

JOINT OPINION BY THE EXPERT GROUP ON THE RE-ASSESSMENT OF A STUDY
PROGRAMME

Internal Security and Civil Protection

**FIRST CYCLE PROFESSIONAL HIGHER EDUCATION
STUDY PROGRAMME "BORDER GUARDING"**

(code 42861)

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Summary of the Re-Assessment of the Study Programme

The first-cycle professional bachelor's study programme "Border Guarding", code 42861 (First Cycle SP "Border Guarding") is implemented by Riga Technical University (RTU) in RTU Rezekne Academy which is a strategic education and research centre in Eastern Latvia. The location in Rezekne is of critical importance for both national security and the security of the European Union, given its proximity to the borders with Russia and Belarus. In this context, the preparation of well-qualified border guard officers in the region is crucial for responding to hybrid threats and irregular migration. The border-guard education continues a long-standing tradition and is specifically oriented towards training officers with high-level leadership, management and analytical competencies.

An important contextual factor for this assessment is the Rezekne Academy of Technologies merger with Riga Technical University (RTU) on 1 April 2025, as a result of which it now operates as RTU Rezekne Academy within RTU's study field "Internal Security and Civil Protection". The expert group noted that, as this is a fresh organisational change, not all processes and activities have yet fully settled within the new system, which has created some uncertainty among staff regarding procedures. At the same time, during the assessment visit, the merger was emphasised as a positive strategic step that opens up more opportunities for both students and academic staff, ensuring access to RTU's extensive research resources, international databases and support systems, and strengthening the overall institutional framework for the programme.

Against this background, the expert group assessed the First Cycle SP "Border Guarding", which is implemented at RTU Rezekne Academy in close cooperation with the State Border Guard College (SBGC) and the State Border Guard (SBG). The study programme constitutes the second stage in a unified vocational education cycle, with the short-cycle "Border Guarding" study programme as the first stage and the First Cycle SP "Border Guarding" providing the professional bachelor's qualification at LQF/EQF level 6. It is delivered in Latvian, in a part-time extramural format, to serve State Border Guard officers and is fully funded from the State Border Guard's state-budget resources. The curriculum continues the long-standing border-guard education tradition in Rēzekne and is oriented towards developing officers with advanced operational, analytical, strategic and leadership competences.

The expert group concludes that the First Cycle SP "Border Guarding" is coherent, professionally relevant and well aligned with the Latvian Qualifications Framework level 6, the European Qualifications Framework and the professional standard "Senior Officer of the State Border Guard". The curriculum is topical, multidimensional and systematically structured, with a clear progression from operational competences at short-cycle level to more analytical, strategic and managerial competences at first-cycle level; strong integration with the short-cycle study programme ensures continuity and avoids duplication, while the content reflects current EU and Latvian priorities in border management, migration and security, including the use of Frontex/CEPOL materials and consideration of new EU asylum/return regulations and hybrid-threat perspectives. Implementation is characterised by a very strong practice orientation: teaching methods, internships and bachelor's theses are tightly linked to real tasks and current priorities of the State Border Guard, internships are systematically organised in State Border Guard units with clear tasks and assessment procedures, and theses typically address concrete operational or strategic issues, feeding into unit-level and sometimes national development. The study programme benefits from qualified and experienced teaching staff drawn from RTU Rezekne Academy, SBGC and SBG, combining

academic and professional expertise in law, internal security and social sciences, as well as from adequate material, technical and information resources, including specialised training infrastructure and modern e-learning tools; cooperation mechanisms (study-field commissions, methodological groups, joint practice management, joint research and digital collaboration) support coordination of courses, alignment between short-cycle and first-cycle studies and integration of studies with service practice.

At the same time, the assessment identified several structural weaknesses and risks that mainly concern strategic development, internationalisation and quality-assurance enhancement rather than basic compliance. The study programme relies heavily on practitioner-lecturers from SBG and SBGC, while the full-time academic core at RTU Rezekne Academy in border guarding remains small and is not yet clearly positioned as the main driver of pedagogical innovation, research development, and study-programme-level quality assurance. The strong hierarchical influence of the State Border Guard on key aspects of the study process, although ensuring high relevance, may constrain academic autonomy, student initiative, international mobility and the diversification of funding, especially given the study programme's structural dependence on a single employer and funder. Elements of internal quality assurance, such as the systematic collection, documentation and use of student and employer feedback, common assessment standards for key competences and study programme-level monitoring of higher-order analytical and research outcomes, require further formalisation. Overall, however, the expert group considers that the First Cycle SP "Border Guarding" clearly fulfils the requirements for the study field and can be successfully implemented in its declared form; the identified weaknesses can be addressed within the accreditation period.

I. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS RECEIVED DURING THE PREVIOUS ASSESSMENT PROCEDURES

Criterion:

In the previous evaluation of the study field the recommendations made by the expert group during the evaluation of the study field and the recommendations made by the Study Quality Commission (if applicable) that are directly relevant to the study programme under evaluation are / have not been fully or partially implemented. The contribution of the higher education institution / college to the analysis of recommendations and their application to the specifics of the study programme is evident.

Analysis

In the previous assessment (2012) of the study field, the expert group issued several recommendations for the first cycle professional higher education study programme “Border Guarding” (First Cycle SP “Border Guarding”). According to the self-assessment report (SAR) and the document “Report on the implementation of the recommendations of the first cycle (professional bachelor's) higher education study programme ‘Border Guarding’ P01”, as well as information obtained during the site visit to RTU Rezekne Academy, these recommendations have been largely addressed and adapted to the specific context of the study programme.

1. Recommendation: “Consider the possibility of more often and intense contacts of teachers with students.”

Implemented activities: The RTU Rezekne Academy has introduced and published schedules of regular online and face-to-face consultations in the e-learning environment and strengthened feedback mechanisms through discussion forums, consultations and individual meetings. Within study courses, the proportion of interactive classes and discussions has been increased, and uniform communication principles have been set out in course descriptions (SAR Annex P01). During the site visit, the study programme director and students confirmed that each student group has a dedicated communication chat, which is actively used for academic and organisational questions.

2. Recommendation: “Further development of the knowledge assessment is desirable. The rules and standards should be more detailed. The element of chance in the assessment of students' knowledge should be more limited.”

Implemented activities: Based on the SAR and information obtained during the site visit, the recommendation regarding the further development of knowledge assessment has been addressed through several measures. From the academic year 2014/2015, the institution initiated a systematic improvement of the assessment system by specifying course-level evaluation criteria, clarifying examination formats, and ensuring their alignment with the intended learning outcomes. Methodological instructions for lecturers on assessment procedures have been developed and are regularly updated, providing a unified approach to assessing study achievements.

In parallel, at the beginning of 2025, the academy has strengthened communication with students regarding assessment principles through the ORTUS electronic environment and targeted consultations. The study programme director maintains a dedicated communication

channel (group chat) with each student group, a practice confirmed by students during the site visit. Students and lecturers consistently reported that course descriptions clearly set out how learning outcomes are assessed and how grades are awarded. In addition, the topics of bachelor's theses are approved by the State Border Guard, which also appoints a consultant competent in the relevant field, thereby ensuring professional relevance and appropriate expert support (SAR Annex P01).

3. Recommendation: "The broader use of video-recording of lectures for part-time students of the Programme is highly advisable."

Implemented activities: The RTU Rezekne Academy notes that students are State Border Guard officials assigned to studies during their working time, making lecture attendance mandatory and integrated into their service schedules. Nevertheless, in specialised border-guard courses, lecturers use video-demonstration materials to facilitate understanding of practical topics (SAR Annex P01). During the site visit to RTU Rezekne Academy and the tour of State Border Guard College, the expert group observed that the necessary technical infrastructure (e-learning platforms, video-conferencing tools) is available for remote connection and support, even though full systematic lecture recording is not the primary mode due to the specific target group and attendance model.

4. Recommendation: "The list of detailed objectives of the Programme should be supplemented with one more item - awareness of general and regional border guarding strategies."

Implemented activities: The study programme objective has been reformulated to emphasise the preparation of senior border guard officers competent to ensure the protection of the external border of Latvia and the European Union, explicitly situating the Latvian border within the broader EU strategic context. Relevant national, EU and NATO strategic documents are referenced in study programme documentation and integrated into teaching (SAR Annex P01). During the site visit, lecturers and study programme management reported that changes in strategic documents and priorities are monitored and incorporated into courses on an ongoing basis.

5. Recommendation: "Involvement of specialists from other higher-level institutions should take a greater part in the development of the programme."

Implemented activities: The RTU Rezekne Academy reports close cooperation with responsible officials of the State Border Guard in developing and updating the study programme; recommendations on current topics are taken into account, and diploma thesis topics are coordinated with the State Border Guard (SAR Annex P01). During the site visit, study programme management explained that, given the high specificity of the First Cycle SP "Border Guarding", intensive cooperation occurs with the National Defence Academy and experts from Frontex. However, the experts also noted that systematic involvement of academic specialists from other higher education institutions outside the immediate security and defence network is less evident in documentation, suggesting that this recommendation has been addressed mainly through sector-specific rather than broader academic partnerships.

