of the Multimedia Studio as well as the tasks assigned to the students that aim at developing a practical skill set essential for producing the multimedia content (video, photo, and audio content). The Multimedia Studio is well equipped and serves as a quality resource for strengthening the multimedia production skills of any student in the study field.

UL has developed and implemented the procedures for attracting highly skilled teaching staff for the ICS and the relevant study programmes. As mentioned in the SER (p. 87), UL has three groups of teaching staff: teaching staff working in elected academic posts, teaching staff working as acting elected academic staff (acting and visiting lecturers), and hourly paid lecturers. Selection and recruitment of candidates for elective posts and acting staff are recruited according to the Regulatory Enactments on Academic and Administrative Positions at the University of Latvia

(approved by decision No 2-3/11 of 31.01.2022 of the University of Latvia Senate). According to the Regulatory Enactments, the following academic positions exist, professor, associate professor, assistant professor, leading researcher, lecturer, researcher, assistant, and research assistant. As indicated in the SER, the requirements for applicants to UL academic positions are set higher scientific, educational qualification requirements, and organisational and professional competencies than required by the provisions of external laws and regulations; thus, the best possible specialists are recruited for the work. For the first time in the last six years, two academic staff members have been elected as associate professors, six as assistant professors and two candidates were elected as lecturers. Overall, the experts conclude that the study direction has successfully attracted a new generation of teaching staff who enrich the study process with new knowledge and research directions.

In the ICS direction's Human Resources Development Plan for 2022-2027, as of September 1, 2022, a number of steps have already been taken to improve academic performance, such as the definition of individual academic objectives, as well as individualised assessment of academic performance, which was also mentioned by the academic staff during the visit. Further efforts will be made towards acquiring the student-centred study process and more active use of e-resources and e-tools. For example, during the expert meeting, one of the lecturers gave an example of how she took a course on creating interactive study courses last summer, adapting the materials to the study process. The plan aims to promote further the participation of teaching staff in international mobility, which has been limited due to the pandemic. The qualification of teaching staff is continuously being improved, with the support of the Academic Department of the University of Latvia, the Faculty of Pedagogy, Psychology and Arts of the University of Latvia, and the Adult Pedagogical Education Centre. During the last period, the teaching staff has improved their English language skills (to C1 level) and their skills in university didactics and preparation of teaching materials, which help improve the study process. All academic staff had the opportunity to participate in a survey before the start of training, indicating their preferences for skill development programmes. All ICS Study directions also have close links with various professional organisations in the field, where faculty members can develop their skills, make new contacts, and engage as experts in developing regulatory frameworks.

As it has been indicated during the assessment meetings with the academic staff the academic and research workload of the teaching staff is balanced. According to the SAR (p. 96), each elected lecturer teaches about 3–5 study courses and in parallel supervises the preparation of term papers, bachelor's theses, master's theses, doctoral theses, as well as internships. The involvement of teaching staff in the teaching of study courses is organised and ensured by FSS departments and their administration. The workload of the academic staff is calculated according to the principle that out of the total annual workload of 1 600 hours (henceforth – h), 1 000 hours are dedicated to academic work and 600 hours – to work on scientific research projects. The academic workload also includes supervision of bachelor's theses (16 h/year), master's theses (24 h/year) and doctoral theses (50 h/year), and reviewing bachelor's, master's and doctoral theses (2–20 h/thesis). During the site visit experts got confirmation, that for the implementation of the study programmes, high-level experts of the sector, and representatives of employers are attracted, with whom, as practitioners, an employment contract is concluded for a semester or an academic year for the implementation of a particular study course. There have been changes in academic staff in recent years, coming the young professionals who have graduated relatively recently from PhD studies. During the evaluation visit, experts had the opportunity to meet with young faculty teaching staff who were very enthusiastic about their working methods and research activities, explaining how, for example, the study process is organised, if a course is presented by several teachers or how students can engage in research activities. It is safe to say that there is a successful intergenerational change of teaching staff in the process.

As mentioned in SAR (p. 99), the students of UL have access to academic support, career

development support and psychological support. Academic support in academic matters is managed centrally by the UL Department of Study Service and the responsible persons with the respective faculties: the director of the study programme, study advisor, trustee, mentor, coordinator, academic staff, and the UL Student Council and faculty-student self-governments. During the visit, when meeting with the representatives of the student self-government, the experts ascertained that the unit was strong support for students. Its task is to represent the students of the faculty both at the national and international level and to advocate the interests of the students in matters of academic, material and cultural life at UL and other state and economic institutions. Here is the opportunity to address a variety of issues, and to receive support for questions related to studies and other issues. The self-government of students has allocated areas of responsibility for which students themselves are responsible. The representatives of the student self-government have the right to participate in the decision-making bodies of the UL of all levels, as well as the right to participate as observers in the tests and examinations. The representatives of the student self-government in the University Senate, the Faculty Council and the Constitutional Assembly have the right to veto matters affecting the interests of students. In the meeting with the librarians, the experts were informed that every student had the opportunity to receive high-quality support for introduction to library resources, information on how to work with databases, etc. As mentioned in SAR (p. 100), the Career Centre provides the following services to students: individual counselling for future studies and careers, setting up an individual career plan; providing support for the transition between different levels of education and from education to the labour market; workshops for career planning skills; Internet resource – Career Centre webpage (information available in both Latvian and English) https://www.karjera.lu.lv/ and https://www.karjera.lu.lv/eng/ provides up–to–date information on career planning issues, occupational information and the labour market; the "E-career" electronic resource https://ekarjera.lu.lv/lv/login and https://ekarjera.lu.lv/login, which enables students to quickly find their internship opportunities and jobs by adding their CVs to a database and employers to recruit employees by listing information on job vacancies in the database.

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

Based on the information that has been gathered by the experts during the on-site visit and provided in the self-assessment report experts conclude that UL has developed a system to determine the financial resources required for the implementation of the study field and the relevant study programmes. Funds needed to implement the study programmes come from the state budget and tuition fees, and the expenses include the financial support the faculty staff need for research-related activities. Investments in the development of study quality and research of the study are being made. The resources available to students and faculty staff are adequate, including auditoriums, multimedia facilities, software, a library, and databases. A standard system and procedures for upgrading and purchasing the material, and informative, methodological, and technical resources are in place. Communication students have access to a well-equipped multimedia studio, which provides opportunities to strengthen their practical skills in their studies. Procedures exist for the attraction of highly skilled teaching staff for the ICS and its study programmes. The selection and recruitment process of candidates for elective posts and acting staff is clear and takes place according to the relevant regulations. Career advancement and the renewal of staff successfully take place under these conditions. The Human Resources Development Plan for 2022-2027 is a key instrument that sets individual goals for the staff members and tracks their performance. Qualification improvement processes for the faculty staff also take place, and the workload is balanced between teaching and research duties. Teaching staff can develop their skills, for example, by improving their English language skills, learning new technologies to ensure the interactivity of the study process and going on mobility programmes to universities in other

countries. Students are provided with academic support, career development support, and psychological support, they are greatly supported by the student council, providing a student voice both in the local faculty and at the University as a whole.

Strengths:
1. A high-quality Multimedia Studio has been established and equipped with technical facilities and human resource support.
2. ICS has considered the recommendations of previous experts and has developed and started implementing a Strategic Plan for Attracting Financial Resources to the study field.
3. Students have access to the necessary software to support their studies on campus and on their computers, such as Microsoft Office 365, IBM SPSS Statistics, Adobe Creative Cloud, etc.
4. Quality library resources and databases are available.
5. A standard for ordering new library resources is established.
6. A system for attracting new teaching staff is in place, and there has been a successful attraction of new staff over the last 6 years.
7. ICS has developed and started implementing a Human Resources Development Plan for 2022-2027, which provides an opportunity to improve the professional development of teaching staff and the development of scientific activities.
8. Good resources available to provide the study process
9. Procedures for the attraction of academic staff and the advancement of their careers
10. Opportunities are available to improve the qualification of the staff

Weaknesses:
1. The Moodle system is optional for all teaching staff and courses, which does not contribute to providing a shared learning environment for students.
2. The Human Resources Development Plant for 2022-2027 has just been drafted, and its implementation started on 1 September 2022, so its effectiveness still needs to be judged.
3. International mobility of the teaching staff has been limited due to pandemic restrictions.

1.4. Scientific Research and Artistic Creation

Analysis

Close linkage exists between the development goals of the University of Latvia (UL), Faculty of Social Sciences (FSS), and the study field. UL has defined research excellence, interdisciplinary research, and international recognition as its scientific aims, and based on these principles, the development documents of FSS and the study field have been composed. The University of Latvia aims "to strengthen scientific excellence in strategic areas of specialisation and research priorities." The Strategy of FSS 2022-2027 defines seven priority research directions, of which the study field pursues two: "Media ecosystem" and "Interaction of the individual, information and technology." The Study Field Development Plan has set out the goals to increase the number of researchers and students who are involved in projects; increase publications in international peer-reviewed journals, and attract funding, among other indicators. If successfully fulfilled, these indicators would suggest a meaningful improvement in the scientific output and quality of the members of this study field. Section 2.4.1. of SER does not go into detail about the actual topics and scientific problems that the study field focuses on, but other sections and additional documents allow for revealing more detail. Section 2.4.4. of SER provides a table that details 17 research projects undertaken by the faculty members of the study field during the last six years. The topics include governance, media literacy and information disorders, the media environment of Latvia, sustainable development, innovations, and other processes in contemporary Latvian society. The topics of these projects correspond to some of the key themes of the study programs of this study field. These also highlight

interdisciplinarity in research, which is one of the directions set out in the UL strategy.

The SER claims that the number of national and international research projects as well as the attracted amount, which exceeds one million euros, of funding acquired in open research project competitions "prove" that the research by the academics of the study field is both relevant and of high quality. These are not the best indicators for the quality of research, though. The actual output—in particular, the number of publications in international peer-reviewed journals (better still, in high-ranking, high-impact journals) by the faculty staff—is a better indicator. The number of publications, including those developed in cooperation with colleagues in other scientific institutions is also among the indicators mentioned in the Study Field Development Plan. The SER highlights the total research output in terms of publications since 2016 (440; of these, 269 have been written by researchers with elected positions at the FFS or PhD students), but shies away from highlighting how many of these qualify as international peer-reviewed publications. The fact that the Study Field Development Plan states that in the year 2021/2022 it aims to publish 24 international peer-reviewed papers, indicates that the number of these among the stated total published output is much lower. At the same time, it must be noted that the study field has published several works that are in Latvian and appear to be of local significance (such as Viktors Freibergs' books, "The Diversity of the Media Environment in Latvia," and the Human development reports). Researchers from the study field have developed their expertise in certain topics, which they have spent considerable time exploring. For example, one professor is an expert on social memory and the history of media, one associate professor has been focusing on gender issues, and another professor is a notable book researcher. Section 2.4.1. of SER also mentions some artistic activities, some of which actually appear to be the faculty members' parallel professions (such as videography or art criticism). Such activities are important because these exemplify links between academic and public communication activities, as well as the industry, but perhaps the mentioned members of the faculty are not the only ones who are professionally active in other fields, too (even though these are further away from the notion of "art").

Faculty members have both teaching and research duties; thus, they are in a position to connect their research work with the content of their courses. Engagement in research is one of the ways how it is ensured that the academic staff remains up-to-date with the developments in their respective fields. The research projects in which the faculty members participate tend to align with their academic expertise and the themes of their courses. The SER states that "[t]he results and findings of all research projects (see Table 2.21) implemented by the academic and research staff of the study field are used in creating and updating the content of the study courses." It proceeds to give examples of how the outcomes of specific research projects have been integrated into particular study courses or used to create new study courses. For instance, the project "Living Together with Difficult Memories and Diverse Identities" informs the study courses "History of Communication", and "Gender Equality Communication and Practice," and its methodology is further utilised in the study course "Qualitative Methods in Communication Research." The book "The Diversity of the Media Environment in Latvia," which has been produced during a project of the same name, is being used in several study courses. During the experts' visit, the representatives of the study field said that no centralised overview system regarding the integration of the outcomes of research projects exists and that this happens organically. This is a justified approach because if the academic staff would need to run all the details of their courses by their superiors the development and updating of study courses risk becoming too burdensome. At the same time, it makes the conclusion at the end of section 2.4.2—that the integration of research in the study content is "consistent and efficient"—hard to verify.

The study field has developed substantial networks of international cooperation. It is evidenced by research and teaching collaboration with colleagues from other institutions. The study field hosts the UNESCO Chair in Media and Information Literacy, which is a potent platform for media literacy-related activities on both national and international levels. Likewise, the IREX media literacy

programme enables international networking among media literacy researchers and educators. Several of the faculty members in the study field have participated in international research projects. Section 2.4.3. states that the most important projects are these: "COMPACT: From Research to Policy Through Raising Awareness of the State of the Art on Social Media and Convergence," "Living Together with Difficult Memories and Diverse Identities," and "Children Born of War – Past, Present, Future". These concern the current issues and regulatory challenges of social media; social memory and identity; and the impact of military conflicts on children's lives, respectively. The SER also states that the staff members of the study field currently work on project proposals for international project competitions, including joint proposals with foreign partners. Some staff members together with colleagues from foreign academic institutions have produced joint publications.

The study field has participated in organising summer schools, including the Baltic Summer School of Digital Humanities, which teaches digital research methods to an international audience. Until 2018, the international "Riga Summer School! Find. Feel. Film" was organised by the Department of Communication studies. Staff members of the faculty have also organised international conferences. The SER also mentions producing peer reviews for journals, although, given the ambition of international networking that the study field manifests in the report, the list of journals to which the faculty members have submitted their reviews could be expected to be longer (the report indicated that the four titles mentioned are not the full list, though).

Cooperation also takes place through participation in international organisations. The Department of Communication Studies has arranged membership for the teaching staff and PhD students in the European Communication Research and Education Association (ECREA), which is a key organisation in communication studies. The teaching staff is also involved with ECREA's CEE network. The actual contribution of the ECREA membership to the study and research process is harder to judge. The SER details some specific outcomes: participation in ECREA General Assembly, presenting at ECREA conferences, and following the ECREA mailing list, which facilitates learning about various events and opportunities. These benefits are promising but do not say much about the actual impact of this membership on research or teaching in the study field. Participation in ECREA conferences is arguably the most closely related to a measurable impact, but it should be noted that participation is open to non-members, too, and the only difference is in the conference fee.

The SER also states that the Department of Communication Studies is a member of the European Public Relations Education and Research Association" (EUPRERA), which aims to bridge the research and practice of PR. However, it does not provide any details about the actual work that the researchers of the study field do in this organisation.

The previous accreditation report urged the Department of Information and Library Studies to intensify its participation in international organisations. The report states that in 2022, the department joined "iSchools"—an international organisation that encompasses universities which teach and research information. This is an appropriate choice, but neither the SER nor the conversations with the faculty staff during the expert visit provided specific details about the activities of the Department in this organisation. The SER says that membership "will" facilitate networking in terms of the development of study programs and research activities. It appears that this participation is yet to provide any tangible result regarding international collaboration. However, the initiation of membership can still be considered a positive signal about the intentions of this department to expand its international cooperation.

In addition to institutional membership in organisations, faculty members also participate in professional organisations individually.

Research activities are an integral part of the duties of the academic staff at UL. First, participation in research activities and publishing papers are among the key requirements of the elected academic positions. These requirements, as well as competition among the staff members for any suitable job openings as a way to advance one's academic rank, are one of the motivation

mechanisms to engage in research. At the same time, the faculty members also cooperate with research projects. Moreover, the considerable differences in the research workload among the academic staff (some faculty members participate in or lead many projects, but others' names are mentioned less frequently) can be interpreted as a sign that flexibility with regard to faculty members' individual interests and aims is provided.

Second, the strategy of FSS has formulated priority research directions, as well as measurable indicators aimed at increasing the number of high-quality publications, research projects and cooperation with researchers from other institutions, both in Latvia and abroad. Third, as envisioned in the Human Resources Development Plan of FSS, the academic staff members each have an individual plan, which is updated and reviewed regularly, thus helping them to set and fulfil their goals. Fourth, a support system exists that absolves the faculty staff from some administrative burden associated with research activities and can apply for funding to cover the costs of, for example, conference visits.

Heavy emphasis on research in the planning documents may complicate the balancing of teaching and research duties among the faculty members and risk causing burnout. Such concerns were raised during the previous accreditation report and are reflected in the SER recommendations (Appendix 18), including recommendations No. 4 and 13. The Human Resources Development Plan, which, among other things, provides annual defining and reviews of academic goals, is among the key responses the study field has developed to address these concerns. The efficacy of this system to a great extent lies in how it is executed in practical terms, but during the research visit, the expert group did not encounter information that would lead them to believe that serious overworking risks are not addressed.

The study process within this study field pays significant attention to students' research activities. This takes place through research projects and final theses that students develop, as well as in students' participation in research projects undertaken by the faculty staff (both in the role of a researcher and participant). Some students have authored articles in publications that have been developed as the result of research projects. During the meetings with experts, students indicated being aware of the diverse opportunities to engage in research projects beyond the basic requirements of the study programs. All this ensures that students have a chance to develop appropriate research skills. In addition, this approach also is crucial to the renewal and succession of the staff, and a significant number of the faculty members are graduates of the study field's programs. However, the SER presents a somewhat exaggerated description of the expected level of these skills upon graduation from master's study programs. The report states: "Upon completing the master's level study programmes with the study field, graduates demonstrate the competence to manage large-scale research projects at the national and international level [..]." There is little evidence that the study programs enable acquiring such a high-level skill set for project management. Moreover, the actual research experiences the graduates have acquired during their studies likely differ, because some of them do participate in research projects other than their study works and theses and others do not. This in itself is justified, because in order to be included in a research team, a student needs to display certain motivation and performance. However, this should have been explained more clearly in the respective parts of the SER.

The SER describes various innovations but does not clarify whether these are considered innovations on the faculty, university, national, or international level. As manifestations of product, innovations are mentioned in new sub-programs, study courses, life-long learning programs, and updated course contents, all of which are important for the development of the study field, but an update for a product is not the same as "innovation." Similarly, the report states that the student media Kivi TV is an innovation, but at the same time notes that it has been operating for "almost ten years," so it is not even new. "Mansmedijs.lv," which is a website for students' works, also appears to have existed for a relatively long time, but the "Avantūra" magazine indeed is recent. Another example of claimed product innovations is scientific work. The SER provides examples of developing research

methodology, but the details about the substance of these innovations are scarce. Many research projects involve creativity and the development of aspects or insights that did not exist before. Coming up with new research instruments (including but not limited to questionnaires or interview guidelines) is an expected part of carrying out such projects. Process innovations offer more concrete examples of developing or adapting new forms of learning through the development of a student-centred approach. The SER notes the "Project Exchange" within the course "Strategy and Tactics of Public Relations" as an example. During the expert visit, students mentioned how the academic staff had been able to adapt to the remote teaching format, including through the introduction of various digital tools. As for marketing innovations, the report mentions social media videos and a booklet, which are common elements of marketing activities, and hardly have substantial innovative elements. The School of Young Communication Specialists and the School of Young Information Specialists that are organised to attract high school students and make them more acquainted with bachelor's study programs in communication science and information management are commendable. Some of the current students that the experts met during the visit, had participated in these schools.