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

Overall, the recommendations from the 2012 assessment for the First Cycle SP "Border Guarding" have been substantially implemented and adapted to the specific context of the study programme. The RTU Rezekne Academy has strengthened teacher-student contact and communication (including regular consultations, interactive classes and group chats), clarified

and standardised assessment criteria and procedures, integrated strategic EU and Latvian border-guarding perspectives into study programme objectives and teaching, and ensured that thesis topics are professionally relevant and supported by competent consultants. The technical and e-learning infrastructure has been upgraded to support part-time officers, and sector-specific cooperation with the State Border Guard, the National Defence Academy and Frontex has been deepened.

At the same time, the site visit indicated that one recommendation remains only partially addressed: while cooperation with security and defence sector partners is strong, the systematic involvement of academic specialists from other higher education institutions beyond this immediate network is still limited and less visible in documentation. This suggests that, alongside clear progress in most areas, there is room to broaden external academic engagement to further support the long-term academic development of the First Cycle SP “Border Guarding”.

Strengths:

1. Student awareness of study requirements has improved, including a more transparent knowledge-assessment system in the study programme and more precisely defined evaluation criteria and requirements.
2. Technical equipment has been renewed and is of high quality, enabling remote participation and the effective use of video and audio materials; video demonstrations are used more frequently in professional study courses.
3. The study programme director is a member of the Senior Border Guard Officer Professional Standard Development Group and maintains close contact with all study programme students, including through group-wide communication chats.
4. Changes in the study programme have been coordinated with the State Border Guard, from whom formal opinions have been obtained. The bachelor’s study programme has been developed in line with Frontex agency guidelines for mid-level border guard managers.

Weaknesses: No significant shortcomings or remaining weaknesses were observed

II. ASSESSMENT OF THE STUDY PROGRAMME “Border Guarding”

2.1. Indicators Describing the Study Programme

Criteria:

- 2.1.1. Compliance of the study programme with the study field.
- 2.1.2. The title, code, degree to be obtained, professional qualification or degree and professional qualification of the study programme, aims, objectives, learning outcomes, which are compliant with the respective LQF/EQF level, and admission requirements are interrelated. The duration and scope of the study programme implementation (including different study programme implementation options), as well as the implementation language, are reasonable and justified.

- 2.1.3. The corrections made to the study programme's parameters within the assessment of the study field are analyzed, justified and would be supported.
- 2.1.4. Economic and / or social justification of the study programme, dynamics of the number of students and employment indicators of the graduates of the study programme.
- 2.1.5. The development and implementation of the joint study programme is justified and ensures a quality study process (if applicable).

Analysis

2.1.1. The first cycle professional higher education study programme "Border Guarding" (42861) is based on the relevant professional standard for the "Senior Officer of the State Border Guard" (classification code of profession 3352-08) (approved at the meeting of 14 February 2024, Minutes No. 1). RTU Rezekne Academy has included a comparison of the study programme with the competencies outlined in this professional standard in its SAR, demonstrating that the study programme adequately covers these competencies (see SAR Annex 8). Based on the professional qualification of the Senior Officer of the State Border Guard and the qualities required therein, the student in the study programme acquires all the necessary knowledge and skills, which are marked both in the name of the study programme and in the achievement of its goals.

A key contribution of the professional higher education study programme "Border Guarding" is its ability to respond to the labour market and national security needs by preparing qualified human resources for the State Border Guard and the broader internal security sector. The first cycle ST "Border Guarding" is designed to ensure the development of competent professionals who are able to protect the external border of Latvia and the European Union, perform border control and border surveillance tasks, and manage operational activities in accordance with national and international legal regulations. The study programme also promotes the development of responsible, analytical, and professionally competent officers capable of organising and managing border guard units, assessing security risks, and cooperating with national and international institutions in internal security.

For instance, graduates of the study programme obtain the professional qualification "Senior Officer of the State Border Guard", which enables them to organise and supervise the work of border guard units, carry out border control and migration management activities, analyse security threats, and ensure the implementation of border protection measures in accordance with professional ethics, human rights principles, and operational requirements.

Taking into consideration the title of the first-cycle ST "Border Guarding" and the professional standard on which the study programme has been created and implemented, the experts conclude that the study programme corresponds to the study field "Internal Security and Civil Protection".

2.1.2. The first-cycle professional higher education study programme "Border Guarding" (code 42861) consists of 243 credit points and is implemented over 4 years and 6 months in a part-time extramural format (SAR, p. 3, Table 3.1.1.1; Annex 2). An analysis of the study programme's education classification code (42861) reveals its thematic and institutional positioning: the digits "42" identify it as a first-cycle higher education study programme leading to a bachelor's degree and a level 6 professional qualification; the element "86" places it within the thematic area of "Civil and military protection"; and "861" denotes its specific

belonging to the thematic group "Protection of persons and property" (SAR, pp. 11–12, Section 3.1.2).

The study programme is strategically designed as the second stage in a unified professional education cycle (SAR, p. 11; Annex 8). Admission requirements for Latvian students include the prior acquisition of the 5th-level professional qualification "Junior Officer of the State Border Guard" through short-cycle professional higher education (SAR, p. 3, Table 3.1.1.1; Annex 2). Under a formal cooperation agreement between RTU Rezekne Academy and the State Border Guard College, 120 ECTS (80 Latvian credit points) from the sequential short-cycle study programme are recognized, ensuring a structured progression to strategic management levels and preventing content duplication (SAR, pp. 11–12; Annex 8; Annex 9-1).

Upon successful completion, students are awarded a Professional Bachelor's Degree in Border Guarding and the professional qualification of "Senior Officer of the State Border Guard" (classification code of profession 3351 08), corresponding to level 6 of the Latvian and European Qualifications Framework (LQF/EQF). (SAR, pp. 3-7)

As stated in the SAR (p. 13), the aim of the First Cycle SP "Border Guarding" is to prepare qualified specialists capable of ensuring the protection of the external border of Latvia and the European Union, performing border control tasks, and organising and managing the work of the State Border Guard service in accordance with national and international legal regulations, professional ethics, and human rights principles. The study programme is designed to meet the needs of the national security system and the labour market by preparing professional bachelor's degree graduates and senior officers of the State Border Guard with a sixth-level professional qualification.

The aim is pursued through several key tasks:

- providing students with in-depth knowledge of the regulatory framework in the fields of border protection, migration, and security;
- developing professional skills to carry out border control and border protection activities using modern technologies and operational methods;
- preparing students for independent and responsible professional duties, including decision-making in complex and critical security situations;
- developing competencies for organising and managing the work of border guard units, including personnel management and inter-institutional cooperation;
- promoting adherence to professional ethics, human rights, and service discipline;
- strengthening research skills by enabling students to analyse border protection processes and apply research results in professional practice (SAR, p. 8).

By fulfilling these tasks, students achieve the intended learning outcomes of the study programme, which include acquiring knowledge of national, European Union, and international legal frameworks, related to border protection and migration, developing the ability to analyse security risks and operational situations, and gaining competencies necessary to independently perform the duties of a border guard officer and manage the work of border guard units.

2.1.3. Since the previous accreditation of the First Cycle SP "Border Guarding", several significant changes have been introduced to its parameters in order to ensure compliance with

national legislation, institutional developments, and the professional requirements of the internal security sector. These changes are described in the Self-Assessment Report (SAR, 3.1.1.).

One of the major structural changes relates to institutional reorganisation. Following the Cabinet Order No. 297 of 23 May 2023 on the reorganisation of the Rezekne Academy of Technology, the institution was integrated into Riga Technical University on 1 April 2025 and now operates as RTU Rezekne Academy. Consequently, the study programme has been incorporated into the RTU's organisational and academic structure, providing access to broader academic resources, research platforms, and cooperation networks.

Another important change concerns the classification of the study programme. In accordance with the amendments to the Law on Higher Education Institutions and the Vocational Education Law adopted in 2022, the study programme type was changed from a second-level professional higher education study programme to a first-cycle professional higher education programme, aligning it with the current structure of the Latvian higher education system.

The transition to the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) has also been implemented. As part of this process, the scope of the study programme was adjusted from 160 Latvian credit points to 240 credit points (SAR, p. 9) to ensure compliance with the national requirements and the Cabinet Regulation No. 305 of 13 June 2023 *“Regulations on the State Standard of Professional Higher Education.”* These changes also ensured a clearer structure of the study programme and alignment of the study components with the requirements of professional higher education standard.

Furthermore, in order to ensure full compliance with the updated professional standard “Senior Officer of the State Border Guard”, approved in February 2024 by the Sub-Council for Tripartite Cooperation in Vocational Education and Employment, the scope of the study programme was slightly increased from 240 to 243 credit points (SAR, p. 9). This adjustment ensures that the study programme fully covers the competencies required for senior officer positions in the State Border Guard and reflects the evolving professional requirements of the internal security sector.

Additionally, the study programme has been formally included in the RTU study field “Internal Security and Civil Protection” by the Study Quality Commission in March 2025. This integration strengthens the academic coherence of the study programme within the study field and ensures its alignment with the study field development plan for 2022-2027, particularly in areas such as research in border security, migration management, and internal security (SAR, p. 10).

Overall, the implemented corrections to the study programme parameters are well justified and reflect both legislative changes and developments in the higher education system as well as the professional requirements of the border guarding sector. These changes improve the structural clarity of the study programme, strengthen its integration within the study field, and ensure its compliance with national standards and the professional qualification requirements. Therefore, the experts consider the corrections to the study programme parameters appropriate and supportable.

2.1.4. Ensuring sufficient and highly qualified personnel for the protection of Latvia’s external border and the European Union border is an important priority for the national security system.

The first-cycle higher education study programme “Border Guarding” addresses these needs by preparing qualified senior officers for the State Border Guard (SBG). The study programme directly strengthens the national and internal security systems by developing the professional competencies required for border control, border surveillance, migration management, and security risk analysis (SAR, p. 13).

The economic and social justification of the study programme is closely linked to the priorities defined in the operational strategy of the State Border Guard for 2023-2027, which emphasises ensuring the necessary number of personnel to perform the border surveillance function of the external state border, as well as strengthening the capacity of the service to participate in international cooperation mechanisms of European Union institutions, including the European Union Agency for Asylum and the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (SAR, p. 11). The strategy highlights the importance of professional training, upskilling, and career development of border guard personnel. In this context, the study programme plays an important role in preparing qualified officers capable of ensuring the effective functioning of the border guarding system and contributing to international cooperation in border security.

The study programme is implemented in close cooperation between RTU Rezekne Academy and the State Border Guard, and is fully financed from the State Border Guard budget. Consequently, students do not incur study costs, and the study programme does not create an additional financial burden on the state education budget. Students enrolled in the study programme are already employed border guard officers; studies do not interrupt their professional careers or create a risk of unemployment. On the contrary, the investment in education increases the effectiveness of the State Border Guard, as officers acquire advanced knowledge and competencies that allow them to reduce operational errors, use resources more efficiently, and strengthen cooperation with other institutions such as the National Armed Forces, the State Police, and European Union agencies such as Frontex (SAR, p. 11).

The employment indicators of graduates are consistently high, as all students of the study programme are employed in the State Border Guard during their studies. After completing the study programme, graduates obtain a professional bachelor’s degree and the qualification of Senior Officer of the State Border Guard, which allows them to occupy higher-level positions within the service. This promotes career development and professional mobility within the internal security system. Graduates also have opportunities to participate in international activities, including cooperation with European institutions and participation in Frontex missions, training initiatives, and international research projects. Higher qualifications contribute to career stability, reduce staff turnover, and motivate continued professional development and long-term service in the border guard system (SAR, p. 17).

The dynamics of the number of students in the study programme are primarily determined by the State Border Guard's personnel planning decisions. According to the cooperation framework established between the State Border Guard and the RTU Rezekne Academy, only officers recommended by the institution are admitted to the study programme. Each year the State Border Guard evaluates the qualifications, service experience, and career development prospects of its officers and decides on the number of candidates to be nominated for studies. As a result, the number of students depends not on general admission campaigns but on the institutional needs of the SBG and its personnel development planning. This system ensures a stable and targeted flow of students and maintains a strong connection between theoretical education and the operational needs of the service. As far as the number of students in the study programme is determined primarily by the personnel planning of the State Border Guard, which means that admission is not open to a broader group of applicants. While this

ensures targeted training of professionals, it may limit the programme's flexibility and growth potential, as the intake depends on institutional needs rather than broader educational demand (SAR, p. 17).

Statistical data show a stable number of students admitted and graduated from the study programme in recent years. For example, between the academic years 2019/2020 and 2024/2025, the number of graduates ranged from 11 to 20 per year, while the number of newly matriculated students ranged from 10 to 23, reflecting the State Border Guard's personnel needs and strategic planning. Variations in student numbers may also occur due to specific features of service organisation, such as transfers to other positions, changes in service location, or parental leave, which may temporarily delay the completion of studies. Additionally, the COVID-19 pandemic during the period 2020-2022 influenced the study process and extended the duration of studies for some students due to remote learning and increased operational workload. In recent years, the study process has stabilised due to improved coordination between the university and the State Border Guard (SAR, p. 12).

Students of the study programme do not usually participate in ERASMUS+ mobility, as combining studies abroad with active service duties is not feasible. Nevertheless, border guards may gain international experience through participation in professional missions, international cooperation activities, and service-related assignments abroad. Such experience contributes to the development of professional competencies and enriches the learning and research process within the study programme.

Overall, the economic and social justification of the First Cycle SP "Border Guarding", the targeted admission system based on the needs of the State Border Guard, the stable dynamics of student numbers, and the consistently high employment rate of graduates demonstrate the relevance, sustainability, and strategic importance of the study programme. The study programme plays an important role in ensuring the availability of qualified personnel for the national border protection system and contributes to strengthening Latvia's internal security and the protection of the external border of the European Union. Considering the close cooperation with the State Border Guard and the stable employment outcomes of graduates, the study programme can be regarded as sustainable and well aligned with labour market needs. Therefore, the criterion can be considered as fully met.

2.1.5. Not applicable.

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

The first-cycle professional higher education study programme "Border Guarding" corresponds to the study field "Internal Security and Civil Protection" and is developed in accordance with the professional standard "Senior Officer of the State Border Guard." The study programme content, objectives, and learning outcomes are aligned with the requirements of the profession and the 6th level of the Latvian and European Qualifications Framework (LQF/EQF), ensuring the preparation of qualified specialists for border protection and internal security tasks. The title, degree, professional qualification, admission requirements, duration, and scope of the study programme are logically interconnected and justified (SAR, pp. 18-19). The study programme structure supports the gradual development of the competencies required for senior border guard officers.

The changes introduced to the study programme parameters since the previous accreditation, including the transition to the ECTS system, the change of study programme type to a first-cycle higher education programme, the integration into RTU, and the adjustment of the study programme scope to comply with the updated professional standard, are well justified and strengthen the programme's compliance with national regulations and sector needs (SAR, pp. 9-14).

During the site visit experts gained confidence that the consolidation process was challenging but ultimately beneficial, as merging with RTU proved to be the most advantageous option due to RTU's focus on engineering programmes. The RTU Rezekne Academy received approximately 7 million euros from RTU, which was primarily invested in academic staff and enabled the development of collaborative projects with RTU and other European universities.

The study programme also has strong economic and social relevance, as it prepares qualified personnel for the State Border Guard and contributes to the protection of Latvia's and the EU's external border. The study programme is implemented in close cooperation with the State Border Guard, which finances the studies and nominates candidates. As students are already employed officers, the employment rate of graduates is consistently high. Overall, the study programme is well aligned with the study field, professional standards, and labour market needs.

Strengths:

1. Strong cooperation with the State Border Guard, which ensures the relevance of the study programme content to real operational needs and labour market demands;
2. The study programme has a clear professional orientation, preparing specialists for specific functions in border protection, migration management, and internal security.
3. Stable employment outcomes, as students are already employed in the State Border Guard and continue their professional careers after graduation.
4. Integration into RTU strengthens the academic environment and access to broader research and institutional resources.

Weaknesses:

1. Limited participation in international mobility programmes (e.g., ERASMUS+), mainly due to students' professional service obligations.
2. The number of students depends entirely on the State Border Guard's personnel planning, which may limit flexibility in study programme development and student intake.

2.2. The Content of Studies and Implementation Thereof

Criteria:

- 2.2.1. The content of the study programme is topical, the content of the study courses/modules is interconnected and complementary, corresponds to the objectives of the programme and ensures the achievement of learning outcomes, as well as meets the needs of the industry, labour market and scientific trends. Complies with the respective LQF/EQF level, state education standard, profession (occupational) standard or professional qualification requirements (if applicable).

2.2.2. In the case of a master's or doctoral study programme, the awarding of a degree is based on the achievements and findings of the relevant field of science or artistic creation.

2.2.3. The study implementation methods contribute to the achievement of the aims and learning outcomes of the study courses and the study programme. Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment principles are considered.

(In case of a joint study programme, or in case the study programme is implemented in a foreign language or in the form of distance-learning, analyse in detail the methods used for the implementation of such a study programme).

2.2.4. If an internship is foreseen during the study programme, the opportunities and provision of internships offered to students, as well as the organisation of work are effective. The tasks of the internship are related to the achievable learning outcomes. The internship complies with the requirements of regulatory enactments.