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

In general, scientific research within this study field corresponds with the content of the study programs in this field, as well as with the strategic directions set out on the UL and FSS policy documents. The academic and research staff of the study field regularly engage in research projects and have demonstrated their competitiveness by acquiring grants in project competitions. It is the policy of UL, FSS, and the study field to promote the participation of the academic staff in research activities through their obligations as part of their academic rank and also support system. Students also are involved in research, through the study requirements and opportunities to join the research projects. This results in the acquisition of research experience, but since only part of the students is able or willing to participate in such projects, their research skills upon graduation likely differ considerably. The publishing record of the study field is solid, although it would be advisable to put more emphasis on quality, rather than quantity of publications. The Study Field Development Plan mentions justified and measurable indicators for the future, including the increase of publications in international peer-reviewed journals. Research findings are being integrated into the study content. The development of international academic ties is promising, and its potential is evidenced by joint publications with foreign authors, participation in international research projects, and joining international academic organisations. The study field, and especially the Department of information and Library studies, should continue advancing its work in this direction. Innovative aspects in the development of the study field are observable, but not all of the things presented as innovations appear to be so without an additional justification.

Strengths:
1. Strong emphasis on research and a clear link between the policies of UL, FSS, and the study field regarding the research directions.
2. Regular participation in research projects that explore issues of both local and international significance.
3. Research activities by the academic staff inform the contents of the study courses.

Weaknesses
1. Participation in "iSchools" has not yet facilitated international collaboration in a tangible way.
2. Some of the claimed innovations are not particularly innovative.

Assessment of the requirement [2]

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Scientific research undertaken in the study field complies with the level of development of scientific research in the relevant scientific disciplines. The research teams demonstrate their competitiveness by securing research grants in open competitions. Researchers are able to produce solid research output, and they have developed their expertise in their respective topics.

1.5. Cooperation and Internationalisation

Analysis

The UL ICS study field has a vast network of different local partners. These connections contribute to achieving the aims of the study field and all relevant study programmes. This network covers the public and private sectors alike. For example, ICS staff members are involved in other universities' Professor Councils and participate as jury members at the International Student Conference at Riga Stradins university (SER p. 122.). Participation is not limited to only Riga Stradiņš University, but also to Liepaja university, Vidzemes University, Daugavpils University etc. (SER p. 122.). Faculty is not only utilising other HEI contacts but also collaborating with internal UL structures, such as the UL Institute of Literature, Folklore and Art. Students can visit the institute and see how their theoretical knowledge is working in real-life circumstances. (SER p. 122.). During the site visit meeting with the academic staff members, they demonstrated an open view to different collaborations with colleagues from other organisations. Academic staff members are highly evaluated specialists that are often invited to Ministries to give lectures and provide their opinion. The partners in the ICS study field from organisations include the Latvian Association of Public Relations Professionals, the Latvian Association of Journalists, the Latvian Association of Broadcasting Organisations, the Library Association of Latvia etc. Such a broad connection is possible because employers and most importantly academic personnel are members of these associations. These partners are also selected in view of specific features of relevant study programmes under this study field. In regards to the private sector, meeting with employer representatives was very informative and provided insight into how they have been involved in the development of study programmes and the study field. For example, Latvian radio representatives stated that they have been involved in meetings in which they could express the overall knowledge and skill level of students and what they would like to see in potential alumni. Other representatives stated that they have been invited and involved in the evaluation of student thesis works. Involvement in creating and developing relevant study programmes was also confirmed during the meeting with employers. Employers highly evaluated the overall level of students to enter the labour market and were satisfied with the knowledge that students receive during the study process. Most employers confirmed that they have been in the role of guest lecturers to students, by this they can directly provide input on the latest industry trends. This also proves that study programmes are preparing good specialists and achieving study programme goals. Employers gave examples of how they have been helping students who are studying, for example adjusting work schedules, after internship taking students as employees. In a previous evaluation report, it was stated that most of the ICS network is based on UL alumni. So recommendations to attract more experts with other educational backgrounds still should be considered, since they can benefit the development of the study field with new fresh ideas and different approaches.

The ICS study field also has a broad foreign partner network that can be found in Appendix 14. List of cooperation agreements. During the site visit meeting with management, the representatives could not indicate cooperation with foreign non-governmental or other institutions, which indicates

that the current network of foreign partners is not being fully utilised and can be expanded even more. Also, all agreements that are currently active are within the Erasmus+ programme, there is no indication of cooperation agreements based on mutual benefits or connections. Also, all these agreements are with universities, there are no institutes or employers etc. In terms of the study programme of Library and Information sciences, almost all contracts are ending this year (2022). This means that these contracts should be renewed or new partners should be found that can benefit this study programme in the future. The good direction of international cooperation can be found in academic staff members, they are members of different international boards and associations, for example – European Archive Society, and the European Library association. This shows that there are good opportunities to obtain new projects and connections besides the Erasmus+ network that can result in additional publicity for the faculty, and higher quality publications, possibly resulting in partnerships in different international projects. Current activities in terms of internationalisation can not lead to the achievement of UL's strategic goal - To promote staff motivation to integrate into global academic development processes and gain experience in the leading foreign universities and research institutions. This is furthermore supported by the study field Development plan, point 1.1.7. States that by the year 2026/2027 study field will have 7 international publications with partners from abroad, but current data already indicates that this point is not ambitious enough because this year in the study field there have already been 5 publications with foreign co-authors. The social science faculty strategy plan is to become internationally recognisable, only 7 publications with foreign partners by the year 2026 is too low to achieve this goal as well. Current cooperation partners are chosen wisely and are relevant to study programmes, but can be expanded to include also institutes, non-governmental institutions etc.

In SER, UL states that they are each semester collecting potential study courses that can be carried out in the English language and are offering these courses for foreign students. Social networks are actively being used to inform current and potential students about opportunities. Experts are taking into account that currently all study programmes are being implemented only in the Latvian language so this limits the actual possibility for international students to come study as incoming mobility. Currently, there is no specific system for attracting foreign students since there is no offer to study the English language. This also limits the attraction of foreign academics since all programmes are taught in English. But the faculty is inviting foreign experts as guest lecturers, so there is a platform for potential further cooperation. Regarding the outgoing mobility of staff in the last two years at annex 17. "Statistics on outgoing and incoming mobility of teaching staff of the study field Information and Communication Sciences" through Erasmus+ for the last two years there has not been any outgoing mobility, but there are 6 mobility cases through different projects. This indicates that even Erasmus+ opportunities can be utilised more. In the case of students' incoming mobility, it is good but can be improved for Information Management Library Sciences and Information study programmes. This also would help to make the study field more known internationally. Similarly with student outgoing mobility - each year there are students who are using different projects to gain study experience abroad. During the site visit, students and alumni also confirmed that they have been introduced to different opportunities for outgoing mobility. After inquiring about additional documents for recognition of internship and credit points after outgoing mobility, the expert team concluded that there are procedures set in place to recognise experience gained during student mobility. The only limitations of using the Erasmus+ and other networks in the case of students are the willingness of the person, some students have indicated that they are not interested, are afraid or can not go to mobility for personal reasons. These activities provide added value to the implementation of the study process and the quality of studies.

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

The ICS study field has a broad network of local and international partners. Academic staff members

involved in the implementation of the study field actively participate in conferences, joint projects and other activities locally and in cooperation with other HEIs. Social partners are fond of student knowledge and have indicated different ways of involvement in the study process – providing thesis topics, potential job opportunities, involvement in the evaluation of the final thesis, and expressing opinions about study programmes. However, a lot of unrealized potentials exists for the development of international cooperation, which would raise the quality of scientific research, incoming mobility and recognition of the ICS study field at the international level. Current activities and strategies implemented for faculty and study field might not be enough to achieve the goal of international recognition. Outgoing student mobility can be considered good but always can be improved and students can be encouraged more to do so. The outgoing mobility of staff members should be improved since this directly can influence study quality and bring new potential connections to the study field.

Strengths:
1. Employers are actively involved in the development of the study field and provide direct input from the industry.
2. UL ICS field is actively working with social partners locally.
3. There is a broad network of cooperation partners for internships and mobility opportunities.
4. Graduates of all study programmes are demanded and highly valued by employers.

Weaknesses
1. The study field does not fully utilise its potential connection network with foreign partners. There are no indications of contracts and agreements outside the Erasmus+ network.
2. Teaching staff mobility could be higher.
3. Current activities of internationalisation are insufficient to fully achieve the strategic goal of the study field and faculty to become an internationally recognisable social science centre.

Assessment of the requirement [3]

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The study field is broadly using local partner connections with all stakeholders, which helps to achieve the aims of the study field. However, regarding the partners from abroad, there is a lot of room for improvement, such as expanding cooperation agreements outside the Erasmus+ network and increasing the outgoing mobility among the academic staff. These deficiencies can be eliminated with effort and support from faculty and staff members themselves and are not sufficient enough to decrease evaluation to partially compliant.

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

Analysis

The recommendations provided in the previous assessment of the Study field are consistently being implemented. During the visit examples of numerous changes made in the last two years, which have already been mentioned earlier in this report, were obtained. The implementation plan of the recommendations provided by the previous accreditation experts is summarised in Appendix 18 (SER, p. 129). It should be taken into account that the last evaluation was carried out two years ago and that the members of the expert group are aware that there was no time to implement long-term

measures, but the attached plan shows that many activities will be carried out in the coming years and the expert group strongly encourages consistent compliance of planned activities because they will definitely contribute to the quality of the UL and the FSS. Experts' recommendations and their implementation progress are regularly discussed at departmental meetings and Study Council meetings, and they are monitored by the head of the Study field and the FSS dean (SER, p. 129).

As for recommendations for the study field, FSS has already implemented several recommendations. The goals of the study field that are achievable during the reporting period are defined. These are in line with the UL Strategy 2021-2027 and the FSS Strategy 2022-2027 (Appendix 18). As already mentioned in this report, the recommendations from the previous assessment have been used in developing the FSS Strategy 2022–2027 and the FSS Human Resources Development Plan 2022–2027. An efficient format of self-analysis for the staff that could be used as input for HR analysis was introduced as well as a new methodology for collecting feedback from students and partners (Appendix 18). In accordance with the recommendation on improving the language skills of the staff members, several faculty members have been educated within the Academic Staff Development Project and further improvements are planned (Appendix 18). Course descriptions were updated, including literature, learning outcomes and teaching methods. A new English version of the FSS website was developed (Appendix 18). When it comes to the study programmes Information Management and Librarian Studies and Information, Young Professionals Schools was held, marketing materials were developed and published, and the reasons for student attrition were analysed (Appendix 18) in order to increase the number of students. Several lecturers have joined international academic organisations in order to broaden the Department's network of potential research associates and staff outgoing mobility has increased (Appendix 18). A list of everything that was done can be found in Appendix 18.

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

Given the very short period since the last assessment procedure, the UL has already actively fulfilled numerous recommendations that were possible in the short term. There are many more recommendations, and it should be emphasised that these are precisely the ones that will contribute the most to increasing the quality of these study programs, which will be implemented in the coming period with a final deadline of 2027. The measures provided in the action plan are realistic and measurable, and if the UL and FSS fulfil everything they plan, it will significantly improve internal processes and the study programs themselves. The expert group believes that the UL and FSS have made a good start with the implementation of the recommendations and certainly advises them to continue in this way. In the next assessment procedure it is definitely recommended to check whether all the recommendations from the previous evaluation procedure (2020) (with an emphasis on long-term measures with a deadline of 2027) have been fulfilled, and not only the one to which this report refers.

Strengths:
1. Clearly developed measures are planned to be implemented with the aim of improving the entire system, based on the recommendations of the previous assessment procedure.
2. Most of the proposed recommendations are already in the process of implementation.

Weaknesses
1. The possibility that the fulfilment of certain long-term requirements may be delayed much longer than planned with regard to the next evaluation period.

Assessment of the requirement [4]

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

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

The university made a detailed plan to eliminate all the deficiencies observed in the last assessment procedure. Some of them have already been removed, while the higher education institution will need a little more time to implement certain recommendations. Namely, the plan foresees that all deficiencies will be removed by 2027.

1.7. Recommendations for the Study Field

Short-term recommendations

1. Provide much more information (for example semesterly with all key indicators) about the quality assurance system and evaluations carried out within the QS on the official website as this is important for current and future students

Long-term recommendations

In order to put more emphasis on the internationalisation aspect and receive more value out of it, if no programmes in English are planned, either create and integrate more courses in English or implement the internationalisation at home strategy.

Create a very clear communication strategy for the information management study programme, in order to emphasise its diverse perspectives and include graduates as well as social partners in communication and marketing.

Have clearer integration, roles and responsibilities for the students and the social partners to participate in various administrative committees related to the development of the studies and study quality assurance.

Have a budget line or motivational systems linked to the annual performance plans for the study programme committees/ directors.

In reporting scientific achievements, greater focus should be placed on publications in high-impact international peer-reviewed journals.

Expand cooperation agreements outside the Erasmus network, for example by signing mutual cooperation agreements with universities from abroad that also ensures not only mobility but the connection to research and potential writing of joint projects.

Promote and increase the outgoing mobility (both short-term and long-term) activity among the teaching staff, since this is a vital component to finding out and bringing back new methodologies, new connections etc. that can benefit the whole study field and improve overall competencies of staff.

Strategic goals of internationalisation have to be reconsidered and made more ambitious to achieve the goal of becoming an internationally recognisable social science centre.

Continuously educate all stakeholders about the quality assurance system with special emphasis on how each of them can contribute to the quality of UL and FSS.

II - "Communication Studies" ASSESSMENT

II - "Communication Studies" ASSESSMENT

2.1. Indicators Describing the Study Programme

Analysis

The study programme teaches a wide array of communication-related topics and issues and prepares students to work in communication-related industries, thus it corresponds to this study field. According to the classification of Latvian education (the Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No 322, 13.06.2017), Journalism and communication, in which this study programme issues a bachelor's degree, fall within Information and communication sciences.

The SER shows that the title, code, the degree to be obtained, professional qualification or degree and professional qualification of the study programme, aims, objectives, learning outcomes, and admission requirements are interrelated.

The title, "Communication studies," encompasses a wide array of communication-related processes, issues, and professions (The SER refers to this programme as "Communication studies," although the UL website calls it "Communication science"; Appendix 18 also refers to the programme 43321 as "Communication science"). The first two digits of the study programme code, 43321, refer to a bachelor's level degree, and the next digit, 3, refers to the thematic group "Social Sciences, Commercial Sciences, and the Law." Code 32 denotes Information and communication sciences, and 321 — Journalism and communication, which corresponds to the contents of this programme. The degree to be obtained, a bachelor of social sciences in Journalism and communication is thus suitable.

The goal of the study programme is the "Provision of knowledge, skills and competence in media analysis and production, journalism, corporate communications, public relations and advertising, offering general theoretical and practical knowledge about the field of communication in contemporary society, including the ability to study and analyse communications phenomena and to develop the ability to work creatively in various areas and industries of communications." The tasks of the study programme involve the provision of knowledge in communication science and related social science disciplines, as well as research methods and contemporary communication processes; professional skills needed to work in industries; the development of creative thinking; as well as knowledge and skills needed to continue studies at the master's level.

The wording of the study outcomes in terms of knowledge, skills, and competencies generally are in line with the Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No. 322 (13.06.2017). One issue concerns competencies, which, according to the government regulation, should include the following: "Ability to formulate, describe, and analyse practical problems in their profession, select the necessary information and use it to solve clearly defined problems, participate in the development of the relevant professional field, show the understanding of the place of the profession in a wider social context." However, the SER lists the following competencies as the outcome of the study programme: "8. Independent identification, selection and analysis of information, with critical analysis of public and communications processes; 9. An understanding of the standards and ethical norms of academic work; 10. An understanding and appreciation of how one's professional work can influence society and the environment, as well as an ability to take part in the development of the relevant professional area." As can be seen here, the report does not say that upon graduation, the students will be able to analyse practical problems in their profession; the analysis competence is limited to public and communication processes. However, the stated goal of the program includes "the ability to study and analyse communications phenomena and to develop the ability to work creatively in various areas and industries of communications," which could be interpreted as including analysis of problems. Thus, the misalignment mentioned above is arguably a minor issue.

Admission requirements are as follows: high school diploma and centralised examination grades in the Latvian language, a foreign language (English, French, or German), and mathematics. These

requirements are reasonable. High school students who attend the classes at the School of Young Communication Specialists or have performed well in the scholarly work and/or creative competition in communication science are able to receive bonus points during the admission process, thus increasing their chance to acquire a state budget-funded place.

The duration of this study programme is three years for full-time studies, which is the typical length for academic bachelor's programs within the Bologna process. Part-time studies of three years and five months also are being offered.

During the previous accreditation, the expert group noted that the aim, goals, objectives, learning objectives, and admission requirements of the study programme are not fully related. The SER states that since the previous accreditation, the learning outcomes have been reformulated in accordance with the Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No. 322 (13.06.2017), but as shown above, the formulations still are not in perfect alignment with what the Regulations require. The experts do not have doubts about the overall compliance of the study program and the ability of the study field to run this study program, but it still should be made sure that all the requirements in terms of knowledge, skills, and competencies are listed in the learning outcomes.

This study programme offers diverse skills, competencies, and knowledge that are useful in a wide array of professional and academic endeavours. Its attractiveness is increased by offering specialisation through two sub-programs: "Business communication" and "Media studies." The former sub-programme is aimed at students who are interested in corporate communication, public relations, and advertising, and the latter sub-programme offers an emphasis on journalism and multimedia production. Both of these specialisations cater to labour markets in which demand for qualified specialists remains high. The data offered in the SER also indicate that the majority of the graduates are working in communication-related fields. Although several other HEIs in Latvia offer communication studies, this study programme maintains its competitiveness in attracting new students.