If the study programme is implemented in a foreign language, provide an assessment of the provision of an internship in a foreign language, including for foreign students.

2.2.5. In the case of a doctoral study programme, students have clearly defined promotion (doctoral theses defence) opportunities (if applicable).

2.2.6. The topics of students' final theses are relevant to the field and correspond to the study programme.

Analysis

2.2.1. The content of the first cycle SP “Border Guarding” is topical and covers the main functional areas of contemporary border management, including national and EU legal frameworks, operational activities, migration and asylum, risk analysis, crisis management, inter-institutional and international cooperation, resource management and leadership (SAR pp. 14-16, section 3.2.1). The structure of courses and modules is interconnected and complementary, corresponds to the objectives of the study programme and supports the achievement of the intended learning outcomes, in line with the needs of the State Border Guard (SAR pp. 5-7, 11-13; Annex P10, P17).

Site visit interviews confirmed that the first-cycle SP “Border Guarding” content is not only coherently designed in the documents but also perceived as relevant and current by stakeholders. Students and graduates pointed to the concrete usefulness of courses for teamwork, leadership, analytical thinking, strategic decision-making and working with EU/Frontex materials in their daily duties. Employers emphasised during the site visit the strong alignment between the curriculum and the competence requirements for senior officer positions, and noted that graduates typically advance quickly in their careers. Academic staff and study programme management pointed to regular adjustments to courses and internships in response to the renewed professional standard in 2024, the Frontex Common Core Curriculum (CCC), and feedback from SBG units. These interviews also confirmed that bachelor's theses and internships are closely linked to real operational and strategic challenges (e.g. risk-analysis models used at national and EU level, smart borders projects), supporting the study programme’s claim to respond to sector developments and applied research needs.

The curriculum shows a clear vertical progression from the short-cycle study programme, which prepares operational-tactical level officers, to the first-cycle study programme, which adds analytical, strategic and management dimensions in line with the updated professional standard “Senior Officer of the State Border Guard” (SAR pp. 9-11, Table 3.1.2.2; SAR pp. 3-5, 3.1.1-3.1.2). During the site visit, teaching staff and management confirmed that course content and internship tasks have been revised continuously to reflect this shift, for example, by replacing more general subjects with courses focusing on society, governance and contemporary security challenges, and by strengthening the analytical and research components in later years.

First cycle SP “Border Guarding” aims and learning outcomes (Z1-Z4, P1-P4, K1-K4) are explicitly derived from the professional standard and NQF/EQF level-6 descriptors and are consistently mapped to groups of courses, internship and the bachelor thesis, ensuring internal alignment between objectives, content and assessment (SAR pp. 7-9; SAR pp. 14-16, 3.2.1; Annex P08, P11). During the site visit, academic staff were able to describe in concrete terms how specific learning outcomes (e.g. risk analysis, applied research, leadership) are operationalised in assignments and practice, and gave examples where student or State Border Guard feedback led to updating literature, changing course focus or improving internship organisation, which supports the practical implementation of these mappings.

The structure and scope of the First Cycle SP “Border Guarding” (general studies, sector-specific theoretical courses, specialisation modules, practice and bachelor thesis, 243 KP/ECTS) comply with the State Standard of Professional Higher Education and legal requirements for first-cycle study programmes, including alignment with LQF/EQF level 6 and the relevant state education and professional standards (SAR pp. 3-4, Table 3.1.1.1; Annex P08, P11). The site visit confirmed that these formal requirements are known and used by management and QA staff, and that recent changes (e.g. after the 2024 professional standard and the merger with RTU) have been made with explicit reference to legal and regulatory frameworks.

Close cooperation with the State Border Guard (SBG) and the State Border Guard College (SBGC), regular updating of content in response to the 2024 professional standard and Frontex CCC, as well as integration of current topics into bachelor theses, indicate that the study programme responds well to labour-market needs and sector developments, while scientific trends are supported by staff participation in conferences, projects and the specialised journal “Border Security and Management” (SAR pp. 5-7, 11-13, 23-27; Annex P11, P17, P19). Site visit corroborated this picture: employers and unit heads described systematic involvement in curriculum discussions and thesis supervision; staff and management reported active participation in joint projects with RTU Rezekne Academy and international partners; and students and graduates confirmed opportunities to present at conferences and to use research results in practice.

At the same time, both the SAR and the site visit highlighted issues that require further monitoring. Given the demanding part-time extramural format and strong reliance on self-study, it would be important to more systematically verify whether all students consistently achieve the more advanced analytical and research-oriented outcomes (risk analysis, applied research, strategic management) alongside full service duties, and to ensure that the most recent EU-level policy and technological developments in border management are embedded across the curriculum as a whole, not primarily through individual teachers’ initiatives or selected theses. While teaching staff and students could point to concrete examples of updated modules and cases during the site visit, these processes are not yet fully documented within a regular, study-programme-wide annual curriculum review cycle.

2.2.2. Not applicable.

2.2.3. Teaching and learning methods, as described in the SAR, emphasise practice-oriented and problem-based approaches, including case studies, simulations and situational tasks, which directly support the development of professional, analytical and management competences (P1-P4, K1-K4) (SAR, pp. 17-19; Annex P10). Lectures and seminars are systematically combined with discussions, situation analyses and group work in law and management courses (e.g. International and EU Law, State and Human Rights, Organisation Management and Leadership, Criminology), helping students move from reproduction of knowledge to application and interpretation in concrete border-guarding contexts (SAR Annex P10). The mandatory internship, study papers and bachelor thesis form a progressive sequence in which students first consolidate operational skills (short-cycle practices I-II), then focus on complex management and analysis tasks (Internship III, study papers I-III) and finally conduct an applied research project that addresses real SBG problems, thereby supporting the higher-order learning outcomes related to research, risk analysis and strategic decision-making (SAR, pp. 18-21, 3.2.4 and 3.2.6; Annex P13; Annex P10).

A key strength confirmed during the site visit is the strong practical orientation of the First Cycle SP “Border Guarding”, stemming from the fact that most lecturers are active officers from the State Border Guard or the Border Guard College. Students and graduates emphasised that situational tasks, simulations, and discussions based on real cases from their units help them link theory to daily work and build confidence in independent decision-making. Employers confirmed that course assignments and internships expose students to non-routine tasks, and that the gradual shift from operational practice towards analysis and management is clearly visible in graduates’ performance. This close coupling of teaching with current practice significantly enhances the relevance and authenticity of learning.

Student-centred and adult-learning principles are explicitly addressed in the SAR, where it states that the study programme follows a student-centred approach through active participation, group tasks, flexible and individualised study schedules adapted to service loads, hybrid and e-learning solutions (estudijas.rtu.lv), and a high proportion of formative assessment within the overall grading structure (SAR, p. 17, 3.2.3). Course descriptions show that assessment typically combines several components (seminar work, homework, intermediate tests, practical assignments, project work, exams), allowing students to demonstrate achievement of learning outcomes in multiple ways and at different points in time (SAR Annex P10). The study programme design also builds on prior learning and professional experience, recognising 120 ECTS from the short-cycle study programme (implemented at SBGC) and explicitly integrating workplace-based learning and Frontex materials, which is in line with adult-learning and recognition-of-prior-learning principles (SAR, pp. 10-11, 15-16; Annex P10).

At the same time, the same feature that brings authenticity, the dominance of practitioners from SBG or the SBGC among lecturers, also raises questions about the long-term development of academic capacity within the higher education institution. The number of full-time academic staff who are primarily employed at RTU Rezekne Academy and devoted to Border Guarding is very low (if any), and several key teaching roles are covered by officers whose main employment and research base remain in the SBGC. From an external perspective, it remains somewhat unclear to what extent study programme and method development are driven by the higher education institution itself and what RTU’s specific

academic added value is for the professional studies beyond providing the formal framework. This tension between a strong practice base and a relatively small academic core is an important strategic issue for future development.

During the site visit, students and graduates confirmed that teaching staff are generally approachable and ready to adapt deadlines or modes of work when service duties (missions, rotations, night shifts) create overload, and that informal communication channels (e.g. direct contact with the study programme director, WhatsApp groups) are actively used to discuss study problems and find individual solutions. However, these arrangements are largely based on informal practices and personal initiative rather than on a clearly described study programme-level system of tutoring and learning support. Students also indicated that feedback is collected after courses and internships, but they are not always informed about how this feedback has been used for changes.

The part-time extramural format with only 25% of full-time contact hours and a significant reliance on self-study places high demands on students' independent learning, and the documentation gives limited detail on how systematic individual support (tutoring, monitoring of progression, targeted support for students at risk) is organised across the study programme (SAR, pp. 11-14, 17). While several courses mention clear learning outcomes and assessment criteria, it is less evident from the written evidence how consistent and transparent assessment standards are at study programme level (e.g. common rubrics for analytical and research skills), and how student feedback on teaching, workload and assessment is systematically collected, analysed and used for improving student-centred practices across the study field (SAR, pp. 17, 30-31; Annex P10). Site-visit discussions with teaching staff suggested that many improvements are discussed and implemented informally at the course level, but that a more visible study-programme-wide loop to close the feedback cycle would be beneficial, including clearer communication back to students about changes made.

The study programme is conducted exclusively in Latvian (SAR, p. 3, Table 3.1.1.1), which is appropriate for its target group and ensures direct relevance to national service. At the same time, the study programme could consider gradually adding more English-language elements, for example selected modules, guest lectures or short intensive courses to strengthen students' readiness for international master's studies in the joint second-cycle (academic master's) study programme "Strategic Border Management". To address this, it is suggested to incorporate selected modules or guest lectures in English, involving experts from international agencies like Frontex.

In summary, the implementation of studies is strongly practice-oriented and clearly supports the development of the intended professional competences, benefiting from the deep involvement of SBG practitioners as lecturers. At the same time, the very small number of full-time academic staff dedicated to Border Guarding, the heavy reliance on part-time practitioners, and the demanding part-time format highlight the need to clarify and strengthen the higher education institution's role in pedagogical innovation, systematic student support, and study-programme-level quality assurance.

2.2.4. The internship is a mandatory part of the First Cycle SP "Border Guarding" and is clearly positioned as a stage for consolidating and deepening previously acquired theoretical knowledge, specifically targeting the functions of a Senior Officer of the SBG (SAR Annex P13). Its purpose and detailed tasks (organisation and management of border checks, border surveillance and immigration control, risk analysis, planning of personnel and technical resources, documentation, emergency-situation management, development of proposals)

mirror the professional competencies K1-K3 and skills P1-P3 defined in the study programme learning outcomes (SAR, pp. 8-9; Annex P13). The internship is organised after completion of theoretical courses, over six weeks (for part-time students spread across two semesters), which matches the logic of progression from classroom to practice and is in line with the professional higher-education structure described in the self-assessment (SAR, pp. 18-19; Annex P13).

The organisation of the internship is described in a dedicated regulation and methodological guideline, specifying responsibilities of the student-intern, the RTU Rezekne Academy internship supervisor and the SBG institutional practice supervisor, including preparation of a work plan, daily internship diary, regular control and consultations, and a final report with oral defence assessed by a commission on a 10-point scale (SAR Annex P13). Students may use their workplace as the internship site if it allows them to perform the full range of required tasks, and placement is coordinated with the SBG, which helps ensure the relevance and feasibility of the placement for all students (SAR, pp. 11-12; Annex P13). The internship tasks and expected results explicitly require students to plan and manage service in structural units, conduct risk analyses, brief and train personnel and formulate conclusions and proposals to improve institutional procedures, thereby directly contributing to higher-order outcomes in management, analysis and professional autonomy at NQF/EQF level 6 (SAR, pp. 8-9; Annex P13). According to the self-assessment, the study programme structure (including 6 ECTS for internship within the overall 243 ECTS) and its content are aligned with the State Standard of Professional Higher Education and sectoral regulations governing professional bachelor study programmes in internal security (SAR, pp. 3-4, 15-16; Annex P08).

Findings from the site visit confirm that, in practice, the internship is perceived as a strong and distinctive element of the First Cycle SP “Border Guarding”. Students and graduates reported that their internship assignments often go beyond routine duties, involving participation in risk-analysis work, planning shifts and resources, contributions to smart borders or project activities, and preparation of proposals that were later discussed or implemented within units. Several graduates noted that internship and thesis topics were directly applied in unit development and sometimes presented at conferences, reinforcing the added value of practice as a platform for applied research and innovation. Employers emphasised that internships are planned in close cooperation with unit heads and HR, and that they see clear progression in students’ ability to take responsibility and think at a higher, management-oriented level by the end of the internship.

At the same time, both the documentation and the site-visit interviews indicate that the quality and equivalence of internship experiences rely heavily on the local practices of individual units and supervisors. While formal responsibilities, diaries and reporting procedures are in place, there is limited evidence of a systematic, study programme-level mechanism to compare placements across units, to ensure that all students can realistically perform the full set of required tasks and to moderate assessment decisions between different supervisors and commissions (SAR, pp. 18-21; Annexes P13, P06). Students mentioned that, in some cases, the overlap between internship and their regular service can blur the boundary between “practice” and “everyday work”, and staff acknowledged that the content richness of internships may vary depending on the unit’s operational situation.

In this light, it would be important to further verify and document, at study programme level, how the internship consistently provides genuine added value beyond ordinary duties for all students, how feedback from students and practice supervisors is systematically collected and analysed, and how resulting improvements in placement selection, task design and assessment are implemented across cohorts (SAR, pp. 11-14, 18-21; Annex P13).

2.2.5. Not applicable.

2.2.6. The topics of students' final theses are relevant to the field and correspond well to the First Cycle SP "Border Guarding". They are described as directly linked to State Border Guard tasks and challenges, including border surveillance and control, migration and asylum procedures, risk and threat analysis, inter-institutional and international cooperation, human rights in border management, resource and personnel management, training, and the use of technologies in border protection (SAR, pp. 8-9; Annex P10; Annex P13). Typical examples include optimisation of border-surveillance procedures in a specific unit, improvement of asylum and return procedures in line with new EU rules, analysis of irregular migration routes at the Latvian external border, enhancement of cooperation in joint operations, development of human-rights-compliant communication with third-country nationals, and evaluation of the effectiveness of technical surveillance means. These topics clearly reflect the study programme's core content and the competencies Z1-Z4, P1-P4 and K1-K4, especially applied analysis, problem-solving and management in the context of border guarding (SAR, pp. 8-9; 18-21).

The expert group's review of a sample of bachelor's theses confirmed that topics match the study programme profile and current priorities in border and migration management, and that students use the multidisciplinary content (law, operations, management, migration, cooperation) in a practice-oriented way (SAR, pp. 18-21; Annex P10). Site-visit interviews further showed that thesis results are sometimes presented at conferences and used in unit-level development, for example, in risk-analysis models or smart-borders projects.

At the same time, during the site visit, it was repeatedly noted that thesis topics are largely proposed and confirmed by the State Border Guard. This ensures high practical relevance and a strong likelihood that results will be implemented, which students find motivating, but it also raises questions about the extent of academic freedom and how strongly students are encouraged to formulate their own research questions. From a quality-assurance perspective, it would be useful to demonstrate more clearly how the topic-selection process balances institutional needs with student initiative and critical reflection, and to provide an aggregated overview over several years showing the distribution of thesis topics across key thematic areas (law and human rights, operations, migration, management, technology, new EU instruments, hybrid threats, digitalisation, data and AI) in order to identify potential gaps and encourage diversification into strategically important but less covered sub-fields (SAR, pp. 18-21; Annex P10).

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

The content and implementation of the First cycle SP "Border Guarding" form a coherent and generally well-functioning whole. The curriculum is topical, clearly structured, and closely aligned with LQF/EQF level-6 requirements and the professional standard "Senior Officer of the State Border Guard," with a logical progression from operational skills at the short-cycle level to more analytical, strategic, and managerial competencies. Teaching methods, internships, and final theses are strongly practice-oriented and closely linked to real tasks and the State Border Guard's current priorities, which students, graduates, and employers experience as directly useful for daily work and career advancement.

At the same time, several structural issues require attention. The study programme relies very heavily on practitioners from the State Border Guard and the Border Guard College, while the full-time academic core at RTU Rezekne Academy is very small and not yet clearly visible as

a driver of pedagogical innovation, research development, and study-programme-level quality assurance. The strong hierarchical influence of the State Border Guard on key aspects of the study process (selection and sending of students, approval of thesis topics, shaping of internships) brings clear relevance but also risks constraining academic autonomy and student initiative. In addition, there is still limited documented evidence of systematic, study-programme-level mechanisms to monitor whether all part-time students achieve the higher-order analytical and research outcomes, and to ensure the equivalence and moderation of internships and thesis topics across units and cohorts.

Strengths:

1. Topical, multidimensional content (law, operations, migration/asylum, risk analysis, crisis management, cooperation, management, research) reflecting current national and EU border-management priorities and State Border Guard needs.
2. Strong labour-market relevance through institutionalised cooperation with SBG and SBGC, regular updates after the 2024 professional standard and Frontex CCC, and bachelor's theses addressing real operational and strategic challenges.
3. Structured progression from short-cycle to first-cycle level, avoiding duplication and gradually deepening analytical, strategic and leadership competences.
4. Broad use of practice-oriented and problem-based methods (case studies, simulations, situational tasks, work-based learning) is perceived by students as directly relevant to daily duties.
5. Coherent sequence of internship, study papers and bachelor thesis, moving from operational practice to applied research and strategic analysis of real SBG issues.
6. Final thesis topics highly relevant to SBG priorities, covering legal, operational, managerial, migration and cooperation issues and often feeding into unit-level or national development.