The number of students in this programme remains stable. According to the SER, in 2021, 268 full-time and 217 part-time students were registered. Various mechanisms exist to allow attracting and retain students, including the School of Young Communication Specialists, extra-mural part-time study format, which allows combining studies with work, and the structuring of the study programme in a way that during the final semester of full-time studies students can focus primarily on writing their bachelor's thesis. The SER notes that since the latest accreditation, the information in English about the study programme that is available on the website of the FSS has been expanded so that the programme is more visible to potential mobility students. The Development Plan for the Study Field states the promotion of the international visibility of study programs as one of its aims and envisions an increase in the number of study courses delivered in English, which is an adequate aim, but currently, this study programme is not dependent on incoming students for immediate survival.

The SER notes that one of the main reasons why a difference exists between the number of third-year students and graduates is that during this time, many students are busy working in their jobs. While this observation reflects positively on the employability of the students, it also highlights the consequences of combining studies and work. The report states that this group of students "almost always" ultimately manage to graduate. At the same time, the need to combine work and studies almost inevitably leaves a negative impact on the quality of studies to which the students are not able to devote completely.

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

The parameters of the study programme are generally compliant with the study field. A misalignment exists between the wording of study outcomes provided in the SER and the Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No. 322 (13.06.2017), regarding competencies. This is not a major issue but

should be fixed anyway. The number of matriculated students is stable, and this study programme remains popular among the students. The offered specialisation in two sub-programs further allows it to meet the demands of both students and the labour market. Students are able to find a job in the profession, but these studies also help them to start an academic career.

Strengths
1. Popular study programme with a sustainable number of matriculated students.
2. Strong interest from communication-related industries to hire graduates of the programme.
3. Sub-programs reflect the response to the interests of students and the demands of the job market.
4. The School of Young Communication Specialists allows reaching to connect with potential students

Weaknesses:
1. The high demand for students in the job market has the potential to negatively impact their academic development.
2. The wording of the study outcomes does not perfectly align with the Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No. 322 (13.06.2017), although the discrepancy is a minor issue.

2.2. The Content of Studies and Implementation Thereof

Analysis

Overall, the bachelor's study programme "Communication Studies" meets the requirements set for the 6th level of the Latvian Qualifications Framework Structure, adheres to all of the other relevel legal Latvian educational legal requirements, as well as is substantiated on the up-to-date trends formulated by the external partners, the labour market, the industry and the society. The programme incorporates the key objectives and learning outcomes related to mass media and communication science developments. The programme encompasses a strong balance between the theoretical foundation and the practical applications. This is achieved by the synergy of the academic staff grounding their knowledge and experience on the most up-to-date research findings, their own professional experience from the relevant sectors, as well as from the insights received from the guest speakers. The key stakeholders engage in the feedback provision for quality assurance purposes and for the necessary timely developments. Based on such feedback the new courses "Digital Marketing Solutions" and "Written Journalism Genres" have been introduced into the programme. The SER (p. 181) states that the programme pays high attention to the fact that, according to the employers' observations, the students lack writing skills. Thus, this is accomplished through such courses as "Issues of the Latvian Language Culture", and "Text, Author, Genre", as well as sub-programme specialisation courses "Public Relations Writing," "Advertising Texts" and "Work in Editorial Office". The most recent course added with the goal of strengthening the writing skills was "Creation of Media Texts". In addition, the writing skills are developed by writing academic papers and the final thesis. However, the expert group has received statements from employers that still the graduates miss elementary writing skills. Hopefully, this will be resolved through the aforementioned courses and tools. Moreover, the programme incorporates a set of necessary content related to new technological developments. Journalism courses are also constantly reviewed and upgraded. The SER explains that the programme has been updated by reducing four sub-programmes to two: "Business communication'' and "Media studies" (p. 182). It is reasoned that this change was implemented due to the changing student numbers as well as based on employer feedback. It is also elaborated that the graduates of this bachelor's study programme can continue to further specialise in the master's study programme "Communication Science" and the equivalent sub-programmes. Those students who met with the experts did not yet have a chance to experience

the sub-programmes and, thus, were not able to comment. The experts recommend to the study field director and the study programme directors, as well as the heads of the sub-programmes, continuously observe the quality and success of these sub-programmes because the same paths in the bachelor's and master's programmes might not be of strong attraction to the students, and maybe offering them at the bachelor's cycle, but not the master's might occur as a necessary decision to be taken in the future. It seems to the experts that the specialisation in the bachelor's cycle is reasonable, for the students to make sound decisions on how to continue in the master's cycle. Meanwhile, the reasoning behind retaining the same specialisation at the Master's level too is not clearly explained.

On page 184, it is stated that the staff reacted to the previous expert group's comments to include more courses in English, in order to develop the English language skills of the students and to accept the incoming Erasmus students. The experts observe that this is a plausible inclusion. To conclude, the expert group confirmed during the on-site visit that the learning outcomes, as well as the courses, are reviewed and revised regularly. Meanwhile, the teaching staff meet regularly to discuss any potential overlap of the content and to avoid it. This was confirmed during the meeting with the programme's students. Graduate competencies were praised by employers.

The study programme primarily involves a set of traditional study methods, also including such methods as case studies or educational field trips to various relevant companies. The SER also mentions some innovative teaching and learning methods, for example, digital games for the practical learning of media skills principles (p. 185), used in the course „The Media Literacy Development Game''. Another method mentioned in SER is an international competition, "PR Arena," at the University of Bucharest in Romania. The SER also offers information about the guest lecturers, students leading seminars, and students teaching students of the earlier course years. Research competencies are also developed via relevant courses. In addition, students can select the so-called excellence courses. The study environment is prepared in a way to accommodate individual as well as group learning. Study materials are individual student centred and are developing critical thinking and the ability to reflect. The E-learning environment also supports individual learning processes. The expert group was able to familiarise themselves with the Moodle environment and see some of the more contemporary study methods used in the virtual environment. Students are able to observe their own progress by seeing their grades in the process of learning, as well as by receiving necessary feedback from the teaching staff. Student-centred learning and teaching are formulated in the learning outcomes, through individual consultations and feedback. The coherent alignment among the learning outcomes, the study methods, and the assessment methods is ensured. The teaching and learning process includes real-world assignments – problems and challenges. Creative learning and teaching are supported by such environments as "MansMedijs.lv" and "Kivi TV", magazine "Avantūra". Despite this, it needs to be mentioned that during the on-site visit, the employers commented that the graduates lack creativity skills. Students also participate in internships to test the theory in practice and write their final bachelor's thesis. The study programme is coherently planned out with a logical journey for a student to begin the learning process and conclude it. Overall, the diverse needs of the students are taken into account through various means of feedback collection.

The study programme includes a mandatory 6-week internship. The tasks, results and sub-programme results are listed in SER in great detail, as well as in the course descriptions. The students had very good feedback about the internship availability and quality during the meeting with the experts. In addition, the employers also stated that they provide internship possibilities to the students. Moreover, as stated by SER on page 195, 15-20% of students receive job offers after internships.

Communication studies is a broad topic and this is represented by the variety of thesis topics. Thus, a programme provides the students to write a thesis in an area relevant to their interests and subsequent professional aspirations. UL and FSS, as well as ICS research areas and interests, are

also the guiding aspects for thesis writing. Students utilise both – qualitative and quantitative research methods. The majority of the thesis grades are either very good (8) or good (7).

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

The bachelor's study programme "Communication Studies" has well-formulated goals and learning outcomes. The courses are developed and organised to meet necessary programme learning outcomes. The programme is continuously updated to meet the necessary trends. New courses are introduced on a regular basis, based on the feedback received by employers, and students and based on the newest research findings. There is a clear coherent alignment among the learning outcomes, the study methods and the assessment methods. The teaching and learning methods involve the necessary traditional methods, as well as innovative methods, theoretical and practical applications are accomplished via various courses and teaching methods, students have the possibility to flexibly elect courses or sub-programmes. Despite this, employers mention that students still lack writing and creativity skills. Also, when asked about some innovative or contemporary teaching and learning methods, students and the teaching staff were primarily mentioning the more traditional, classical methods. Internships receive very good feedback from the students and about 15-20% of students receive job offers after them. Final theses offer a broad relevant variety of topics.

Strengths:
1. The inclusion of the courses taught in English, in order to develop English language skills and to accept the incoming Erasmus students.
2. Good scope of the programme, which allows for the achievement of the necessary goals and learning outcomes.
3. The appropriate decision was made to reduce the sub-programmes to two ("Business Communication" and "Media Studies").
4. Quality internships, after which 15-20% of students receive job offers.
5. Relevant final theses topics.
6. In general, employers praise graduate competencies.

Weaknesses:
1. According to employers, graduates lack writing and creativity skills.
2. Traditional teaching and learning methods are still prevailing and there is still room to underline the contemporary or innovative methods even more.

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

   NA

2.3. Resources and Provision of the Study Programme

Analysis

During the familiarisation with the SAR and the on-site visit, the experts were convinced that the higher education institution provides all the necessary informational, scientific, material and technical basis for the specificity and implementation of the study programme and creates

preconditions for the achievement of the study results and the provision of a quality study process. There are spacious rooms available to accommodate a wide range of audience sizes. Students are provided with university Wi-Fi to use their computers for studying. Students can connect to electricity in the audio studios. In addition, the Lecture-rooms are fully or partially equipped with multimedia projectors, computers, and sound equipment. The faculty has two fully equipped computer rooms with all the necessary software for the study process. In the computer rooms, students have access to MS Office (Word, Powerpoint, Excel, Teams, etc.), IBM SPSS Statistics, Adobe Creative Cloud (Premiere, Photoshop, InDesign, etc.), Nvivo, Gephi, Protégé, MultiTes, and UCINet software. For the acquisition of specialised courses, such as multimedia skills, there is a specialised Multimedia Studio with all the necessary equipment not only for filming and sound recording but also software for editing multimedia content, where students can work not only on weekdays but also on weekends. A professional video engineer is hired to ensure technical support to the students. Students have access to seven video cameras with tripods and other necessary equipment, including portable lights. All the cameras have charging systems and capacious sets of Li-Ion batteries. This makes it possible for seven separate groups to work at the studio or outside of it (SAR 198 p.). There are also five go-pro cameras with various strengthening opportunities such as equipment that makes it possible to film underwater. High-quality sound recordings involve 25 professional microphones of various types and models, as well as 15 professional tape recorders that are mostly used to record sound outside of the pavilion. The "Digital Photography" course has four mirror cameras with various lenses and flashbulbs to help students to gain photography skills. As mentioned in the SAR (page 72), investments in the development of study quality and research of the study field consist of UL investments, study activity investments; investments in science attracted from international, national and university project calls. Thanks to the investments mentioned above, the UL can subscribe to databases relevant to the social sciences and update computer equipment and software needed for teaching. The investments have enabled the improvement of the facilities of the Multimedia Studio, which is an invaluable tool for developing the skills of future professionals in the field of communication. The library's resources and databases are available to students and meet the needs of their study fields, and the library is accessible 60 hours a week. In cooperation with the Information Technology Department of the University, the Library provides free online access to the University e-resources repository http://dspace.lu.lv.

According to the SAR (page 82), a total of 42 e-resource platforms are available at UL in 2022 (both e–book platforms – VLeBooks, ProQuest Ebook Central, and e-journal databases – Cambridge Journals Online (archive available until 31.12.2018), Emerald eJournals Premier (archive available until 22.04.2020.), JSTOR I–XII, XIV, XV and Life Sciences Collections, HeinOnline, Oxford Journals Online, Sage Journals, ScienceDirect, SpringerLink Contemporary Journals, Taylor & Francis Social Science & Humanities Library, Physical Review Journals, Westlaw, Wiley Online Library E-Journals Full Collection and separately purchased e-journals, and Lursoft Newspaper Library NEWS.LV, reference resources – LETA online news, LETA Archive and Nozare.lv, Letonika, tools – SAGE Research Methods, Passport, Orbis, Overleaf Commons, MarketLine, mixed–format databases – ClinicalKey, Culturethèque, European Pharmacopoeia, LVS Latvian Standards Online Reading Room, OECD iLibrary, ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global, ScienceDirect, Scopus, UpToDate, Web of Science Core Collection). Communication students have access to a wide range of databases that allow them to use sources used by communication professionals daily, such as access to the LETA news agency's databases, including its archive. In addition to MS Office 365, students and staff are provided with software such as SPSS, Question Pro, Autodesk, MathWorks MatLAB, Esri ArcGIS, etc. If distance learning is required, both MS Teams and Zoom are used. The University also provides technical support, if needed, for lecturers or students using specific applications.

After meeting with the ICS management and reviewing the SAR, the experts conclude that the allocated funding ensures the full implementation of the study process. The funding for the implementation of the study program is provided by a state budget subsidy from the Ministry of

Education and Science, which for the academic year 2021/2022 amounted to EUR 1630 for full-time studies; the tuition fee, considering the conditions of the university, is EUR 2300 per year for full-time studies and EUR 1750 per year for part-time studies (SAR p. 198). The total study programme budget is expected to be EUR 911,167 per year. The ICS direction's planned income is based on a forecast of 56 full-time students in budget places, 212 full-time fee-paying students, and 217 part-time fee-paying students (SAR 199). As mentioned in the SAR, the programme's costs are calculated considering the methodology developed by the UL and the relevant legislation. Having regard to all aspects and the information on the number of students in the academic year 2021/2022 (268 full-time students), the estimated cost of the full-time programme per student is EUR 1840 per year, while the total cost of the programme is EUR 526 533 per year (p. 199 of the SAR). The SAR university representatives have also modelled the possible changes in the cost in case of a decrease in the number of students, considering the proposed tuition fees and the state budget subsidy. The calculations show that for the Programme to be cost-effective and to provide students with a quality study process, the number of fee-paying students in the Programme (in all courses combined) should be at least 184. In contrast, if the Programme had only budget students, the number of students should reach 346 (SAR p. 200).

Currently, the programme is not implemented in part-time regular students (PTRS) form, but the SAR states that the programme developers expect at least 170 students to study in the PTOS programme. With this planned number of students, the estimated cost of the PTIR programme per student is EUR 1 744 per year, and the total cost of the programme is EUR 259 758 per year (p. 201 of the SAR). In analysing the costs of part-time in-person studies, the programme implementers have used the student data for the academic year 2021/2022, assuming 217 students studying at the PTRS programme. The estimated cost per student is EUR 1347 per year, and the programme's total cost is EUR 270 676 per year (SAR p. 202). For the programme to be cost-effective and to ensure a quality learning process for students, the number of fee-paying students in the programme (all courses combined) should be at least 119. All the calculations presented in the SAR show that the UL has sufficient financial resources to implement the study programme and its sub-programmes and to ensure their further development. In addition, the faculties can also attract financial support for developing the programmes from the UL Study Quality Enhancement Fund. Investments from various projects are drawn to improve the material and technical basis of the programme (SAR p. 204). To attract more potential fee-paying students, the faculty has also developed a parallel PR campaign to the university's admissions campaign, which faculty representatives mentioned to the experts.

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

The study programme "Communication studies 43321" provides all the necessary informational, scientific, and material-technical basis for the specifics and implementation of the study programme and creates preconditions for the achievement of study results and the provision of a quality study process. In general, the provision of various technologies for strengthening the skills of future communication professionals, which can be acquired in the Multimedia Studio (availability of technologies), as well as information communication facilities - software for the study process, computer classrooms and the possibility to use the licensed software on their computers, is good. The university has also carried out a thorough financial cost-benefit analysis of the costs of the Study field in all forms of studies, concluding that there are sufficient financial resources to implement the study programme and sub-programmes while ensuring their further development.

Strengths:
1. ICS provides high-quality material and technical facilities to support students' learning process.
2. A well-equipped multimedia studio with cameras, computers, and microphones for the training of

practical skills and the support of a professional video engineer.

3. Students have access to library resources 60 hours per week.

4. Students can use the MS Teams environment on their computers during their studies.

5. A wide range of online resources is available (42 different e-resources)

6. The Cost-effectiveness of each field of study has been carefully assessed.

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 programme provides all the necessary informational, scientific, and material-technical basis for the specifics and implementation of the study programme and creates preconditions for the achievement of study results and the provision of a quality study process. The university has also carried out a thorough financial cost-benefit analysis of the costs of the Study field in all forms of studies.

2.4. Teaching Staff

Analysis

Currently, 29 faculty members participate in the implementation of the study programme, of which 2 professors, 3 associate professors and 5 assistant professors (SER, p. 205, table 3.1.10). During the onsite visit dean and the academic staff emphasised the generation change in teaching staff and that they have more and more younger employees, which is reflected in the quality of the study programme itself. In order to ensure the quality of the study programme, practitioners are also included in the performance of classes which is great because it enables students to familiarise themselves with the current trends in the labour market (SER, p. 204; meetings with the academic staff). In this way, students get both theoretical and practical knowledge at the same time. It should also be noted that some teachers participate in the market as specialists in the field in parallel with their academic activities, which also contributes to the quality of the study programme.

The course content regularly includes the latest trends, both in terms of course content itself and in relation to professional literature, both digital and available in the faculty library. Teachers participate in national and international projects (a list of the projects is available in SER, p. 206 and in Appendix 13) and point out that they include the results of their research in the contents of the courses themselves. With the aim of exchanging experience at the international level, during the visit, the teachers highlighted their membership in various international organisations, such as, for example, the European Communication Research and Education Association (ECREA) and the European Public Relation, Education and Research Association (EUPRERA).

The teachers in this study programme have great experience in participating in scientific conferences and projects, on the local and international levels (Appendix 10, Appendix 13). The diversity of topics, conferences and projects shows that FSS has provided teaching staff with a wide range of knowledge and experience, which can only positively reflect on the study programme itself. The teachers expressed great satisfaction with the support they receive from the administration of the higher education institution, both in terms of work balance and funding the scientific activities. Despite this, it is evident from the Plan of the bachelor's study programme Communication Science that some teachers hold a large number of subjects (for example, one professor teaches the following subjects: Text, Author, and Genre; Introduction to Studies and Research; Research Methods in Social Sciences; Bachelor Thesis; Course Paper in Communication Science;

Communication and Popular Culture; Academic Project in Communication Studies; Introduction in Performative Practices; Creative Project in Communication Studies; Radio and TV Speech; Introduction to Theatre, Cinema and Television Criticism; Introduction in Performative Practice), which is not good for the quality of teaching and the teaching process, not even from the perspective of the teacher, who can hardly prepare well with so many subjects at the semester level, and not even from the perspective of students who have the same teachers from semester to semester.

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

The qualification of the teaching staff members complies with the requirements for the implementation of the study programme and the requirements set forth in the regulatory enactments. There is a great collaboration between the teaching staff in order to align the content of the study courses. Teachers have great scientific experience (participation in projects, conferences and publishing scientific papers) and they regularly apply the results of scientific research in the teaching process itself. There is also great cooperation between the scientists and practitioners in the implementation of the study programme. However, despite the support of the HEI management, some teachers are overburdened in this study program.

Strengths:
1. Involvement of teachers in scientific projects at the national and international levels.
2. Cooperation between scientists and practitioners in the implementation of the study program.
3. Institutional support for teachers in teaching and scientific work (time allocation and financial support).

Weaknesses:
1. The excessive workload of individual teachers on 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

It is evident from the attached CVs (Appendix 10) that the academic staff and visiting lecturers have the necessary qualifications for the implementation of the study programme and the requirements set out in the respective regulatory enactments.

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 UL has provided a detailed document in Annex 32. That provides proof of the Study programme "Communication studies 43321" compliance with the Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No. 240 "Regulations on the State Standard of Academic Education".

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

NA

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 study programme implementation language is Latvian. Study course descriptions are prepared in Latvian and English. Study course descriptions could be improved. For example, none of the study course descriptions contains information about the personnel involved in the implementation of the study course nor the study course developer, or the person responsible for delivering the study course. This issue can be resolved on a long-term basis and does not influence the overall evaluation of the criteria. Additionally, it is advisable that the study course literature is renewed on an annual basis and is not older than 10 years. See Annex 35.

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The diploma issued and diploma supplement corresponds to Cabinet of ministers No. 202. Annex 29.

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The UL has provided the Declaration of the head of study field (Annex 37) certifying that the academic staff involved in the implementation of the study programme "Communication Studies" (43321) complies with the requirements specified in Section 55, Paragraph one, Clause 3 of the Law on Higher Education Institutions.

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: Fully compliant

The UL has provided Decision No 1.10/78 (05.12.2019) of the Council for Higher Education addressed to the University of Latvia on the implementation of the academic study programme "Communication Studies 43321" the Council has decided to allow the University of Latvia to implement the academic study programme in Communication studies (Annex 30).

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

NA

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 UL has provided a Head of Study Field Declaration, stating that the teaching staff members involved in the implementation of the study programme "Communication Studies 43321" 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. Annex 11.

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

NA

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 study agreement is fully compliant with the Law on Higher Education Institutions Section 46, paragraph 2 and regulations of Cabinet of Ministers 23.01.2007. to Regulation No. 70 "Mandatory regulations to be included in the study agreement" (Annex 7. Study Agreement for Studies at UL. Standard Sample). On a short-term basis, UL has to specify agreement point 2.15., with reference point 4.18. is not correct in regard to students' intellectual property.

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

UL has provided the confirmation document No. 1-13/460 that in case of termination of the study programme students will be provided with the opportunity to continue studies in the Bachelor level study programme "Sociology 43314". See annex 5.2. Additionally UL has provided agreement No. 6012-D55.2/195 with Vidzemes Augstskola that students will be given the opportunity to continue their studies in professional Bachelor's study programmes "Communication and Public relations 42321" or "Media studies and Journalism 42321". See annex 5.5.

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The UL has provided the document - Refund and Compensation Policy Statement, No 1-13/129)

(Annex 6.), which confirms that the 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.

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

NA

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

NA

Assessment of the requirement [8]

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

All regulation requirements are met with minor deficiencies that can be easily eliminated.

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

The content of the program is in accordance with the requirements of the labour market. The study programme is continuously being updated to meet the necessary trends and it offers diverse competencies and knowledge that are useful in a wide array of professional and academic endeavours. Specialisation through two subprograms „Business communication" and "Media studies'' is being offered. There is a clear coherent alignment among the learning outcomes, the study methods and the assessment methods. There is great cooperation between the scientists and practitioners in the implementation of the study programme. However, despite the support of the HEI management, some teachers are overburdened in this study program.

Strengths:
1. Popular study programme with a sustainable number of matriculated students.
2. Quality internships after which 15-20% of students receive job offers.
3. Cooperation between scientists and practitioners in the implementation of the study program.
4. Institutional support for teachers in teaching and scientific work (time allocation and financial support).

Weaknesses:
1. The excessive workload of individual teachers on the study programme.

Evaluation of the study programme "Communication Studies"

Evaluation of the study programme:

Good

2.6. Recommendations for the Study Programme "Communication Studies"

Short-term recommendations

> The wording of the study outcomes, and particularly competencies, should align more closely with the Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No. 322 (13.06.2017) and accentuate the ability to analyse practical problems in their profession.

Long-term recommendations

> Include more specific learning outcomes and related courses or topics in order to underline the development of writing and creativity skills.

> Include additional modern (innovative) teaching and learning study and assessment methods.

II - "Information Management" ASSESSMENT

II - "Information Management" ASSESSMENT

2.1. Indicators Describing the Study Programme

Analysis

According to the classification of Latvian education (the Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No 322, 13.06.2017), Library, information and archive studies fall within Information and communication sciences. Thus, this study programme clearly belongs to the study field. The contents of the study programme, with its emphasis on information, and the outcomes of the studies in terms of knowledge, skills, and competencies are in compliance with the study field.

The SER shows that the title, code, the degree to be obtained, professional qualification or degree and professional qualification of the study programme, aims, objectives, learning outcomes, and admission requirements are interrelated. The title, "Information management," highlights the breadth of information-related issues this study programme covers and signals the intention to broaden the target audience of this study programme beyond those who are interested in working in traditional memory institutions. The first two digits of the study programme code, 43322, refer to a bachelor's level degree, and the next digit, 3, refers to the thematic group "Social Sciences, Commercial Sciences, and the Law." Code 32 denotes Information and communication sciences, and 322 — Library, information, and archive studies, which corresponds to the contents of this programme. The degree to be obtained, a bachelor of social sciences in Library, information, and archive studies, is thus appropriate. The aim of the study programme is "to provide basic and specific knowledge, skills and competence in the area of information management." The tasks of the study programme involve the provision of knowledge and skills related to information management; understanding of people's information behaviour and the information society; insight into library science, information science, book science, archival science and other relevant social sciences. The wording of the outcomes of the studies in terms of knowledge, skills, and competencies are in line with the Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No 322 (13.06.2017).

The admission requirements are as follows: a high school diploma and a positive grade in the Latvian language, foreign language, and mathematics exams. (SER says that the admission requirements are "successful grades in Latvian language classes, as well as one foreign language and mathematics knowledge" without mentioning the centralised exams. However, the information on the UL website clarifies this and states that the grades in question refer to the centralised exams.) These requirements are justified. High school students who attend the classes at the School of Young Information Specialists are able to receive bonus points during the admission process, thus increasing their chance to acquire a state budget-funded place. The duration of this study

programme is three years for full-time studies, with 120 credits, which conforms with the Latvian Law of Higher Education Institutions. Part-time extramural studies of four years also are being offered.

During the previous accreditation, the expert group noted that the degree this study programme awards does not fully comply with the Latvian Education Classification. The awarded degree should have been a bachelor of social sciences in Library, Information, and Archive Studies. Furthermore, they noted that although the programme in its goals mentions museums, these institutions are underrepresented in the study programme. Both of these criticisms are addressed. The SER also mentions that the goals, tasks and expected results of the study programme have been updated and the details about the bonus points for admission that the attendees of the Young Information Specialists' School can collect have been added.

This is the only academic study programme in Latvia that offers a bachelor's degree in Library, Information, and Archive Studies. The graduates are highly sought after in traditional memory institutions, such as libraries and archives, and they play a key role in preserving cultural heritage. With the development of the information society, their knowledge and skills are of great importance in other entities, too, including private commercial companies that also need information specialists. Interest in the graduates from such entities would be of great importance in making this study programme more attractive for potential students because traditional memory institutions offer relatively low salaries, which may dissuade potential students from joining this programme. This issue was acknowledged in the discussions during the visit by the experts to the study field.

It is not hard to assess the actual demand for graduates in higher-paying sectors, despite the obvious importance of graduates in a wide array of industries. The SER references the "Informative Report on Medium and Long-term Labour Market Forecasts" by the Latvian Ministry of Economics, which says that in the medium term (by 2027), information and communication technologists will be among those professions in which the number of available jobs increases the most. However, this study programme prepares information specialists, rather than technologists, and the overlap between these two categories is not self-evident.

The data about the employment of the graduates indicate that the majority of them are employed in their respective industries, but the remaining graduates have found employment somewhere else. All in all, the evidence shows that the graduates of this study programme do not have a problem with finding jobs.

The dynamics of students that are enrolled in the study programme remain relatively stable. Between the years 2016 and 2021, the programme had an average of about 84 students across all of the study forms. During these years, about 32 students on average were matriculated. These numbers are not high. Given the economic context, these numbers are acceptable, but the contents of the study programme have the potential to attract more students whose skills could be used in other sectors too. Some of the disconnect between what the study programme can offer and its desirability among potential students could be addressed by new marketing solutions.

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

The parameters of the study programme are compliant with the study field. The number of students in this programme remains stable, although one could expect it to be higher. Demand exists for graduates, although most of it appears to come from traditional memory institutions, which do not offer great salaries. This aspect reduces the economic attractiveness of the otherwise good study program.

Strengths:
1. Unique study programme with great social and cultural significance.
2. Demand for graduates from memory institutions.

3. The School of Young Information Specialists is a promising platform through which potential students can be attracted.

Weaknesses
1. The offering of this study programme is not fully considered or appreciated by its target audience, which is arguably larger than the actual student pool.
2. Many of the most important current employees of the graduates are not able to pay high salaries, which decreases the desirability of this programme in the eyes of the potential students.

2.2. The Content of Studies and Implementation Thereof

Analysis

The content of the programme is based on complex sources including national and international, research findings, new trends and perspectives gathered during relevant conferences, insights collected from various relevant associations, labour market representatives, views from partner universities, stakeholder feedback, and others. The programme structure includes general education courses, sector-related courses, theoretical foundations for information management, management of information services, research work and internship. The courses comply with the goals and learning outcomes of the programme. On page 143 of the SER, it is mentioned that the programme representatives have reacted to the previous expert group's recommendations. To begin with, the teacher of the course "Methods for analysing social networks" will focus the content on amateur science. In regards to the course "Electronic publishing" and the comment that it should include the aspects of scholarly publications and communications, the ICS representatives report that careful considerations have been made and state that these topics are already included in the other courses (such as: "Introduction to information science", "Digital libraries and e-repositories". Finally, the ICS representatives communicate how the goals and learning outcomes of the mandatory by-law course "Environment and sustainable development basics" relate to the study programme's goals and learning outcomes. The SER on page 144 mentions that overall students are satisfied with the study programme. Meanwhile, the employers are in general satisfied as well. Their comments to include content on programming has been taken into attention and such topics have been added to some relevant courses ("Basic concepts and tools of the Internet" and "Basics of database design"). The SER also mentions relevant changes and developments, which have been made to the programme.
As mentioned in the study field management part of this report, the experts raised a question regarding the 22% drop-out rate on average after the first semester in this study programme. During the meetings, the experts learned that the problem was known. The graduates and the employers had several observations. One touched upon the idea of making the title of the programme more clear and relevant. This also links to the other comment, which relates to the observation made in SER on page 144: "A lower average rating relates to the issue of how much the learning outcomes of the Study programme are in line with labour market needs." The graduates and employers stated that the prestige of the subsequent profession, upon graduation from this programme, should be revisited. The employers stated that the current vision of the programme on where graduates can work after this programme may be somewhat limited. The suggestion is to broaden the perspectives of where graduates could work after receiving the information management competencies. The proposal would be to organise a focus group with the graduates and employers in order to formulate a clearer message on the programme's key selling points, as well as communicate more accurately on the wider possibility of the professions (for instance, information management or information management technologies in the organisations). This may perhaps lead to some necessary curriculum renewals and revisions. Moreover, the possibilities of working with the IT faculty have been emphasised during the meetings.
Overall, the programme primarily includes traditional teaching and learning methods. The majority

of the courses are based on lectures and this may seem relevant to the programme's profile. On the other hand, what is mentioned on page 145 and what was communicated during the expert meeting with the academic staff, some courses are taught to peers or teams (e.g., "Information literacy," "Information systems," "Environment and sustainable development basics," and "Information organisation"). The active component in the study programme is achieved via seminars, practical methods and field trips. In addition, students have clear possibilities to develop practical competencies during an internship. Also, to develop research skills during research-based courses. The Moodle system was presented to the expert group during the visit and seems to be used appropriately. Students receive regular information and feedback on their individual performance and are informed about their grades. In addition, more emphasis is put not only on the summative but also on the formative assessment. The timetable is planned out well. Students receive individual contact or virtual consultations.

There are three internships in the programme – one mandatory and two optional. The internship on information management in organisations (the elective one) may certainly open up wider perspectives for greater variety in the career paths for the students. During the meetings with the students/ graduates, the expert group learned that they have very good remarks about the possibilities of internships and what their main goals and learning outcomes are. On the other hand, the employers stated how they also participate in accepting students for internships and how some students may certainly become employers after the internships and graduation. The National Latvian Library and the National Latvian Archive are the key internship and employment places but are not limited only to these two organisations. One observation from the students was that the internship could be offered to the students even faster - earlier in the programme.

The variety of the final thesis topics depends on the student's interests, internship experience, and similar. The topics can be offered by the faculty members, sector representatives or students themselves. The usual research topic selections are grouped into the following three categories: 1) General aspects of information management; 2) Management of information resources; 3) Management of information services. Students usually write the thesis in the General aspects of the information management category. The topics are up-to-date, including such aspects as digital literacy and media literacy and the habits of information users.

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

Overall the programme is designed well, is significant, formulates the goals and learning outcomes well, the courses correspond to the aims of the programme, the programme is regularly updated and the main stakeholders are satisfied. The most urgent area for improvement in this programme is the communication about this programme's strengths and working together with the graduates and employers on the graduates' career paths. The necessary technological aspect is included in the courses. Team teaching is used and highly valued by the students. Lectures are combined with practical work. Both formative and summative assessments are used. The programme offers a diverse choice of relevant internships. Research topic selections for the final theses are relevant and up-to-date, and the evaluations are good.

Strengths:
1. The programme adheres to meeting relevant goals and learning outcomes, the courses are structured and mapped well, and in general, the students and employers are satisfied.
2. The necessary technological aspect is included in the relevant courses.
3. Peer and team teaching, especially when collaboration between an academician and a practitioner is present.
4. Faculty started putting more emphasis not only on the summative but also on the formative assessment.

5. Diversity and variety in the choice of internships.

6. Relevant research topics for the final theses.

7. Interdisciplinarity possibility to work with the IT Faculty.

Weaknesses:

1. The drop-out average may result from insufficient clarity about the programme's key selling points, failure to manage the students' expectations and not using the resources of the graduates and employers enough in order to revisit the wider possibility of the graduates' professions.

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

NA

2.3. Resources and Provision of the Study Programme

Analysis

Based on the visit of the experts to the UL Faculty of Social Sciences (FSS) and SAR, it can be stated that the implementation of the study programme is provided with high-quality material and technical support. Both high-quality rooms with everything necessary for the study process and computer classrooms with all software, which is very important for the students of the study programme "Information Management", are available. Students are provided with programmes in the development and maintenance of the library and archival information systems, database development, website development, image editing, thesaurus and ontology development, research data coding and analysis, information and data visualisation, analysis of social networks, electronic presentation of texts and other documents, digitisation, etc. Access is also provided to various publication databases, which are also essential for the information support of the study process (SAR p. 156). Many e-learning resources/research databases are available to support the study process. As mentioned in SAR, the LUL has introduced a state-of-the-art set of technologies, Primo Discovery and SFX, to ease access to electronic resources. One link accesses search results from all of the databases that are at the LUL (SAR p. 156). During the visit, the good cooperation with the UL Faculty of Computing was also mentioned several times, as the academic staff member Liene Viļuma works at both faculties, ensuring a closer link between the two study fields. To ensure the study process, a successful cooperation has been established with the Archives of Latvia, which provides additional resources for the study process - lecturers and recommending specific information technology programmes. After discussions with current and former students, the experts conclude that students and academic staff are satisfied with the information and material and technical facilities provided for a more successful study process.

The allocated funding ensures that the study process is fully implemented. The funding for the implementation of the study programme is provided by the state budget subsidy from the Ministry of Education and Science, which for the academic year 2021/2022 (as well as for the study field "Communication sciences") was EUR 1630 for full-time studies; the tuition fee, taking into account the conditions of the university, is EUR 2300 per year for full-time studies and EUR 1750 per year for part-time studies (SAR p. 157). The total study programme budget is expected to be EUR 141 830 per year. The planned income for the ICS direction is based on a forecast of 66 full-time students in budget places, five full-time fee-paying students and 13 part-time fee-paying students (SAR p. 157).

As mentioned in the SAR, the programme's costs are calculated considering the methodology developed by the UL and the relevant legislation. Considering all aspects and the information on the number of students in the academic year 2021/2022 (71 full-time students), the estimated cost of the full-time programme per student is EUR 1 738 per year. The programme's total cost is EUR 123 398 per year (p. 158 of the SAR). The SAR university representatives have also modelled the possible cost changes in case of a decrease in the number of students, considering the proposed tuition fees and the state budget subsidy. The calculations show that for the programme to be cost-effective and to provide students with a quality study process, the number of fee-paying students in the programme (in all courses combined) should be at least 47. In contrast, if the programme had only budget students, the number would have to exceed 82 students (SAR p. 159). The study programme has found that the number of students in part-time extramural studies needs to be increased to ensure cost-effectiveness without offering the study plan only once per four years. In the future, the plan is to organise enrolment into the extramural studies programme once every two years to attract more students. The minimal number of students would have to be at least 35 to ensure the programme's cost-effectiveness. With this planned number, the calculated basic cost per student in the extramural studies programme is EUR 1,748 per year, with a total cost of EUR 61,200 (SAR p. 159). Analysing the costs of the part-time extramural programme, the programme implementers have concluded that at least 35 students (in all courses combined) are needed for the programme to be cost-effective.

The university, having analysed the number of students and costs, has concluded that to ensure the cost-effectiveness of the study programme, it is necessary to increase the number of fee-paying students and to implement the planned PTRS form of study. To increase the number of fee-paying students, it is intended to work more actively on marketing activities to attract applicants, explaining the content of the study programme, the skills to be acquired and the opportunities in the labour market. Several students and alumni also said that more needs to be done to promote and explain the study programme, as the description needs to give an idea of the strength and usefulness of the knowledge that can be gained from this study programme. All graduates mentioned that the knowledge acquired in this study programme allows them to work in any sector, not only in libraries and archives, where the salaries are lower. This is a valuable programme where the knowledge gained is helpful in any business organisation. The programme could involve more former students willing to share their experience in marketing activities. As the programme is looking at new ways to attract more fee-paying students until a positive outcome is achieved, the programme is additionally funded from the financial accumulation of the continuing education activities carried out by the Department of Information and Library Studies, and plans are underway to include some of the programme's courses in the further education offer. Given that continuing education programmes are widely used and in demand in Latvia, this could be an excellent way to obtain additional funding for providing the programme to full-time students. The faculty may also receive financial support for the study programme development from the UL Study Quality Enhancement Fund. The previous recommendation of the expert group was to implement additional fundraising and develop a strategic fundraising plan.