Weaknesses:

1. A very small full-time academic core and a heavy dependence on SBG/College practitioners raise questions about the HEI's own role in pedagogical innovation, research development, and programme-level QA.
2. Limited common standards and transparency for assessment of key competences (analysis, research, decision-making) and limited documentation on how student feedback is used and communicated back at the study programme level.
3. Internship quality and scope depend strongly on local unit practices; there is no clearly documented mechanism to ensure equivalence of tasks and moderated assessment across all placements.
4. Limited documented use of student/employer feedback on internships for systematic improvement of placement selection, task design and support.
5. Aggregated overview of thesis topics and their distribution across thematic areas and emerging trends is missing; there is no clear process to identify thematic gaps or over-concentration and to promote topics in under-represented but strategically important areas.
6. The study programme is implemented in Latvian, which is appropriate for the target group, but currently provides only limited English-language elements to help students

build the skills needed for international learning activities and progression to English-medium master's studies.

Assessment of the requirement [1] (applicable only to master's or doctoral study programmes)

No.	Requirement	Fully compliant	Partially compliant	Not compliant	Justification
R1	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				Not applicable

2.3. Resources and Provision of the Study Programme

Criteria:

- 2.3.1. The study provision, scientific provision (if applicable), informative provision (including library), material and technical provision and financial provision comply with specific features and the conditions for the implementation of the study programme and its sub-programmes (if applicable), create prerequisites for the achievement of the learning outcomes and indicate the possibility to ensure a high-quality study process.
- 2.3.2. In the case of a doctoral study programme, the study and science provision, including resources provided within the framework of cooperation with other scientific institutions and higher education institutions, meets the conditions for the implementation of the doctoral study programme, creates preconditions for achieving learning and research outcomes.
- 2.3.3. The funding available to the study programme and its sub-programme (if applicable), funding sources and the use of funding ensures full implementation of the study process, the study programme and its sub-programme (if applicable) has the minimum number of students to ensure the profitability of the study programme (by separately indicating the different implementation options of the study programme) and facilitates the development of the study programme.

Analysis

2.3.1. The overall resource provision for the First Cycle SP “Border Guarding” appears appropriate for its specific profile and mode of delivery and creates realistic prerequisites for achieving the intended learning outcomes and ensuring a high-quality study process (SAR, 3.3).

The study base combines the infrastructure of RTU Rezekne Academy, the State Border Guard College, and the State Border Guard units, forming an integrated academic-professional environment tailored to internal-security and border-guard training (SAR, pp. 23-24, 29-31). RTU Rezekne Academy provides modern auditoriums, seminar rooms, computer classes and video-conferencing facilities, supporting part-time, hybrid and remote teaching in line with

the study programme's extramural format (SAR, p. 24, 3.2.3; 3.3.1). The SBGC contributes a specialised training complex (tactical training area, weapons shooting range, border-control simulation point, vehicle-control training area), while territorial SBG administrations (e.g. Ludza, Daugavpils, Terekhova, Silene) offer real operational environments for practical classes and internships, thereby directly supporting the development of professional skills and competences P1-P3 and K1-K3 required by the professional standard (SAR, pp. 18-21, 24, 3.2.4; 3.3.1). During the site visit, students, graduates and employers highlighted these real-environment facilities and joint RTU-SBGC arrangements as a clear strength, stressing that simulators, shooting ranges and operational posts provide "realistic" training conditions and are used regularly in teaching and internships.

Scientific provision is ensured through long-standing cooperation with the SBGC and SBG within the RTU research platform "Security and Defence"; for around ten years, the partners have jointly organised the international scientific-practical conference "Border Security and Management" (60-70 participants from multiple EU and third countries) and publish the open-access journal "Border Security and Management", indexed in EBSCO and Index Copernicus (SAR, pp. 5-7, 29-30; Annexes P17, P18, P19). Academic staff involved in the First Cycle SP "Border Guarding" have relevant doctoral or master's degrees in law, economics, internal security and social sciences and an active publication and project record in border security, migration and internal-security topics, which supports research-based teaching and supervision of study papers and bachelor theses (SAR, pp. 28-30; Annexes P14-P18). This scientific environment, including access to the Frontex Research Library, the EU Open Data Portal, and participation in Frontex/CEPOL initiatives, contributes to achieving learning outcomes P4 and K4 related to applied research and lifelong learning (SAR, pp. 20-21, 29-30). During the site visit, it was confirmed that staff and some students regularly participate in conferences (e.g. Rezekne) and joint projects, and that thesis results are sometimes presented and used in SBG, although the formal academic core at RTU Rezekne remains small and much research activity is still anchored institutionally in the Border Guard College.

Informative provision is strong: the RTU Rezekne Academy Library offers a modern, accessible setting (459 m² total area, 30 study places, individual work rooms) in good technical condition, with opening hours adapted to students' needs (SAR, pp. 25-26, Table 3.3.1.1). Its collections reflect the study directions and include substantial holdings in law, social sciences and specifically in "Public order services. Border guard" (UDC 351.74), supplemented by sectoral literature purchased in English and project-funded acquisitions (SAR, p. 26, Table 3.3.1.2). Students have site and remote access to a wide range of databases (e.g. EBSCO, ScienceDirect, Scopus, Web of Science, Jurista Vārds, Latvian Standards, and, via RTU, ACM, Cambridge, ProQuest, SpringerLink, Wiley, O'Reilly), as well as to the SBGC library's specialised border-guard literature, Frontex and CEPOL training materials and internal SBG documents, including restricted-access resources under defined procedures (SAR, pp. 25-27, 29-30). This provides a solid basis for both coursework and final-thesis research. Students and graduates confirmed during the site visit that remote access works reliably alongside service duties, although some noted that time, not resource availability, is the main constraint.

Material and technical provision includes access to e-learning platforms (estudijas.rtu.lv, MS Teams), digital study materials, video lectures, interactive maps and simulation tools, which are particularly important for part-time students combining service and studies (SAR, pp. 17-18, 24, 30). The integrated RTU Rezekne Academy-SBGC-SBG infrastructure, including field training and operational units, ensures that students can develop operational and tactical skills in realistic settings while also using modern ICT, surveillance and information systems as required by the professional standard and Frontex CCC (SAR, pp. 16, 18-21, 24; Annex

P11). However, the SAR provides less detail on the age and renewal cycle of specific equipment (e.g. ICT hardware, simulators) and on systematic planning for upgrading technological resources in line with rapidly evolving border-management tools, which is important for maintaining a high-quality environment over time (SAR, 3.3.1). During the site visit, staff expressed concern that access to certain modern systems and databases for training remains limited and depends on SBG decisions, and that more structured planning for future investments in simulators and ICT would be desirable.

Financial provision is clearly defined: the study programme is fully funded from the State Border Guard's state-budget resources, with tuition fees paid by SBG and a contract setting common principles for the flow and administration of funding (SAR, p. 27, 3.3.3). During the site visit it was confirmed that the employer considers the study programme strategically vital and is committed to its continued financing.

Funding is structured into remuneration of academic staff and visiting lecturers (60%), remuneration of general staff (18%) and other costs (digital resources, quality assurance, literature, material-technical base; 22%), which indicates targeted support for teaching quality and resource maintenance (SAR, p. 27, Table 3.3.3.1). The profitability threshold for the study programme's part-time extramural format is calculated at a minimum of 16 students per year (or 40 students over a two-year cycle) to ensure an even distribution of fixed costs. Current student numbers, which have ranged from 47 to 59 per academic year during the reporting period, significantly exceed this threshold, confirming the study programme's short-term financial viability. Detailed financial calculations indicate that the average cost per student is approximately 73,000 EUR for the entire duration of the study programme (roughly 29,000 EUR per year). For the academic year 2025/2026, the tuition fee is determined by the RTU Council and is set at 1,880 EUR per year for part-time studies. (SAR, p. 27, 13-14; section 3.3.3).

Despite this current stability, the study programme's total dependence on a single institutional funder and its personnel policy implies a structural vulnerability. The experts noted a need for more structured financial-risk management that analyses scenarios for significant fluctuations in cohort sizes and defines how core quality and resource renewal, such as the upgrading of ICT equipment and simulators, will be protected over the long term. Currently, there is limited documented planning for such technological upgrades in line with evolving border-management technologies.

During the site visit the employer confirmed that they see the study programme as strategically important and is committed to continuing financing; however, they also acknowledged that cohort size and funding depend on overall SBG personnel policy and national budget decisions.

In this context, the strong dependence on a single institutional funder (SBG) and its personnel policy implies potential vulnerability to changes in strategic priorities or budget allocations; the programme could further demonstrate how financial risks are monitored and how resource quality would be safeguarded in the event of significant fluctuations in cohort sizes (SAR, 3.1.3; 3.3.3). The site visit also highlighted that, while RTU consolidation has brought benefits such as health insurance, defined research/professional-development hours and access to projects, staff perceive increased administrative workload (e.g. budget and documentation flows via Riga) and are not yet fully confident how RTU will support longer-term investment in border-guard-specific infrastructure if SBG needs change.