As mentioned in the SAR (p. 161), several staff members of the study programme have participated in scientific and applied research calls. Such fundraising will continue as well, as this is also required by the 2022 Human Resources Development Plan 2022-2027 of the FSS. This plan will include measures to motivate the activities of academic staff in raising financial resources. According to the university's representatives, the study programme's financial growth is planned at 5% per year. The long-term timeframe for the activities is 2027. The Development Plan 2021-2027 outlines the tasks to be carried out. One of the most important tasks is to increase the research capacity of the academic staff, which would also attract additional funding and ensure studies of higher quality, and better visibility in society, thus attracting more students. Funding for the study programme is generally ensured. Still, additional opportunities are being sought to increase it by offering further

training programmes and strengthening academic staff's research capacity.

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

The study programme "Information Management 43322" provides all the necessary informational, scientific, and material-technical basis for the specifics and implementation of the study programme. It creates preconditions for the achievement of study results and the provision of a quality study process. In general, various databases, technologies and information communication facilities are well provided - software for the study process needs, computer classrooms and the possibility to use the licensed software on the students' personal computers. The university has also carried out a thorough financial cost-benefit analysis of the costs of the study field in all forms of study, concluding that efforts are needed to raise the study programme profile and attract funding for the future provision of the programme. Steps to attract funding are embedded in the 2021-2027 Development Plan, which foresees strengthening academic staff's research capacity and organising marketing activities to promote the programme and explain its content to potential students.

Strengths:
1. The study field provides a high-quality material and technical base for the students' study process.
2. Students are provided with programmes in the development and maintenance of the library and archival information systems, database development, website development, image editing, thesaurus and ontology development, research data coding and analysis, information and data visualisation, analysis of social networks, electronic presentation of texts and other documents, digitisation, etc.
3. Students have access to library resources 60 hours per week.
4. Students can use the MS Teams environment on their computers during the study process.
5. Alumni are very satisfied with the content and quality of the study programme and recommend it to others.
6. A plan is in place to increase financial resources and strengthen the research capacity of academic staff.
7. The study programme has excellent potential if its advantages are made clear.

Weaknesses:
1. Admission to the part-time programme is only every four years, although there are plans to increase this to every two years.
2. There needs to be more quality explanations of the content of the study programme to potential students.
3. Insufficient funding of the study programme from fee-paying students is compensated by the accumulation of financial resources from the continuing education activities carried out by the Information and Library Studies department.

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 programme provides all the necessary informational, scientific, and material-technical basis for the specifics and implementation of the study programme. It creates preconditions for

the achievement of study results and the provision of a quality study process.

2.4. Teaching Staff

Analysis

A sufficient number of teachers are employed in the study programme. Namely, courses are taught by two elected professors and three associated professors, which is in line with the Law on Universities (SER, p. 161). Courses are taught by the faculty members from the FSS Department of Information and Library Studies, the Department of Communication Studies, the Department of Political Science and the Department of Sociology but from other faculties as well (for instance Faculty of Computer Science, Faculty of Law, Faculty of Economics and Management) (SER, p. 162, onsite visit). Therefore, the department exhibits great interdisciplinarity, which is extremely important in the field of information management. The qualification of the teaching staff members enables the achievement of the aims and learning outcomes of the study programme and the relevant study courses.

In the previous assessment procedure, the biggest complaint of the expert group related to weak international cooperation and scientific work, and with these goals, the FSS Human Resources Development Plan for 2022-2027 was adopted, which should encourage teachers to publish papers in prestigious international journals, develop and participate in international scientific projects as well as to join the international professional organisations.

Professionals from the sector are also included in the performance of classes which is great because it enables students to familiarise themselves with the current trends in the labour market (SER, p. 164; onsite visit). In this way, students get both theoretical and practical knowledge at the same time. Professionals have also served as advisors to research projects among students and they have taken part in commissions focused on the defence of final papers (SER, p. 164).

The teachers expressed great satisfaction with the support they receive from the administration of the higher education institution, both in terms of work balance and funding the scientific activities. During the onsite visit, members of the academic staff emphasised that they are strongly encouraged to participate in research and writing projects and also have a project support centre. Regarding teaching, there is also support and they can complain if the workload is unbalanced. Teachers mentioned that both sides are quite intense, but they are trying to balance it out because "in the university, you can not teach without research activities" (onsite visit, meeting with the academic staff). There is great cooperation between the teachers in the implementation of the study programme – such as joint field trips, organisation of seminars, joint research projects etc. (SER, p. 166).

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

The qualification of the teaching staff members complies with the requirements for the implementation of the study programme and the requirements set forth in the regulatory enactments. There is a great collaboration between the teaching staff such as joint field trips, organisation of seminars, joint research projects etc. Considering that the teaching staff most often publish scientific works in domestic journals and in their native language, it is strongly recommended to publish works in prestigious international scientific journals. The FSS Human Resources Development Plan for 2022-2027 was adopted which should encourage teachers to publish papers in prestigious international journals, develop and participate in international scientific projects as well as join international professional organisations.

Strengths:
1. FSS Human Resources Development Plan for 2022-2027 in order to ensure the development of

the academic staff.

2. Interdisciplinarity of the academic staff.

3. Cooperation between scientists and practitioners in the implementation of the study program.

4. Great collaboration and good teamwork between the teaching staff.

5. Institutional support for teachers in teaching and scientific work (time allocation and financial support).

Weaknesses:

1. The teaching staff mostly often publish their research output in local outlets and in Latvian, ratchet than in international peer-reviewed 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 number and qualifications of teachers in the study programme are in line with the requirements set out in the respective regulatory enactments.

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 UL has provided a detailed document in Annex 23. That provides proof of the Study programme "Information Management 43322" compliance with the Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No. 240 "Regulations on the State Standard of Academic Education".

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

   Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

   NA

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 study programme implementation language is Latvian. Study course descriptions are prepared in Latvian and English languages. Study course descriptions can be improved, for example, none of the study course descriptions contains information about the responsible personnel that is involved in the implementation of the study course nor the study course developer, or the responsible person for delivering the study course is indicated in the descriptions. This issue can be resolved on a long-term basis and does not influence the overall

evaluation of the criteria. Additionally, it is advisable that the study course literature is renewed on an annual basis and is not older than 10 years. See in Annex 26.

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The diploma issued and diploma supplement corresponds to Cabinet of ministers No. 202. Annex 20.

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The UL has provided the Declaration of the head of study field (Annex 28) certifying that the academic staff involved in the implementation of the study programme "Information Management" (43322) complies with the requirements specified in Section 55, Paragraph one, Clause 3 of the Law on Higher Education Institutions.

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: Fully compliant

The UL has provided Decision No 1.10/84 (05.12.2019) of the Council for Higher Education addressed to the University of Latvia on the implementation of the academic study programme "Information Management 43322" the Council has decided to allow the University of Latvia to implement the academic study programme in Information Management (Annex 21).

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

NA

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 UL has provided a Head of Study Field Declaration, stating that the teaching staff members involved in the implementation of the study programme "Information Management 43322" 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. Annex 11.

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

NA

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 study agreement is fully compliant with the Law on Higher Education Institutions Section 46, paragraph 2 and regulations of Cabinet of Ministers 23.01.2007. to Regulation No. 70 "Mandatory regulations to be included in the study agreement" (Annex 7. Study Agreement for Studies at UL Standard Sample). On a short-term basis, UL has to specify agreement point 2.15., with reference to point 4.18. is not correct in regard to students' intellectual property.

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

UL has provided the confirmation document No. 1-13/458 that in case of termination of the study programme students will be provided with the opportunity to continue studies in the Bachelor level study programme "Sociology 43314". See annex 5.1. Nevertheless, on a long-term basis, it would be advisable to find some other partner higher education institution that may provide opportunities for students to continue their studies.

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The UL has provided the document - Refund and Compensation Policy Statement, No 1-13/129) (Annex 6.), which confirms that the students are guaranteed compensation for losses if the study programme is not accredited or the study programme's licence 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.

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

NA

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

NA

Assessment of the requirement [8]

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

All regulatory requirements are fully met with minor deficiencies that can be easily eliminated.

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

The parameters of the study programme are compliant with the study field. The number of students in this programme remains stable, although one could expect it to be higher. Demand exists for graduates, although most of it appears to come from traditional memory institutions, which do not offer great salaries. This aspect reduces the economic attractiveness of the otherwise good study program. The programme is designed well, it formulates the goals and learning outcomes well, the courses correspond to the aims of the programme, the programme is regularly updated and the main stakeholders are satisfied. The most urgent area for improvement in this programme is the communication about this programme's strengths and working together with the graduates and employers on the graduates' career paths. Team teaching is used and highly valued by the students. Lectures are combined with practical work. Research topic selections for the final theses are relevant and up-to-date, and the evaluations are good. The study programme provides all the necessary informational, scientific, and material-technical basis for the specifics and implementation of the study programme. It creates preconditions for the achievement of study results and the provision of a quality study process. In general, various databases, technologies and information communication facilities are well provided - software for the study process needs, computer classrooms and the possibility to use the licensed software on the students' personal computers. The university has also carried out a thorough financial cost-benefit analysis of the costs of the study field in all forms of study, concluding that efforts are needed to raise the study programme profile and attract funding for the future provision of the programme. Steps to attract funding are embedded in the 2021-2027 Development Plan, which foresees strengthening academic staff's research capacity and organising marketing activities to promote the programme and explain its content to potential students. The qualification of the teaching staff members complies with the requirements for the implementation of the study programme and the requirements set forth in the regulatory enactments. There is a great collaboration between the teaching staff such as joint field trips, organisation of seminars, joint research projects etc. Considering that teachers most often publish scientific works in domestic journals and in their native language, it is strongly recommended to publish works in prestigious international scientific journals. The FSS Human Resources Development Plan for 2022-2027 was adopted which should encourage teachers to publish papers in prestigious international journals, develop and participate in international scientific projects as well as join international professional organisations.

Strengths:
1. Unique study programme with great social and cultural significance.
2. Peer and team teaching, especially when collaboration between an academician and a practitioner is present.
3. Interdisciplinarity possibility to work with the UL Faculty of Computing.
4. The study field provides a high-quality material and technical base for the students' study process.
5. FSS Human Resources Development Plan for 2022-2027 in order to ensure the development of the academic staff.

Weaknesses:
1. The offering of this study programme is not fully considered or appreciated by its target audience, which is reasonably large.

2. The drop-out average may result from insufficient clarity about the programme's key selling points, failure to manage the students' expectations and not using the resources of the graduates and employers enough in order to revisit the wider possibility of the graduates' professions.

3. Insufficient funding of the study programme from fee-paying students is compensated by the accumulation of financial resources from the continuing education activities carried out by the Information and Library Studies department.

Evaluation of the study programme "Information Management"

Evaluation of the study programme:

Good

2.6. Recommendations for the Study Programme "Information Management"

Short-term recommendations

Long-term recommendations

Work on increasing the desirability of this study programme among the potential students; more actively communicate the usefulness of the knowledge offered by the study programme outside the traditional memory institutions.
Discuss with the graduates and the social partners (employers) the content of the study programme and revisit its learning outcomes by exploring broader possibilities related to the graduates' career possibilities and build the marketing and communication on this in order to manage the expectations of the potential students and to manage the drop-out rates.
Stronger emphasis should be put on publishing research output in international peer-reviewed journals.

II - "Communication Science" ASSESSMENT

II - "Communication Science" ASSESSMENT

2.1. Indicators Describing the Study Programme

Analysis

The study programme encompasses diverse communication-related topics and issues and prepares students to work in communication-related professions, thus it corresponds to this study field. According to the classification of Latvian education (the Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No 322, 13.06.2017), Journalism and communication, in which this study programme issues a master's degree, fall within Information and communication sciences.

The SER shows that the title, code, the degree to be obtained, professional qualification or degree and professional qualification of the study programme, aims, objectives, learning outcomes, and admission requirements are interrelated. The title, "Communication science," relates to the communication-related processes, issues, and professions the programme covers. The first two digits of the study programme code, 45321, refer to a master's level degree, and the next digit, 3, refers to the thematic group "Social Sciences, Commercial Sciences, and the Law." Code 32 denotes Information and communication sciences, and 321 — Journalism and communication, which corresponds to the contents of this programme. The degree to be obtained, the Master's degree of Social Sciences in Journalism and Communication, is therefore suitable. The goal of the study

programme is "To educate highly qualified and competitive specialists in media and communication, as well as to develop the field of the media and communication science." The tasks of the study programme include the provision of knowledge in media and communication, as well as social science methodology; the development of professional skills and competencies in journalism, advertising, corporate communication, and multimedia production; develop creativity, as well as skills needed for research and analytical work, presentation, argumentation, and leadership. The wording of the outcomes of the studies in terms of knowledge, skills, and competencies are mostly in line with the Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No. 322 (13.06.2017). However, the government regulations state that the knowledge outcome should be reflected in the ability "to demonstrate in-depth or expanded knowledge and understanding [..] which provide a basis for creative thinking or research, including working in contact with different fields" but the SER says that one of the knowledge outcomes is "[i]n-depth familiarity with contacts among various areas, critical and creative thinking and the use of same [sic!] in professional and scientific areas." Thus, while government regulations require knowledge and understanding that enable creative thinking or research, the SER states that the students will become familiar with creative thinking. Misalignment is also evident in the skill section. The government regulations require the ability "to independently apply theory, methods and problem-solving skills to perform research or artistic activities or highly skilled professional functions" whereas the SER states that the skill is the use of theories in communication and other social sciences to resolve "methodological problems." A bigger problem is the considerable difference between how the learning outcomes in terms of skills, knowledge, and competencies are described in Latvian and English. For example, the Latvian version lists four elements in the knowledge list, but the English version lists three. The wording is also different. For example, the Latvian version says: "In-depth knowledge and understanding of media and communication theories and the latest findings," while the English one puts it this way: "An in-depth understanding of the classical theories and latest discoveries in the field of communication science." The English version states: "In-depth familiarity and understanding of communication science research methodologies, as well as academic and professional ethics," but the Latvian version does not mention methodology (it is stated in the skills outcomes) nor ethics (stated in the competencies outcomes). Similar discrepancies can be observed regarding skills and competencies, too.

Since according to the AIKA methodology, the main text is in Latvian and the English version is a translation, it should be noted that the Latvian version is considerably closer to what the Government Regulation requires. This means that the issues with wording are more of a technical, rather than a fundamental problem. One issue concerns knowledge outcomes. The Regulation requires to provide knowledge about the field "which provides the basis for creative thinking," but the Latvian version of SER puts it this way: "In-depth knowledge and understanding of the range of professional and research creativity and practice in the field of media and communication." Thus, instead of knowledge that facilitates reactive thinking, the description offers knowledge about creativity. However, since the tasks of the program, as mentioned above, do include "nurturing creativity," this is likely more of a technical shortcoming in the formulation, which nevertheless should be corrected.

To be admitted to this programme, the prospective students need to have a bachelor's degree or second-level professional higher education in information and communication sciences, or a bachelor's or master's degree in social sciences, business and law and take an entrance exam, or have a bachelor or master's degree in other sciences, take an entry exam and have professional experience in information and communication field. These requirements are justified.

The duration of this study programme is two years full-time with 80 Latvian credits, which conforms with the Latvian Law of Higher Education Institutions. Part-time and extramural study forms are possible if demand for these exists.

Of the recommendations the expert group offered during the previous accreditation, one relates to the parameters of the study programme. It concerned the objectives and learning outcomes of the

study programme. Although the SER states that changes have been made in the wording of the goals, tasks, and learning outcomes, as seen above, the latter still needs some work.

The expert group during the previous accreditation also noted that the practical applications of the studies (such as journalism, advertising, strategic communication, etc.) are not specified in the description of the objectives and learning outcomes of the programme. The section "Indicators Describing the Study Programme" introduces the sub-programs "Business communication" and "Media studies," but despite the claims about the economic significance of the study programme, still does not name any particular professions in the aims and learning outcomes when describing the respective sub-programs (pp. 217–219). These professions can be implied from the section that describes the companies in which the graduates work. If the decision to omit specific mentions of professions was deliberate (for example, because of the academic, rather than the professional, focus of the study program), this should have been explicitly stated so.

The changes have also been made regarding the admission rules, which creates a three-pronged system: students with a degree or second-level professional higher education in information and sciences; students with a degree or second-level professional higher education in social sciences, business and law; and students with a degree or second-level professional higher education in unrelated disciplines. Admission requirements differ for each of these three groups. Such differentiation is justified; it ensures that the master's study programme is able to focus on providing in-depth knowledge in communication science, and those who lack a basic understanding of the field are not admissible.

The study programme aims to provide both academic and professional knowledge. It offers two sub-programs: "Business communication" and "Media studies." At the same time, focusing on a wider social context contributes to the graduates' general intellectual development and their flexibility in finding employment options. The many communication-related sectors of the economy constantly require new specialists. According to the data provided in the SER, the majority of those who have graduated from this programme work in their respective fields.

Since communication science is concerned, among other things, with the information environment, the programme is socially significant. Its significance is further accentuated by the research work the researchers of this study programme do, and by the fact that students are involved in research projects, which not only allows them to acquire research skills but also helps in the renewal and succession of the research staff.

According to the SER, in 2021, 42 full-time students attended the programme. After years of decline in the number of matriculated students, which culminated in 2019, when the number of registered students was 32, the situation currently appears to stabilise. However, Appendix 48 shows that the number of graduates continues to fluctuate: in 2019, six students graduated, in 2020, twelve and in 2021 nine. In absolute numbers, these changes are not too dramatic, even though proportionally these are considerable. This is to be expected for a master's study programme, the student pool of which is, of course, smaller than that of a bachelor's program.

Still, appendix 48 indicates a considerable dropout rate. The SER states that in many cases this is due to the difficulties with combining work with studies. Other mentioned reasons are financial and personal issues, change of workplace or place of residence, and not being properly prepared for studies at the UL. The SER expresses confidence that moving to the House of Letters at the new University campus, the new model for doctoral studies, as well as enhancement of information on the website and social media will lead to an increase in students. These might help, but the study programme should also consider whether the current situation reflects certain structural problems that might be impacting its competitiveness against those offered by other higher education institutions in Latvia and abroad.

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

The parameters of the study programme are compliant with the study field, but in some respects, the formulated learning outcomes do not perfectly align with the requirements of the Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No. 322 (13.06.2017): The wording of the knowledge and skill outcomes does not incorporate all elements that are required. The Latvian and English versions of the learning outcomes have been formulated considerably differently. However, since the Latvian version does not deviate far from what the Government Regulation prescribes, this misalignment does not raise doubts about the general compliance of the study program in general. The admission requirements are well-thought-out, and the focus on providing students with diverse knowledge that broadens their viewpoint and helps in advancing their professional careers is appropriate. The study programme has societal and economic significance, but the fluctuation in the admission and graduation numbers signals the fragility of interest among potential students. Given the emphasis the SER puts on the demand for communication specialists in various industries, this aspect is worrisome.

Strengths:
1. Contributes to the development of communication science in Latvia
2. Has the potential to help address various contemporary communication and information environment-related issues

Weaknesses:
1. A considerable dropout rate.
2. Practical or professional applications of learning outcomes acquired in each of the sub-programs (Media studies and Business communication) are not explicitly mentioned.
3. The wording of the study outcomes do not perfectly align with the requirements of the Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No. 322 (13.06.2017) and considerable differences exist between the Latvian and English language version of the learning outcomes.

2.2. The Content of Studies and Implementation Thereof

Analysis

The content, structure, goals, and learning outcomes of the study program are clearly designed. The course descriptions are well structured and the content is sufficient. The constructive alignment among the learning outcomes, the study methods and the assessment methods is ensured. The previous expert group had some comments in regards to some aspects of the course descriptions – for instance, some of the assignments being of too general nature, some of the criteria of assessment not provided, absence of some necessary mandatory literature and stronger application of the electronic resources. These observations and remarks have been taken into consideration and reacted accordingly with the necessary revisions. During the site visit, the expert group was introduced to the content of electronic course content on Moodle. Grounded on the feedback received from the labour market, relevant new content was included in the programme, such as digital humanities, computerised text analysis, data visualisation, media ecosystem, risks in the informative environment, and media literacy. In the mandatory section, A students learn the modern theoretical concepts about media, communication and social sciences. It is observed in the programme that the acquiring of the theoretical concepts, which was also mentioned by the students of the programme, is predominant. One of the observations from the previous expert group was the hesitation if the time devoted to the studies aligned with this didactical approach. When asked about some contemporary teaching and learning methods, the academic faculty and the students primarily mentioned the more traditional didactical methods. The experts recommend reviewing and rethinking the variety of teaching and learning methods and what type of more modern methods could be applied, to fit the needs and profiles of the current generation of learners.

The restricted elective part (Part B) offers choosing 16 ECTS from one of the sub-programmes: "Business Communication" or "Media Studies". Overall, the choice of courses and the content are adequate. Nevertheless, the experts deliberate whether the continuation of such sub-programmes from the undergraduate study programme "Communication studies" to this graduate programme is reasonable and attractive to students so they would continue their education in this, rather than other universities. It may seem that the sub-programmes in the bachelor's programme should provide the student with the possibility to try certain content and based on that should lead to the narrower, more specialised master's programme. However, in this situation, those who aim to transition from bachelor's to master's are presented with the same choice, instead of offering students more in-depth content in the specifically designated master's programme. Grounded on this, the expert group suggests to the ICS representatives, as the long-term goal, to reconsider the ICS study programme portfolio, by offering broader bachelor study programmes with specialisations and more specialised master's study programmes as a continuation from undergraduate to graduate studies. This is once again discussed on page 228 of the SER, where the sub-programmes are explained. The SER explains that: "In this sense, the Study programme ensures research into the media and the communication sector, as well as links to the UL FSS bachelor's degree programme "Communications Science." Master's degree students continue their studies and specialise in the sub-programmes "Business communication" or "Media studies." Thus the courses in the Study programme ensure the higher education succession principle for 3+2 years." Based on the provided student numbers – for bachelor's and master's students in the respective Appendix 31 and Appendix 48, the statistics for both cycles are very different and this approach does not necessarily ensure the 3+2 principle. Moreover, it may seem that the recruitment of students is primarily internal, which might be sort of limiting.

Theoretical study courses in media and communication (courses taught every 2 years and therefore acquired in the 1st or 3rd semester) in Part B, offer another 12 ECTS of a great variety of courses. There is also an individually planned research work, which is significant for the master's students. Part C allows the students to choose courses from the other UL master's degree programmes. Upon the meeting with the students, the experts were informed that students would like to have more choices in Part C. Overall the mapping of the study courses has a direct link to the goals of the study programme (as provided in Appendix 50).

Great emphasis is put on the research part of the programme. Certain new courses were added to the programme and some were renewed: "Communication Theory, Models and Practice", "Research and Academic Writing", and "Communication Theory in the Context of Social Sciences". Meanwhile, a new course "Media Ecosystem" is based on a project from the Fundamental and Applied Research Programme (FARP) of the Latvian Council of Science (LCS): "Latvia's Media Ecology: Analysis of Changes Caused by the Fourth Industrial Revolution". Thus, the research and the research skills component are sufficiently presented and implemented in the programme. A very good practice is observed in the course "Research and Academic Writing", where the master's students are engaged in the bachelor's programme "Communication Studies" by reviewing bachelor students' final papers and participating in the defences. The key here is to ensure the quality of the master's students' work. Overall, the content of the course descriptions adheres to the goals and objectives of the study programme.

Page 229 of the SER explains that the research conducted by the academic faculty directly links to the study programme's goals, objectives, and learning outcomes. The programme courses - lectures and practical work, master's thesis topics and consultations, are grounded on the research findings and the faculty staff substantiate their teaching on the newest relevant research results. The international perspectives in the research results are gathered from the faculty's participation in international projects. This is stated in the SER (page 230), as well as was discussed during the meetings with the teaching staff. Moreover, the academic faculty and the students have access to up-to-date scholarly content (traditional and electronic) in the databases in the FSS library and the

National Latvian Library. In addition, the relevant sectors of communication and journalism share the most timely trends with the faculty. According to the SER, page 230, the academic faculty members also regularly participate in scholarly conferences, and seminars, and are members of international organisations. The teaching staff and the PhD students actively participate in research together, based on which research work (e.g., monographs) is published and also used in the study programme.

The SER describes the diversity of teaching methods, including various types of lectures: introductory lectures, interactive lectures, story-telling lectures, summary lectures and issue-focused lectures. The document does not give details of what is meant by that and, for example, whether the existence of "interactive lectures" implies that the other types do not have any elements of interactivity. Other forms of classwork, including seminars, practical assignments, working in pairs or groups, or field trips are clearer. The report states that practitioners from the field conduct guest lectures or participate in seminars. A combination of individual and discussion work is utilised. A welcome element is the participation of PhD students as lecturers in Master students' classes. The study programme encourages students to research issues that are of interest to them, and opportunities exist to engage in research projects that are undertaken by the faculty staff. They also can present the results of their research work at the UL conference and publish scientific articles. In this way, research skills and experience can be greatly developed. Such an approach reflects some of the key principles of student-centred learning. These include considering the characteristics of students and the diversity of their needs when designing appropriate ways of teaching; employing diverse types of teaching and pedagogical methods, and promoting independent learning while at the same time offering support from the teaching staff. Learning outcomes and the principles of grading are communicated to students. The university has a system that enables filing students' complaints and proposals.

The SER divides the topics of the final theses into seven basic groups: the media; digital communication; communication of culture; business communication; corporate communication; identity communication; the language of communication and forms of expression. At this level of approximation that has been made available to the expert group, it can be deduced that the topics indeed closely relate to the study programme and the field. The dynamics of the topics that are described in the SER indicate that these topics follow the changes in the media environment, for example, students' interest has shifted from print media to online media and digital communication. The research interests of the teaching staff, reflected by their project work, also appears to have left a positive influence on the topics of theses.

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

Overall, the content of the course descriptions adheres to the goals and objectives of the study programme. The course descriptions are well structured and the content is sufficient. The constructive alignment among the learning outcomes, the study methods and the assessment methods is ensured. The reasoning behind continuing the sub-programmes of "Business Communication" and "Media Studies" from the bachelor's cycle to the master's is unclear and it is not obvious that it is the best approach to the recruitment of students. The contents of the study programme and the qualification degree are based on the up-to-date research results, conducted by the academic faculty. Various teaching methods are being used. Lectures are combined with seminars and forms of independent work, although the description of the approach to lecturing is vague. Practitioners and experts in communication-related industries, as well as PhD students, are involved in the study process. The principles of a student-centred approach can be identified in the study process. The topics of the final theses are related to the study field; they reflect the trends in the field and are influenced by the research topicalities of the academic staff.

Strengths:
1. The study programme has a strong basis for developing an understanding of the theoretical conceptions of communication science and includes sufficient time devoted to preparing for research work and writing the final thesis.
2. The content of the study programme is based on the timely research findings, conducted by the academic faculty.
3. Various teaching methods.
4. Professionals from the communication industries contribute to the study process.

Weaknesses:
1. The reasoning behind continuing the sub-programmes of "Business Communication" and "Media Studies" from the bachelor's cycle to the master's is unclear and could be to some extent limiting the recruitment of students.
2. A vague description of approaches to lecturing.

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

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The "Communication Science" study programme has defined justified core goals and objectives and results, and it responds to the needs of the labour market. The content and the final thesis are relevant to the study field; the content of the study programme is based on the research areas conducted by the academic staff.

2.3. Resources and Provision of the Study Programme

Analysis

During the familiarisation with the SAR and the on-site visit, the experts were convinced that the higher education institution provides all the necessary informational, scientific, material and technical basis for the specificity and implementation of the study programme and creates preconditions for the achievement of the study results and the provision of a quality study process. There are spacious rooms available to accommodate a wide range of audience sizes. Students are provided with university Wi-Fi to use their computers for studying. Students can connect to electricity in the audio studios. In addition, the Lecture-rooms are fully or partially equipped with multimedia projectors, computers, and sound equipment. The faculty has two fully equipped computer rooms with all the necessary software for the study process. In the computer rooms, students have access to MS Office (Word, Powerpoint, Excel, Teams, etc.), IBM SPSS Statistics, Adobe Creative Cloud (Premiere, Photoshop, InDesign, etc.), Nvivo, Gephi, Protégé, MultiTes, and UCINet software. For the acquisition of specialised courses, such as multimedia skills, there is a specialised Multimedia Studio with all the necessary equipment not only for filming and sound recording but also software for editing multimedia content, where students can work not only on weekdays but also on weekends. A professional video engineer is hired to ensure technical support to the students. Students have access to seven video cameras with tripods and other necessary equipment, including portable lights. All the cameras have charging systems and capacious sets of Li-Ion batteries. This makes it possible for seven separate groups to work at the studio or outside of it (SAR 198 p.). High-quality sound recordings involve 25 professional microphones of various types and models, as well as 15 professional tape recorders that are mostly used to record sound outside

of the pavilion. As mentioned in the SAR (page 72), investments in the development of study quality and research of the study field consist of UL investments, study activity investments; investments in science attracted from international, national and university project calls. Thanks to the investments mentioned above, the UL can subscribe to databases relevant to the social sciences and update computer equipment and software needed for teaching. The investments have enabled the improvement of the facilities of the Multimedia Studio, which is an invaluable tool for developing the skills of future professionals in the field of communication.

The library's resources and databases are available to students and meet the needs of their study fields, and the library is accessible 60 hours a week. In cooperation with the Information Technology Department of the University, the Library provides free online access to the University e-resources repository Dspace.lu.lv. According to the SAR (page 82), a total of 42 e-resource platforms are available at UL in 2022 (both e–book platforms – VLeBooks, ProQuest Ebook Central, and e-journal databases – Cambridge Journals Online (archive available until 31.12.2018), Emerald eJournals Premier (archive available until 22.04.2020.), JSTOR I–XII, XIV, XV and Life Sciences Collections, HeinOnline, Oxford Journals Online, Sage Journals, ScienceDirect, SpringerLink Contemporary Journals, Taylor & Francis Social Science & Humanities Library, Physical Review Journals, Westlaw, Wiley Online Library E-Journals Full Collection and separately purchased e-journals, and Lursoft Newspaper Library NEWS.LV, reference resources – LETA online news, LETA Archive and Nozare.lv, Letonika, tools – SAGE Research Methods, Passport, Orbis, Overleaf Commons, MarketLine, mixed–format databases – ClinicalKey, Culturethèque, European Pharmacopoeia, LVS Latvian Standards Online Reading Room, OECD iLibrary, ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global, ScienceDirect, Scopus, UpToDate, Web of Science Core Collection). Communication students have access to a wide range of databases that allow them to use sources used by communication professionals daily, such as access to the LETA news agency's databases, including its archive. In addition to MS Office 365, students and staff are provided with software such as SPSS, Question Pro, Autodesk, MathWorks MatLAB, Esri ArcGIS, etc. If distance learning is required, both MS Teams and Zoom are used. The University also provides technical support, if needed, for lecturers or students using specific applications.

After meeting with the ICS management and reviewing the SAR, the experts conclude that the allocated funding ensures full implementation of the study process. The funding for the study programme implementation is provided by the state budget subsidy from the Ministry of Education and Science, which for the academic year 2021/2022 was EUR 2445 for full-time studies. The tuition fee for full-time studies was EUR 2350 (SAR p. 239). The total Study programme budget is expected to be EUR 102 500 per year. The planned income for the ICS direction is based on a forecast of 40 full-time students in budget places and two full-time fee-paying students (SAR p. 240). As mentioned in the SAR, the programme's costs are calculated considering the methodology developed by the UL and the relevant legislation. Considering all aspects and the information on the number of students in the academic year 2021/2022 (42 full-time students), the estimated cost of the full-time programme per student is EUR 2279 per year, and the total cost of the programme is EUR 95718 per year (SAR p. 240). The representatives of the SAR university have also modelled the cost-effectiveness of the study programme, calculating that for the study programme to be cost-effective and to provide students with a quality study process, the number of fee-paying students in the programme (in all courses combined) should be at least 40. In contrast, if the programme had only budget students, the number should reach 38 (SAR p. 241). The SAR mentions that the programme developers expect at least 30 students to study in the PTRS PTIP programme. With this planned number of students, the estimated cost of the part-time in-person study programme per student is EUR 2054 per year, and the total cost of the programme is EUR 52 285 per year (p. 241 of the SAR). For the programme to be cost-effective and to provide students with a quality study process, the number of fee-paying students in the programme (in all courses combined) should be at least 29 (as calculated by UL, SAR p. 242).

In analysing the costs of part-time studies, the programme implementers have used student data for the academic year 2021/2022, assuming 25 students studying at the PTRS. The estimated cost per student is EUR 2004 per year, and the programme's total cost is EUR 42 527 per year (SAR p. 243). For the programme to be cost-effective and to ensure a quality study process for students, the number of fee-paying students in the programme (all courses combined) should be at least 24. All the calculations presented in the SAR show that the study programme is cost-effective and that the university has sufficient financial resources to implement the programme and its sub-programmes and to ensure their further development. In addition, the faculties can also attract financial support for developing the programmes from the UL Study Quality Enhancement Fund. Investments from various projects are drawn to improve the material and technical support (SAR p. 244). Considering the recommendations of the previous expert group, the study field successfully develops the system of attraction of finances, which is also included in the Human Resources Development Plan 2022-2027 of SZF; for example, the faculty teaching staff use the financial attraction instruments of the UL - participate in scientific and applied research project calls, use the university Research Development Support programme, where, in the academic year 2021/2022, good progress has been made in the area of fundraising. One of the successes mentioned is the fact that the faculty of the study programme has been awarded the right to implement the IREX Baltic Media Literacy Programme ("Media Literacy in the Baltics"), the project "Innovative and Inclusive Governance for Promoting Public Engagement, Trust, Communication" implemented by the UL and National Research Program of the Latvian Council of Science (SAR p. 244). The university itself believes that to increase cost-effectiveness, it is desirable to increase the number of fee-paying students, and therefore plans to work more actively on attracting undergraduate students to continue their studies at the master's level and on marketing activities to attract potential students.

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

The study programme "Communication Science" (45321) provides all the necessary informational, scientific and material-technical basis for the specificity and implementation of the study programme. It creates preconditions for achieving study results and providing a qualitative study process for master's level students. In general, the provision of various technologies for strengthening the skills of future communication professionals, which can be acquired in the Multimedia Studio (availability of technologies), as well as information communication facilities - software for the study process, computer classrooms and the possibility to use the licensed software on the students' personal computers, is good. The university has also carried out a thorough financial cost-benefit analysis of the costs of the field of study in all forms of study, concluding that there are sufficient financial resources to implement the study programme and sub-programmes, including their further development, but that it is desirable to increase the number of fee-paying students in the master's studies.

Strengths:
1. ICS provides high-quality material and technical facilities to support the learning process of students.
2. A well-equipped multimedia studio with cameras, computers and microphones for practical skills training and a professional video engineer's support is also helpful for the master's programme.
3. Students have access to library resources 60 hours per week.
4. Master's students are provided with various software for analysing research results, such as SPSS and NVivo.
5. A wide range of online resources (42 different e-resources) are available.
6. The cost-effectiveness of each study direction has been thoroughly assessed, and a Human Resources Development Plan has been developed to strengthen the scientific capacity of the

teaching staff in various projects.

7. Financial support for two projects has already been attained for the 2021/2022 academic year.

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 programme provides all the necessary informational, scientific and material-technical basis for the specificity and implementation of the study programme. It creates preconditions for achieving study results and providing a qualitative study process for master's level students. The university has also carried out a thorough financial cost-benefit analysis of the costs of the field of study in all forms of study.

2.4. Teaching Staff

Analysis

There are 22 members of teaching staff in the Study programme among whom 13 are FSS's faculty members: 2 professors, 4 associate professors, 4 assistant professors and 2 lecturers (SER, p. 245). Most of them are part of the Department of Communication Studies and the Department of Information and Library Studies of the FSS (SER, p. 246). The qualifications of faculty members satisfy the requirements of this study programme. In addition to participating in projects at the national and international levels, the teachers have experience in publishing scientific papers and books with prestigious international publishers. It should also be emphasised that some teachers participate in the work of the Latvian Science Council, and they are winners of various scientific and professional awards (SER, p. 246; onsite visit). Teachers are regularly working on their own professional development by attending various courses such as English language improvement programs, publication skills related to scientific work, student-centred learning methods etc. (SER, p. 246, onsite visit). In the previous assessment procedure, the complaint of the expert group was that teachers rarely publish in international publications. In accordance with that, the FSS has already taken certain measures to encourage teachers to publish articles in journals that are indexed in the most prestigious WOS and Scopus scientific databases (see FSS Human resources development plan for 2022-2027). In comparison to the previous assessment procedure, minimal progress is visible, which is logical considering the short period of time and the duration of publication in prestigious scientific journals. However, teachers should be constantly encouraged to publish papers in prestigious international journals.