2.3.2. Not applicable.

2.3.3. The First Cycle SP “Border Guarding” is fully financed from the State Border Guard’s state-budget resources; students do not pay tuition fees, and funding is regulated by a cooperation agreement that defines mutual obligations and the principles for covering study costs (SAR, pp. 11-13, 27). The SAR specifies that the minimum number of students required for the study programme’s financial sustainability is 16 students per year (40 students per two-year cycle in the part-time extramural format), and the actual student numbers in recent years have exceeded this threshold, which indicates that the study programme currently operates above its profitability minimum (SAR, pp. 13-14, 27). Funding is structured into three main blocks: remuneration for academic and visiting staff (60%), remuneration for general staff (18%) and other costs (22%), including digital resources, literature, quality-assurance activities and the development and maintenance of the material-technical base, suggesting that the use of funds is aligned with ensuring the quality and continuous improvement of the study process (SAR, p. 27, Table 3.3.3.1).

The First Cycle SP “Border Guarding” is offered in a single implementation form, part-time extramural studies for serving border guards, and financial calculations and profitability considerations are clearly linked to this specific model. The cooperation with the State Border Guard ensures a stable flow of cohorts aligned with SBG personnel-development planning (SAR, pp. 11-14, 3.1.4; 3.3.3). During the site visit, employers confirmed their strategic interest in maintaining the programme and continuing to fund officers’ studies, and staff reported that, so far, cohort sizes have been adequate to sustain the model. At the same time, both management and SBG interlocutors acknowledged that decisions on the number of nominees and available budget ultimately depend on broader national priorities and overall SBG staffing needs. This reliance on a single employer and budget source implies vulnerability to shifts in strategic priorities or budget constraints; therefore, it would be advisable to clarify how medium-term and long-term financial risks are assessed and how investments in staff development, research and resource renewal would be safeguarded in the event of significant fluctuations in cohort sizes (SAR, 3.1.3; 3.3.3). The site visit also showed that, while RTU consolidation has brought some benefits (e.g., health insurance, research/professional-development hours, project opportunities), staff are not yet fully sure how RTU will support study-programme-specific investments if SBG funding conditions change.

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

Resources and provision for the First Cycle SP “Border Guarding” are overall appropriate for the study programme’s professional profile and part-time extramural format. The integrated RTU-SBGC-SBG infrastructure, a strong, informative, and scientific environment, and dedicated SBG state-budget funding create realistic conditions for achieving the intended learning outcomes and maintaining a high-quality study process. Students, graduates and employers particularly value the realistic training facilities, good library and database access, and the fact that financial barriers do not limit participation.

At the same time, the resource system is structurally vulnerable. Much of the specialised infrastructure and access to modern systems depend on State Border Guard decisions; long-term renewal and upgrading of ICT and simulators are not yet underpinned by clearly documented investment planning; and the study programme relies on a single employer-funder whose priorities and budgets may change. RTU consolidation has brought clear benefits (health insurance, research and development hours, project opportunities) but also additional administrative workload, and staff expressed uncertainty about how RTU and

SBG will jointly secure study programme-specific investments and resource quality if cohort sizes or funding conditions shift in the future.

Strengths:

1. Integrated RTU-SBGC-SBG base with academic facilities, specialised training infrastructure and real operational environments well suited to a professional border-guard bachelor.
2. An active international scientific environment around the “Border Security and Management” conference and journal, used by staff, students and employers.
3. Practical training infrastructure (simulators, shooting ranges, operational units) is regularly used and highly valued for its realism and up-to-date nature.
4. Clear, stable state-budget funding from the State Border Guard, with no tuition fees for students and a transparent cost structure.
5. Profitability threshold and cohort sizes are clearly calculated and currently exceeded, indicating the financial viability of the part-time extramural model.
6. Funding distribution supports both staff remuneration and quality-related costs (digital resources, literature, technical base, QA).

Weaknesses:

1. Limited documented planning for renewal and upgrading of technical and ICT equipment (including simulators and digital tools) in line with evolving border-management technologies.
2. Strong dependence on a single funder (State Border Guard) and its personnel policy, creating vulnerability to strategic or budget changes; financial-risk management is only briefly addressed.
3. Access to some modern systems and technological tools for training remains constrained by SBG decisions, with no clearly articulated long-term investment plan.
4. RTU consolidation has increased administrative workload, and staff are uncertain how RTU will support border-guard-specific resource renewal if SBG funding or priorities change.
5. Limited information on earmarked funding or strategic financial planning for long-term study programme development (new courses, tech upgrades, internationalisation), beyond maintaining current operations.

Assessment of the requirement [2]

No.	Requirement	Fully compliant	Partially compliant	Non compliant	Justification

R2	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	X			Resources in all key areas (teaching base, research environment, library and ICT, training facilities, and stable state funding) are sufficient and appropriate to deliver the First Cycle SP “Border Guarding” as designed and to achieve the intended learning outcomes.
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2.4. Teaching Staff

Criteria:

- 2.4.1. The qualification of the teaching staff members involved in the implementation of the study programme complies with the requirements for the implementation of the study programme and the requirements set forth in the regulatory enactments, and it enables the achievement of the aims and learning outcomes of the study programme and the relevant study courses.
- 2.4.2. The higher education institution / college purposefully takes measures so that changes in the composition of the teaching staff do not negatively affect the quality of the implementation of the study programme and the compliance of the study programme with the requirements specified in regulatory enactments.
- 2.4.3. The scientific publications and the involvement in research- related projects of the academic staff involved in the implementation of the doctoral study programmes contribute to the implementation of a high-quality doctoral study programme (if applicable).
- 2.4.4. Each member of the academic staff in the last six years has published in peer-reviewed editions, including international editions (if the staff member has worked for a shorter period, the number of publications should be indicated in proportion to the period worked) or artistic achievements (for example, exhibitions, films, theater performances and concerts) or five years of practical experience (except for experience in the implementation of the study programme) in accordance with the Law on Higher Education Institutions.
- 2.4.5. A mechanism for mutual cooperation of the teaching staff in the implementation of the study programme has been established, it ensures the achievement of the aims of the study programme and the interconnection of study courses within the study programme.

Analysis

2.4.1. Cooperation with the State Border Guard College (SBGC) is a core principle of the First Cycle SP “Border Guarding” and underpins a unified professional education cycle, in which the short-cycle programme forms an integral part of the first cycle of professional higher education. The main direction of this cooperation is the integration of personnel: several SBGC

lecturers act as visiting lecturers at RTU Rezekne Academy and implement professional specialisation courses (Operational Activities, Border Checks, Weapons and Shooting Training, Crisis Management), while RTU Rezekne Academy lecturers provide methodological seminars for SBGC teaching staff on research and higher-education didactics (SAR, 3.4.5). During the site visit, RTU Rezekne Academy lecturers who are not directly linked to the border guard indicated an interest in job-shadowing opportunities in border-guard units in order to deepen their understanding of the sector. Fourteen teaching staff are involved in implementing the First Cycle SP “Border Guarding”, including academic, professional, and visiting staff from the fields of law, internal security, and social sciences. Of these, three are professors or associate professors holding doctoral degrees (Dr.oec., Dr.jur.), five are assistant professors and lecturers with master’s degrees (M.jur., M.sc.soc., M.sc.comp.), and additional lecturers with master’s degrees (M.sc.soc., M.jur.) come from the strategic cooperation partner, the State Border Guard College, with substantial professional experience in State Border Guard structures. All teaching staff are proficient in Latvian at a native level and also have professional working knowledge of English or Russian, which enables the use of international cooperation and study materials in foreign languages and supports the implementation of the professional standard requirements (SAR 3.4.1).

Following the merger with RTU, the qualifications of the teaching staff at RTU Rezekne Academy must comply with the RTU Senate decision of 27 April 2015 (minutes No. 589) and meet the specific criteria set by the State Border Guard, including appropriate academic degrees, certifications, and relevant professional experience. Strong pedagogical competencies are also required, enabling staff to design engaging and effective learning experiences. All teaching staff regularly participate in professional development activities (e.g. digital teaching methods, academic ethics, innovations in higher education), which support lifelong-learning competences and the achievement of study results (SAR 3.4.1; site visit interviews with lecturers). At the same time, it should be noted that there appears to be a limited number of full-time lecturers appointed from the RTU Rezekne Academy side specifically for this programme.

2.4.2. Changes in the composition of the teaching staff have been minimal, and no special measures to reduce staff turnover have been deemed necessary. The teaching staff has been working with the programme on a long-term basis (SAR 3.4.2; site visit interview with the programme director).