It should also be noted that some teachers participate in the market as specialists in the field in parallel with their academic activities, which also contributes to the quality of the study programme. The teachers expressed great satisfaction with the support they receive from the administration of the higher education institution, both in terms of work balance and funding the scientific activities. During the onsite visit dean and the academic staff emphasised the generation change in teaching staff and that they have more and more younger employees, which is reflected in the quality of the study programme itself. Teachers have great scientific experience (participation in projects, conferences and publishing scientific papers) and they regularly apply the results of scientific research in the teaching process itself. There is great cooperation between scientists and practitioners in the implementation of the study programme.

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

The qualification of the teaching staff members complies with the requirements for the implementation of the study programme and the requirements set forth in the regulatory enactments. There is a great collaboration between the teaching staff in order to align the content of the study courses. Teachers have great scientific experience and they regularly apply the results of scientific research in the teaching process itself. Considering that teachers most often publish scientific works in domestic journals and in their native language, it is strongly recommended to publish works in prestigious international scientific journals. The FSS Human Resources Development Plan for 2022-2027 has set out this as one of the aims.

Strengths:

1. FSS Human Resources Development Plan for 2022-2027 in order to ensure the development of the academic staff.

2. Involvement of teachers in scientific projects at the national and international levels.

3. Institutional support for teachers in teaching and scientific work (time allocation and financial support).

Weaknesses:

1. Relatively few published works in prestigious scientific journals, although there is progress compared to the previous assessment.

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 number and qualifications of teachers in the study programme are in line with the requirements set out in the respective regulatory enactments.

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 UL has provided a detailed document in Annex 49. That provides proof of the Study programme "Communication Science 45321" compliance with the Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No. 240 "Regulations on the State Standard of Academic Education".

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

NA

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 study programme implementation language is Latvian. Study course descriptions are prepared in Latvian and English languages. Study course descriptions can be improved, for example, none of the study course descriptions contains information about the responsible personnel that is involved in the implementation of the study course nor the study course developer or the responsible person for delivering the study course indicated in the descriptions. This issue can be resolved on a long-term basis and does not influence the overall evaluation of the criteria. Additionally, it is advisable that the study course literature is renewed on an annual basis and is not older than 10 years. See Annex 52.

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

   Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

   The diploma issued and diploma supplement corresponds to Cabinet of ministers No. 202. Annex 46.

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

   Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

   The UL has provided the Declaration of the head of study field (Annex 53) certifying that the academic staff involved in the implementation of the study programme "Communication Science" (45321) complies with the requirements specified in Section 55, Paragraph one, Clause 3 of the Law on Higher Education Institutions.

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: Fully compliant

   The UL has provided Decision No 1.10/79 (05.12.2019) of the Council for Higher Education addressed to the University of Latvia on the implementation of the academic study programme "Communication Science 45321" the Council has decided to allow the University of Latvia to implement the academic study programme in Communication Science (Annex 47).

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

   NA

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 UL has provided a Head of Study Field Declaration, stating that the teaching staff members involved in the implementation of the study programme "Communication Science 45321" 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. Annex 11.

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

NA

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 study agreement is fully compliant with the Law on Higher Education Institutions Section 46, paragraph 2 and regulations of Cabinet of Ministers 23.01.2007. to Regulation No. 70 "Mandatory regulations to be included in the study agreement" (Annex 7. Study Agreement for Studies at UL. Standard Sample). On a short-term basis, UL has to specify agreement point 2.15., with reference point 4.18. is not correct in regard to students' intellectual property.

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

UL has provided the confirmation document No. 1-13/461 that in case of termination of the study programme students will be provided with the opportunity to continue studies in the Master level study programme "Sociology 45314". See annex 5.4. Additionally, UL has provided agreement No. 6012-D55.2/195 with Vidzemes Augstskola, that students will be provided with the opportunity to continue their studies in the Master's study programme "Strategic Communication and Management 45321" or "Media and Information Literacy 45321".

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The UL has provided the document "Refund and Compensation Policy Statement (No 1-13/129) (Annex 6.), which confirms that the students are guaranteed compensation for losses if the study programme is not accredited or the study programme's licence 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.

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

NA

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

   NA

Assessment of the requirement [8]

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

   Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

   All regulatory requirements are met except for minor deficiencies that can be easily eliminated.

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

The study program has economic and societal importance, and it also serves an important role in the development of media and communication research in Latvia. The learning outcomes, the study methods and the assessment methods are mutually aligned, but a certain mismatch exists between the stated outcomes of the study program and the relevant government regulation. The content of study courses is relevant and up-to-date and necessary resources are available to students. Various teaching methods are being used, although the diversity of lecturing types used is not clear. The teaching staff is qualified and has research experience, but, to maintain a strong emphasis on teaching students research skills, the teaching staff also should pay more attention to publishing papers in high-quality international journals. This imperative has already been recognized in the Study Field Development Plan. Qualified teaching staff who have research experience, as well as practitioners from the relevant industries are involved in the study process and student-centred principles are incorporated. This program replicates the same specialisation approach as utilised in the respective bachelor's study, which offers sub-programs in Media studies and Business communication. The reasoning behind the decision to maintain this exact same approach to specialisation on a Master's level is unclear. The fluctuation in the number of admitted students and graduates poses a significant challenge.

Strengths:
1. Importance in terms of societal, economic, and scientific contribution.
2. Up-to-date study content.
3. Has links with the relevant professional industries.

Weaknesses:
1. Relatively low and fluctuating student numbers.
2. Relatively few high-level publications by the academic staff.

Evaluation of the study programme "Communication Science"

   Evaluation of the study programme:

   Good

2.6. Recommendations for the Study Programme "Communication Science"

Short-term recommendations

Align the wording of the study outcomes more closely to the requirements of the Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No. 322 (13.06.2017). Synchronise the Latvian and English wording of the outcomes.

Explicitly mention the practical applications of the study outcomes of the sub-programs and their related professions.

Long-term recommendations

Develop mechanisms that would help to attract more students and retain them.

II - "Librarian Science and Information" ASSESSMENT

II - "Librarian Science and Information" ASSESSMENT

2.1. Indicators Describing the Study Programme

Analysis

According to the classification of Latvian education (the Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No 322, 13.06.2017), Library, information and archive studies fall within Information and communication sciences. Thus, this study programme clearly belongs to the study field. The contents of the study programme, with its emphasis on information, and the outcomes of the studies in terms of knowledge, skills, and competencies also relate to the study field.

The SER shows that the title, code, the degree to be obtained, professional qualification or degree and professional qualification of the study programme, aims, objectives, learning outcomes, and admission requirements are interrelated. The title, "Librarian Science and Information," describes the thematic focus of the programme. It should be noted, though, that two versions of the title appear in the documents. "Librarian Science and Information" is used in SER, but in the application by UL, the program is referred to as "Library Science and Information.". This is the form used by the UL website in English. The first two digits of the study programme code, 45322, refer to a master's level degree, and the next digit, 3, refers to the thematic group "Social Sciences, Commercial Sciences, and the Law." Code 32 denotes Information and communication sciences, and 322 — Library, information, and archive studies, which corresponds to the contents of this programme. The degree to be obtained, Master's Degree of Social Sciences in Library, Information and Archive Studies, is therefore appropriate. The goal of the study programme is to "educate highly qualified information specialists with competence in the management of information resources and information services for work in libraries and other information institutions, to promote the involvement of students in scientific research work." The tasks include offering the newest information in the library, information, archive and literature studies, and good command of their theories; providing students with skills to research, interpret, and present information, as well as expert and leadership skills and ethical responsibility; helping graduates to develop creativity in the job market and prepare them for doctoral studies. The wording of the outcomes of the studies in terms of knowledge, skills, and competencies do not fully comply with the Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No 322 (13.06.2017). The knowledge part does not mention creative thinking, which the Cabinet regulations require, but it is mentioned in the tasks section. The skills part does not reference entrepreneurship and innovations, independent improvement of one's competencies and specialisation, as well as taking responsibility for the results of work performed by personnel groups. The competencies part does not include critical analysis of complex scientific and professional problems and justifications of decisions, all of which is also a requirement in the Regulation.

However, the discrepancies are not so big that would raise doubts about the general compliance of the study program. To be admitted to this programme, the prospective students need to have a bachelor's degree or second-level professional higher education in information and communication sciences, or a bachelor's or master's degree in social sciences, business and law and take an entrance exam; or have a bachelor or master's degree in other sciences, take an entry exam and have work experience in information and communication field. These requirements are justified.

Since the last accreditation, changes in the admission rules have been made. The study programme has adopted an approach that takes into consideration previous education in information and communication sciences, and those candidates who do not have such experience, need to clear additional requirements to be admitted. This system is justified. The expert group during the previous accreditation also pointed to an issue with the wording of learning outcomes. The learning outcomes section has been updated, but its wording does not perfectly align with the formulations written in the Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No 322 (13.06.2017) (this issue has been described above). However, this is a minor issue and unlikely to have a significant impact on the quality and compliance of the study program.

The graduates of the study programme are able to advance their careers at libraries, archives and other information and memory institutions. Potential for work at private entities that need information specialists who search, select, organise, and disseminate information also exists. The SER references the "Informative Report on Medium and Long-term Labour Market Forecasts" by the Latvian Ministry of Economics, which states that the number of jobs in information and communication services is growing and will keep doing so in the medium term. It should be noted, though, that information and communication services encompass a wide array of professions and as such do not say much about the specific demand for library and information specialists. At the same time, based on the input from employers and other sources the expert group does not doubt that demand exists for the graduates of this study program; this programme is a key source of professions in the library, archive and related sectors; and they also fulfil an important social and cultural role. The data offered in the SER show that an absolute majority of the graduates work in a sector related to this study program. The number of students in 2021 was 25, which illustrates an upward trend compared to the previous years. The self-assessment notes that lately increased interest has been displayed by students who have obtained a previous degree in other fields, rather than information and communication sciences, but are developing careers in memory institutions. This further reflects the importance of the study programme in this sector and its potential to increase the appeal of its contents to potential students. The dropout rate is not huge, but given the relatively low total number of students, each student who leaves the studies causes a considerable change in the proportion of those who graduate against those who are admitted to the programme. Also, it can be a challenge to combine one's studies and full-time job duties.

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

The parameters of the study programme are mostly compliant with the study field. The parameters have been updated since the last accreditation, but the wording still does not perfectly align with the Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No. 322 (13.06.2017). Demand exists for graduates of this study programme, which also has cultural and social importance. The number of students is not high, although a recent upward trend can be observed.

Strengths:
1. The study programme offers knowledge, skills, and competencies that are sought after in the job market.
2. It offers opportunities to those who work in memory institutions and related fields and need further education to advance their careers.

Weaknesses:
1. Student enrollment could be higher.
2. The wording of the learning outcomes does not fully align with those described in the Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No. 322 (13.06.2017). They do not mention creative thinking, entrepreneurship and innovations, independent improvement of one's competencies and specialisation, taking responsibility for the results of work performed by personnel groups, critical analysis of complex scientific and professional problems and justifications of decisions.

2.2. The Content of Studies and Implementation Thereof

Analysis

The Master's study programme "Library Science and Information" (45442), as shown by the SAR and meetings with graduates of the study programme and representatives of the labour market, has been designed following its goals and objectives, achievable results, as well as the requirements of today's labour market, especially considering the need for information communication skills in various sectors. The content of the study programme corresponds to its aims and objectives. The study programme is implemented in full-time studies in four semesters. Still, its possible implementation in part-time in-person and part-time extramural studies in five semesters is also planned. The master's programme complies with the national regulatory framework - the State Education Standard. The program provides the knowledge, skills and competence specified in level 7 of the Latvian Qualifications Framework for Education. Students are offered both compulsory courses and restricted elective and free elective courses. The content is regularly supplemented and updated. As early as the entrance examinations for the master's programme, applicants should have already identified the level of research of the master's thesis topic and a plan on research questions and methodology. During the study process, students may choose to carry out independent work related to their master's thesis. Students may take a free elective course in another master's study programme of the UL in the amount of 2 CP. Both during a personal visit to the university, meeting with representatives of students and employers, and by familiarising themselves with the SAR, the experts ensured that the views of all involved parties were considered in developing the study programme and courses. For example, in preparation for the accreditation of the university's field of study, a working group was established which met regularly and discussed the changes planned and already implemented during the process. The study programme has been updated with topical courses thanks to close links with representatives of the employers.

At the beginning of 2022, the study direction surveyed employers, where 87% of respondents indicated that graduates have good or very good information literacy skills. Graduates' ability to acquire new knowledge is also highly rated, with 50% of respondents rating it as very good and 38% as good. Computer and language skills are also highly rated. Graduates' ability to plan and organise their work and the work of others is rated lower - 50% of surveyed employers rated it as average, while only 43% rated it as good. Practical knowledge and decision-making skills are also evaluated critically (SAR p. 263). The results of this survey have been considered in the increased emphasis on planning and organisation of work in the courses "Personnel Management" and "Management of Information Institutions". Since the study programme has close cooperation with the National Library of Latvia in organising the study process, after the survey, there was a focus group with representatives of the library, who also highly appreciated the students' skills, providing suggestions for the development of new study courses or the integration of topics into the study process, such as copyright in the digital environment, digitisation of cultural heritage. In questionnaires and focus group interviews, employers' evaluations have been considered, and course descriptions have been updated with new topics. New courses have been developed, such as "Digitisation of Cultural Heritage" and "Information Ethics", involving professionals from the field teaching the courses. Given that this is an academic programme and students do not have internships, it was agreed that

the NLL could invite master's students on study tours more often and that the library representatives could lead practical classes. In meetings with employers' representatives and academic staff, the experts confirmed that the study programme has strong links with the NLL and that both parties are satisfied with the principles of cooperation.

In the improvement of study courses to be introduced after the accreditation process, not only the recommendations of employers but also the recommendations of the previous expert group have been taken into account; for example, a new study course, "Information Ethics", and two study courses that are taught together with the Master's study programme "Communication Science" - "Communication Theories in the Context of Social Sciences" and "Critical Thinking in Higher and Continuing Education" have been included in the compulsory part. The issue of information ethics has been updated by creating a new study course, "Information Ethics" (2 CP), in the compulsory part of the study programme. Information ethics issues are also more strongly emphasised in other study courses, such as " Theories of Information Society " and "Research Methods" (SAR p. 265). The improvement of the study course also considers the priorities set out in national planning documents, recommendations of sector professionals and the expert group on updating the approach of memory institutions. A new study course, "Digitisation of Cultural Heritage", has been established in the study programme, emphasising the tasks of all memory institutions in preserving cultural heritage. And based on the recommendations of the expert group, a team-teaching approach is being implemented in the teaching of this course, involving sector professionals with experience in the development of cultural heritage preservation and digitisation projects (SAR 265) in the development and teaching of the course. Overall the mapping of the study courses has a direct link to the goals of the study programme (as provided in Appendix 42) and the content of the course descriptions adheres to the goals and objectives of the study programme.

The study programme is the only one in Latvia to offer a social sciences master's degree in library, information and archival science, and this programme is unrivalled. The content of the study programme is based on the latest developments in library science, information science, archival science, and book science, which are regularly integrated into the course descriptions and the e-study environment. As mentioned in the SAR (p. 265), one of the recommendations of the expert group was to articulate the current research directions clearly; therefore, to identify current research trends and directions in library and information science, a bibliometric analysis of research publications published scientific journals indexed in citation databases Web of Science and Scopus were carried out. A paper on this was prepared for the 80th Scientific Conference of the UL. The analysis results show that the research field has expanded and become more interdisciplinary over time due to the impact of technology: the rapid arrival of technology and changes in the availability of information and in the way people search for and use information have encouraged a more comprehensive view. As mentioned by the academic staff during the visit and also available in the SAR (p. 266), the content of the study programme is based on the latest developments in libraries, information, book, and archival science. The course lecturers actively follow all the latest research, participate in various research projects, and integrate the findings into their courses. Along with the traditional research areas, research areas that are not directly related to work processes in memory institutions - knowledge management, social media, innovation, information activities, and bibliometrics are developing. Page 266 of the SER explains that one common and high-priority research area which faculty members and students of the Department of Information and Library Studies are pursuing is "interaction among individuals, information and technologies." This area includes subjects such as innovations at memory institutions, organisation of knowledge, information activities, media skills and information skills, digital skills, data skills, human-focused information resources and services, the theoretical and practical aspects of reading, memory institutions and the local community, as well as book science. A new research area to be developed is a document management and archival science, which is only included in the curriculum for the academic year 2021/2022. The lecturers are professionals in the field of archives, and one of the

lecturers has started doctoral studies in the Social Sciences programme. This could encourage the development of research in this field, both for Master's and PhD theses.

The SER describes the diversity of teaching methods, including various types of lectures: lectures, seminars, practical activities, field trips, independent work, discussions, problem analysis, role-playing exercises, cooperative learning methods (group work), tests, papers, etc. Until now, one credit point is worth 40 academic hours, 16 of which are contact hours (lectures, seminars, workshops) and the remaining 24 are independent studies. After accreditation, to save financial resources, it is planned to reduce the number of contact hours from the current 40% to 30%-35%, something that is permitted in the Cabinet of Ministers Regulation "Regulations on the State Academic Education Standard" (available in Latvian) as adopted on 13 May 2014 (SAR p. 267). The proportion of lectures tends to decrease as e-courses allow the insertion of learning materials for independent study, promoting a student-centred learning process. The SAR states (p. 268) that the Moodle environment gives students access to timely information about subjects that are to be discussed, projects that must be handed in, as well as teaching materials for independent studies. All grades and references to the work that has been submitted and the seminars in practical work in which students have been involved can be seen by students in the E-course grading sections of Moodle. Academic staff uses various electronic tools such as Miro, Mentimeter, Kahoot, Padlet, Quizzi, Mind Master, Socrative, etc. This help to make the process more dynamic to attract the attention of students and to organise express tests, group discussions and mind maps. The report states that in different study courses practitioners from the field conduct guest lectures or participate in seminars (for example, the library of the UL, the LNL and the LNA). Guest instructors who arrive in Latvia as part of the Erasmus programme deliver lectures that all students are invited to attend (SAR p. 268). A combination of individual and discussion work is utilised. The study programme encourages students to research issues that are of interest to them, and opportunities exist to engage in research projects that are undertaken by the faculty staff. They also can present the results of their research work at the UL conference and publish scientific articles. In this way, research skills and experience can be greatly developed. The study programme has considered the recommendations of the previous accreditation expert group by regularly updating the course descriptions and paying attention to the precise formulation of learning outcomes and the methods by which these outcomes will be achieved. Course descriptions also detail all independent work and types of examinations that are aligned with the study outcomes. The results are aligned with the overall study programme outcomes – obtainable knowledge, skills and competencies (Appendix No. 44). Learning outcomes and the principles of grading are communicated to students. The university has a system that enables filing students' complaints and proposals.

The SER divides the topics of the final theses into three basic categories: general aspects of information management (the work of information/memory institutions, professional competence, education, information activities, information skills, other skills, etc.); management of information resources (various information resources, publishing, Ebooks, digital collections, websites); management of information services (regional research, gender research, services at libraries and other institutions, buildings, venues, etc.). The theses in the Study programme focus on important aspects of library and information science. Many topics are recommended by professionals. The largest proportion of written and defended theses came from the thematic group "Management of information services" (38%). A variety of research methods are used in the development of master's theses, such as different types of interviews, content analysis, questionnaires, the Delphi method, and a verbal protocol that is most often used when researching the use of information systems. As mentioned in SAR (p. 271) a new review form and grade sheet were introduced in the 2021/2022 academic year to make the process of evaluating and grading master's theses more objective. The evaluation sheet has eight components, and a score is given for each of them.

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

The Master's study programme "Library Science and Information" (45442) has been designed following its goals and objectives, achievable results, as well as the requirements of today's labour market, especially considering the need for information communication skills in various sectors. The study programme is the only one in Latvia to offer a social sciences master's degree in library, information and archival science, and this programme is unrivalled. The content is regularly supplemented and updated and based on the latest developments in the library, information, book, and archival science. In the improvement of study courses to be introduced after the accreditation process, not only the recommendations of employers but also the recommendations of the previous expert group have been taken into account. The topics of the final theses are related to the study field; they reflect the trends in the field and are influenced by the research topicalities of the academic staff. Many topics are recommended by professionals.

Strengths:
1. The study programme has strong links with the National Library of Latvia and both parties are satisfied with the principles of cooperation.
2. The recommendations of the previous expert group have been taken into account for creating new study courses or improving existing courses.
3. A new research area to be developed is document management and archival science, which is only included in the curriculum from the academic year 2021/2022 - this would encourage the development of research in this field, both for Masters' and PhD theses.
4. After accreditation, to save financial resources, it is planned to reduce the number of contact hours from the current 40% to 30%-35%, which will increase the independent study process and promote a student-centred learning process.
5. Professionals from the industry contribute to the study process.
6. Relevant research topics (including new directions, for example, knowledge management, social media, innovation, information activities, and bibliometric) for the final theses.

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

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

   Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

   The Master's study programme has been designed following its goals and objectives, achievable results, as well as the requirements of today's labour market, especially considering the need for information communication skills in various sectors. The topics of the final theses are related to the study field; they reflect the trends in the field and are influenced by the research topicalities of the academic staff.

2.3. Resources and Provision of the Study Programme

Analysis

Based on the visit of the experts to the FSS and SAR, it can be stated that the implementation of the study programme is provided with high-quality material and technical support. There are both high-quality rooms with everything necessary for the study process and computer classrooms with all software, which is very important for the students of the study programme "Library Science and Information" (45442). As many of the courses in the study programme are related to information technology, part of the classes are held in the UL FSS computer rooms (two classrooms with a total of 65 workstations), where students can also use scanners to learn how to digitise documents. In the

computer rooms, students can use MS Office (Word, Powerpoint, Excel, Teams u.c.), IBM SPSS Statistics, Adobe Creative Cloud (Premiere, Photoshop, InDesign u.c.), Nvivo, Gephi, Protégé, MultiTes, UCINet software (SAR p. 273). A maximum variety of e-learning resources/research databases are available to support the learning process. As the experts saw during their visit and by consulting the information mentioned in the SAR (p. 273), the Department of Information and Library Studies has established good cooperation with the National Library of Latvia (NLL), which has a rich collection of information resources in the library and information science. The library also hosts some classes and pre-defence of master's theses. Students can use the NLL's collections, especially the specialised Library and Information Science reading room. In addition, both teaching staff and students regularly receive information from the NLL on new acquisitions in the field.

The allocated funding ensures that the study process is fully implemented. The funding for the implementation of the study programme is provided by the state budget subsidy from the Ministry of Education and Science, which for the academic year 2021/2022 (as well as for the study field "Communication sciences") was EUR 2445 for full-time studies; the tuition fee for full-time studies is EUR 2350 per year, considering the conditions of the university (SAR p. 274). The total Study programme budget is expected to be EUR 43900 per year. (SAR p. 274). As mentioned in the SAR, the programme's costs are calculated considering the methodology developed by the UL and the relevant legislation. Taking into account all aspects and the information on the number of students in the academic year 2021/2022 (25 full-time students), the estimated full-time cost of the programme per student is EUR 1 754 per year, and the total cost of the programme is EUR 43 873 per year (SAR p. 274). The SAR University representatives have also modelled the possible changes in the cost in case of a decrease in the number of students, considering the proposed tuition fees and the state budget subsidy. The calculations show that for the programme to be cost-effective and to provide students with a quality study process, the number of fee-paying students in the programme (in all courses combined) should be at least 16. In contrast, if the programme had only budget students, the number should exceed 15 (SAR p. 275). Analysing the costs of part-time in-person studies, the programme implementers have concluded that at least 12 fee-paying students are needed to make the programme viable. A part-time in-person programme requires at least nine fee-paying students (for all courses combined). The University, having analysed the number of students and their costs, has concluded that to ensure the cost-effectiveness of the study programme, the number of self-financed students should be reduced, and the number of fee-paying students should be increased. To increase the number of fee-paying students, similarly to the Communication Sciences programme, it is planned to work more actively on attracting students at the Bachelor level to continue their studies at the Master level and on marketing activities to attract potential students. The University has already taken steps to reduce the costs of the study programme. After accreditation, it has been decided to move to a lower number of teaching hours (30%-35%, instead of the previous 40%), as allowed by the Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No.240 "Regulations on the State Standard of Academic Education". But to avoid compromising the quality of studies, e-courses will be supplemented with teaching materials and lecture recordings (SAR p. 278). The representatives of the study programme mention that during the last two academic years, they have managed to optimise the costs of the study programme by reviewing the courses that can be taken together with students from other master's programmes, as well as by offering limited elective courses together for both courses, slightly reducing the total number of contact hours. Although the faculty can also receive financial support for the development of the programme from the UL Study Quality Enhancement Fund, solutions are actively being sought to increase the number of fee-paying students. Still, the university is aware that students' ability to pay is related to salaries in the cultural sector. The SAR mentions that the income from the lifelong education programmes will be used to develop the programme. On average, the additional funding received by the Information and Library Studies department during the reporting period amounts to EUR 9350 per year. Over the next two academic years, it is planned to develop and offer professionals in the field

a number of other relevant lifelong education programmes on innovation, design thinking and local history in memory institutions. A more active offering of learning the program courses in the status of a listener could be an additional funding source. (SAR p. 278).

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

Conclusions, strengths and weaknesses:
Study programme Library Science and Information (45442) provides all the necessary information and scientific and material-technical basis for the specifics and implementation of the study programme. It creates preconditions for the achievement of study results and the provision of a quality study process. In general, various databases, technologies and information communication facilities are well provided - software for the needs of the study process, computer classrooms and the possibility to use licensed software. Close cooperation with the National Library of Latvia has been established to support the study process. The University has also carried out a thorough financial cost-benefit analysis of the costs of the study direction in all study forms, concluding that more fee-paying students should be attracted, which is hampered by the lower salary levels in the cultural sector, which includes library sciences. To obtain additional funding for the study direction, it is planned to offer a number of topical lifelong study courses for anyone interested in design thinking and local history studies in memory institutions. One of the solutions to obtain additional funding is the offering of learning the program courses in the status of a listener.

Strengths:
1. The study direction provides a high-quality material and technical base for the student's learning process.
2. The University has established a close relationship with the National Library of Latvia to provide the study process.
3. Graduates are very satisfied with the content and quality of the study programme and recommend it to others.
4. A plan has been developed to increase funding for the study direction, such as lifelong learning courses and the possibility of taking courses as a listener.
5. The study programme has a high potential for attracting fee-paying students if the salaries in the cultural sector were increased.
6. The study curricula have been reviewed, the number of contact hours reduced, and the reducing contact hours by increasing the use of the e-learning environments in the study process and combining courses with other Master programmes.

Weaknesses:
1. A small number of students who graduate from a bachelor's programme go on to study a master's programme for financial reasons.
2. The university is not yet able to fully self-finance its studies.
3. In the public space, there is little information and explanation about the content of the study program and the possibilities of graduates in the labour market in various sectors.
4. Teaching staff have access to the Moodle environment for the study process, but conversations with students/teaching staff confirmed that Moodle is an optional platform.
5. Graduates' potential for promoting the study programme needs to be used more.

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 programme provides all the necessary information and scientific and material-technical basis for the specifics and implementation of the study programme. It creates preconditions for the achievement of study results and the provision of a quality study process. The University has also carried out a thorough financial cost-benefit analysis of the costs of the study direction in all study forms.

2.4. Teaching Staff

Analysis

Professionals from the sector are included in the performance which enables students to familiarise themselves with the current trends in the labour market (SER, p. 279; onsite visit). In this way, students get both theoretical and practical knowledge at the same time. Professionals have also served as advisors to research projects among students and they have taken part in commissions focused on the defence of final papers (SER, p. 164). In addition to practitioners, lectures are often attended by guest lecturers, especially through the Erasmus + programme.

Teachers are regularly working on their own professional development by attending various courses (SER, p. 281, onsite visit). The team teaching methods are being developed on the basis of recommendations from the Expert Group in the previous assessment procedure (SER, p. 282).

The qualifications of faculty members satisfy the requirements of this study programme. In addition to participating in projects at the national and international levels, the teachers have experience in publishing scientific papers and books with prestigious international publishers. It should also be emphasised that one professor is an internationally renowned book science specialist, the head of the research sector, the head of the NLL Letonika and Baltic Centre, member of the editorial board of the National Encyclopedia (SER, p. 279).

In the previous assessment procedure, the biggest complaint of the expert group related to weak international cooperation and scientific work, and with these goals, the FSS Human Resources Development Plan for 2022-2027 was adopted, which should encourage teachers to publish papers in prestigious international journals, develop and participate in international scientific projects as well as to join the international professional organisations.

In order to ensure the quality of the study programme, practitioners are also included in the performance of classes which is great because it enables students to familiarise themselves with the current trends in the labour market. In this way, students get both theoretical and practical knowledge at the same time.

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

The qualification of the teaching staff members complies with the requirements for the implementation of the study programme and the requirements set forth in the regulatory enactments. There is a great collaboration between the teaching staff such as joint field trips, organisation of seminars, joint research projects etc. Practitioners are also included in the performance of classes which is great because it enables students to familiarise themselves with the current trends in the labour market. Considering that teachers most often publish scientific works in domestic journals and in their native language, it is strongly recommended to publish works in prestigious international scientific journals. The FSS Human Resources Development Plan for 2022-2027 was adopted which should encourage teachers to publish papers in prestigious international journals, develop and participate in international scientific projects as well as join international professional organisations.

Strengths:

1. FSS Human Resources Development Plan for 2022-2027 in order to ensure the development of the academic staff.

2. Cooperation between scientists and practitioners in the implementation of the study programme.

Weaknesses:

1. Relatively few of the teaching staff have their primary affiliation with the department.

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 number and qualifications of teachers in the study programme are in line with the requirements set out in the respective regulatory enactments.

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 UL has provided a detailed document in Annex 41. That provides proof of the Study programme "Librarian Science and Information" compliance with the Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No. 240 "Regulations on the State Standard of Academic Education".

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

NA

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 study programme implementation language is Latvian. Study course descriptions are prepared in Latvian and English languages. Study course descriptions can be improved, for example, none of the study course descriptions contains information about the responsible personnel that is involved in the implementation of the study course nor does the study course developer, or responsible person for delivering the study course indicated in the descriptions. This issue can be resolved on a long-term basis and does not influence the overall evaluation of the criteria. Additionally, it is advisable that the study course literature is renewed on an annual basis and is not older than 10 years. See Annex 44.

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The diploma issued and diploma supplement corresponds to Cabinet of ministers No. 202. Annex 38.

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The UL has provided the Declaration of the head of study field (Annex 45) certifying that the academic staff involved in the implementation of the study programme "Librarian Science and Information" (45322) complies with the requirements specified in Section 55, Paragraph one, Clause 3 of the Law on Higher Education Institutions.

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: Fully compliant

The UL has provided Decision No 1.10/83 (05.12.2019) of the Council for Higher Education addressed to the University of Latvia on the implementation of the academic study programme "Librarian Science and Information 45322" the Council has decided to allow the University of Latvia to implement the academic study programme in Librarian Science and Information (Annex 39).

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

NA

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 UL has provided a Head of Study Field Declaration, stating that the teaching staff members involved in the implementation of the study programme "Librarian Science and Information 45322" 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. Annex 11.

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

NA

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 study agreement is fully compliant with the Law on Higher Education Institutions Section 46, paragraph 2 and regulations of Cabinet of Ministers 23.01.2007. to Regulation No. 70 "Mandatory regulations to be included in the study agreement" (Annex 7. Study Agreement for Studies at UL. Standard Sample). On a short-term basis, UL has to specify agreement point 2.15., with reference point 4.18. is not correct with regards to students' intellectual property.

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

UL has provided the confirmation document No. 1-13/459 that in case of termination of the study programme students will be provided with the opportunity to continue studies in Master level study programme "Sociology 45314". See annex 5.3. Nevertheless, on a long-term basis, it would be advisable to find some other partner higher education institution that may provide opportunities for students to continue their studies.

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The UL has provided the document - Refund and Compensation Policy Statement, No 1-13/129) (Annex 6.), which confirms that the 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.

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

NA

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

NA

Assessment of the requirement [8]

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

All regulatory requirements are met with only minor deficiencies that can be easily eliminated.

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

The study programme has societal and economic importance, and it also serves an important role in the development of library sciences, management of information services and information management research in Latvia. The study programme offers knowledge, skills, and competencies that are sought after in the job market. The learning outcomes, the study methods and the assessment methods are mutually aligned. The content of study courses is relevant and up-to-date and necessary resources are available to students, but study course descriptions can be improved, for example, none of the study course descriptions contains information about the responsible personnel that is involved in the implementation of the study course nor does the study course developer, or responsible person for delivering the study course indicated in the descriptions.

In general, various databases, technologies and information communication facilities are well provided - software for the needs of the study process, computer classrooms and the possibility to use licensed software. Close cooperation with the National Library of Latvia has been established to support the study process. Various teaching methods are being used. The teaching staff is qualified and has research experience, but to maintain the strong emphasis on teaching students research skills, the teaching staff also should pay more attention to publishing papers in high-quality international journals. This imperative has already been recognized in the Study Field Development Plan. The Master theses in the Study programme focus on important aspects of library and information science. Many topics are recommended by professionals.

Strengths:
1. Importance in terms of societal, economic, and scientific contribution.
2. Up-to-date study content.
3. Cooperation between scientists and practitioners in the implementation of the study programme.
4. Graduates are very satisfied with the content and quality of the study programme and recommend it to others.
5. Employers highly value graduates' information literacy skills and computer and language skills.

Weaknesses:
1. A small number of students who graduate from a bachelor's programme go on to study a master's programme for financial reasons.
2. Relatively few high-level publications by the academic staff.
3. In the public space, there is little information and explanation about the content of the study program and the possibilities of graduates in the labour market in various sectors.
4. Relatively few teaching staff have their primary affiliation with the department.

Evaluation of the study programme "Librarian Science and Information"

Evaluation of the study programme:

Good

2.6. Recommendations for the Study Programme "Librarian Science and Information"

Short-term recommendations

Fully align the wording of the learning outcomes with those described in the Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No 322 (13.06.2017): the knowledge, skills, and competencies of learning outcomes should include all the key elements prescribed by the regulation, including entrepreneurship and innovations, taking responsibility for the results of work performed by personnel groups, and critical analysis of complex scientific and professional problems and justifications of decisions.

The correct title of the study program should be clarified: "Librarian Science and Information" or "Library Science and Information".

Long-term recommendations

Develop mechanisms that would help to attract more students and retain them.

Encourage the academic staff to publish more of their research output in international peer-reviewed journals.

More leaching staff whose primary affiliation is with the department would be desirable.

In the future, make the Moodle environment mandatory for all lecturers and students, both for placing study materials, for interactive learning (student-centred) and for communication with students.

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

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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		Quality assurance system is well established, significant progress can be seen since the last assessment procedure. Namely, among other things the Quality Management Handbook was created and published in 2021, which will certainly further contribute to the development of the quality assurance system and the study programs themselves.

Requirements	Requirement Evaluation			Comment
R2 - Compliance of scientific research and artistic creation with the level of development of scientific research and artistic creation (if applicable)	Fully compliant			Scientific research undertaken in the study field complies with the level of development of scientific research in the relevant scientific disciplines. The research teams demonstrate their competitiveness by securing research grants in open competitions. Researchers are able to produce solid research output, and they have developed their expertise in their respective topics.
R3 - The cooperation implemented within the study field with various Latvian and foreign organizations ensures the achievement of the aims of the study field.	Fully compliant			The study field is broadly using local partner connections with all stakeholders, which helps to achieve the aims of the study field. However, regarding the partners from abroad, there is a lot of room for improvement, such as expanding cooperation agreements outside the Erasmus+ network and increasing the outgoing mobility among the academic staff. These deficiencies can be eliminated with effort and support from faculty and staff members themselves and are not sufficient enough to decrease evaluation to partially compliant.
R4 - Elimination of deficiencies and shortcomings identified in the previous assessment of the study field, if any, or implementation of the recommendations provided.		Partially compliant		The university made a detailed plan to eliminate all the deficiencies observed in the last assessment procedure. Some of them have already been removed, while the higher education institution will need a little more time to implement certain recommendations. Namely, the plan foresees that all deficiencies will be removed by 2027.

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	Communication Studies (43321)	Not relevant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Good
2	Information Management (43322)	Not relevant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Good
3	Communication Science (45321)	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Good
4	Librarian Science and Information (45322)	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Good

The Dissenting Opinions of the Experts

No dissenting opinions.