2.4.3. Not applicable.

2.4.4. The teaching staff involved in the implementation of the First Cycle SP “Border Guarding” consists of 14 members, including academic, professional, and visiting staff representing law, internal security, and social sciences. This group includes three professors or associate professors holding doctoral degrees (Dr.oec., Dr.jur.) and five assistant professors or lecturers with master’s degrees. Most academic staff members have published in peer-reviewed journals including international outlets (SAR 3.4.1). Annex P18 of SAR provides a person-by-person list of publications over this period, within the last six years. Detailed evidence in Annex P18 provides a person-by-person list of these publications, including work by two Professors, who maintain extensive publication records in databases such as Scopus and Web of Science. Additionally, significant scholarly contributions include the monograph "Schengen acquis".

In accordance with the Law on Higher Education Institutions, the staff also demonstrates significant practical experience; lecturers from the strategic partner, the State Border Guard College (SBGC), possess substantial professional experience within State Border Guard structures. The composition of the teaching staff has been highly stable with minimal changes during the reporting period, as personnel have been engaged with the programme on a long-term basis (SAR, 3.4.2).

During the site visit, it was confirmed through interviews with lecturers and students that research results are frequently integrated into service practice and presented at conferences. However, during the site visit, lecturers expressed a desire for clearer and increased financial support specifically for their publishing activities. Furthermore, during the site visit, academic staff who do not have a professional border-guarding background expressed a strong interest in job-shadowing opportunities within units to deepen their understanding of the sector's nuances (SAR, 3.4.5). Despite these areas for further development, the expert group concludes that the qualifications of the teaching staff fully comply with legal and institutional requirements, including degrees, sector experience, and language skills.

2.4.5. The teaching staff involved in the implementation of the First Cycle SP “Border Guarding” operate within a unified cooperation framework that brings together representatives of RTU Rezekne Academy, the State Border Guard College (SBGC) and the State Border Guard. The main cooperation mechanisms are:

- Regular meetings of the study field commission (until 01.04.2025 at RTA, thereafter RTU study field “Internal Security and Civil Protection”), where the content, tasks and assessment forms of study courses are coordinated, and student feedback and internship results are analysed, ensuring that courses are linked to programme aims and learning outcomes.
- Methodological working groups and thematic seminars, in which RTU Rezekne Academy and SBGC lecturers jointly discuss assessment criteria and align content between the short-cycle and first-cycle programmes, promoting unity of the study process.
- A joint practice management system, where SBGC and State Border Guard unit heads participate in planning internships, coordinating tasks and setting criteria, thereby integrating studies with service practice.
- Joint research activities, including conferences and scientific publications on border-guard tactics, risk analysis and human-rights issues, which strengthen the scientific basis of the study content.
- Digital collaboration via e-learning platforms (estudijas.rtu.lv, MS Teams), which are used to share course materials, internship guidelines, and to evaluate student work.
- Close cooperation between RTU Rezekne Academy and the State Border Guard in the process of developing bachelor's theses, including topic assignment and selection, supervision and participation in thesis-defence committees.

During the site visit, lecturers and students highlighted that case studies and role-play based on real service situations are widely used in teaching, often involving external experts, which promotes active learning and deepens understanding of professional practice. The study courses are interconnected both vertically and horizontally, supporting the gradual and targeted achievement of study results. Overall, the programme's academic staff are responsive, knowledgeable and competent. However, following the recent merger with RTU, there was

some uncertainty among staff regarding procedural and organisational changes, underscoring the need for continued internal communication and coordination.

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

The teaching staff and cooperation arrangements for the First Cycle SP “Border Guarding” can be assessed as generally strong and appropriate for the programme’s profile. There is a stable core of qualified academic and professional staff from RTU Rezekne Academy and the State Border Guard College, with relevant degrees, sector-specific experience and active participation in professional development and research. Cooperation with SBGC and the State Border Guard is well institutionalised through joint curriculum work, internship planning, research activities and bachelor thesis supervision, and teaching methods (case studies, role-play, use of real service situations) effectively connect theory with practice.

At the same time, the on-site visit identified two issues that merit attention: the number of full-time lecturers appointed from RTU Rezekne Academy specifically for this programme appears limited, and some staff remain uncertain about all procedural and organisational changes following the merger with RTU. Addressing these aspects by strengthening the full-time academic core and enhancing internal communication and coordination would further consolidate the programme's long-term academic capacity and governance.

Strengths:

1. Qualified and experienced teaching staff. RTU Rezekne Academy, in close cooperation with the State Border Guard College, brings together teaching staff with substantial professional experience in state border security and related fields, thereby strengthening the programme's practical relevance alongside its academic dimension.
2. Interdisciplinary and practice-oriented approach. Collaboration among experts in law, internal security, and management supports an interdisciplinary curriculum and enables a deeper understanding of complex topics such as border security, law enforcement, and leadership, reinforced by the systematic use of role-plays and other practical exercises.
3. Ongoing professional development. Regular participation in international conferences, research activities and training ensures that teaching staff remain up to date with new trends and challenges in the field, helping to maintain the currency and quality of the First Cycle SP “Border Guarding”.

Weaknesses:

1. Teaching staff who are not directly involved in border-guarding lack specific knowledge of State Border Guard work, which makes it more challenging for them to adapt teaching materials and provide real-life examples directly related to the professional context.
2. The analysis did not fully clarify whether the criteria and procedures for selecting teaching staff have been reviewed or adjusted following the integration into RTU, and to what extent RTU’s requirements are now systematically applied in this study programme.

Assessment of the requirement [3]

No.	Requirement	Fully compliant	Partially compliant	Not compliant	Justification
R3	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.	X			The qualification of the academic and visiting staff is high and professional, fully complying with both the former Rezekne Academy of Technologies standards and the current RTU institutional requirements. Although procedural alignment following the merger is still settling, required degrees, and practical experience ensure full compliance with regulatory enactments and a high-quality learning process without disruption.

2.5. Assessment of the Compliance of the Study Programme “Border Guarding”

No.	Points	Fully compliant	Partially compliant	Not compliant	Justification
1.	The study programme complies with the State Academic Education Standard or the Professional Higher Education Standard, including the minimum requirements for the content of the mandatory course in civil protection and the training of employees in civil protection issues whilst implementing the study programme.	X			Annex 8 “P08_EN_compliance_with_educational_standards” fully complies with Cabinet regulation No 305 “Regulations on the State Standard for Professional Higher Education”

2.	The study programme/subprogramme (if applicable) complies with a valid professional standard or the requirements for the professional qualification, if the completion of the study programme leads to a professional qualification (if applicable)	X			Annex 11 “P11_EN_Compliance_with_the_professional_standard” (The professional qualification requirements for a senior officer of the State Border Guard are set out in the State Security Profession Standard) fully complies with “Standards for Professions and Professional Qualification Requirements”.
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 56 ¹ , Paragraph two and Section 56 ¹ , Paragraph two of the Law on Higher Education Institutions.	X			The attached study course descriptions (Annex 10 “P10_EN_study_course_descriptions” and Annex 13 “P13_EN_Description_of_the_student_internship_organization”) are prepared in Latvian and English and fully comply with the requirements set forth in Section 56 ¹ , Paragraph two and Section 56 ² , Paragraph two of the Law on Higher Education Institutions.
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.	X			The provided Diploma Sample (Annex 2 “P02_EN_Diploma_Diploma_Supplement_Samples_Border_Guard” complies with the procedure by which state-recognised documents of higher education are issued in accordance with Cabinet regulations No. 202 “Procedure for Issuing State-Recognised Documents Certifying Higher Education”.

¹ Law “Amendments to the Law on Higher Education Institutions” adopted on 14.07.2022., in force from 11.08.2022. Published: Latvijas Vēstnesis, 144, 28.07.2022.

² Law “Amendments to the Law on Higher Education Institutions” adopted on 14.07.2022., in force from 11.08.2022. Published: Latvijas Vēstnesis, 144, 28.07.2022.

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.				Not applicable
6.	Removed ²				
7.	At least five teaching staff members with a science 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 (if applicable, for period till August 1, 2024) 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).				Not applicable
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.	X			The attached resumes of staff (Annex 15, “P15_EN_Curriculum_vitae”) and confirmation (Annex 16, “P16_EN_Confirmation_of_1_language_proficiency) verify that language proficiency is compliant with Cabinet Regulation No. 733 “Regulations on the Required Level of State Language Proficiency, the Procedure for State Language Proficiency Testing, and the State Fee for the State Language Proficiency Test”.

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).				Not applicable
10.	The sample of the study agreement complies with the mandatory provisions to be included in the study agreement.	X			Sample of the attached study agreement (Annex 3, “P03_EN_Sample_of_Study_Agreement”) complies with Cabinet Regulation No. 70 “Mandatory Provisions to Be Included in the Study Agreement”.
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.	X			The attached contracts (Annex 4, “P04_EN_About_the_possibilities_of_continuing_studies”) confirm that the institution provides the possibility to continue studies within the following option at RTU's First cycle higher education programme “Administration of Customs and Taxes” (education classification code 42861).
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 licensing of the study programme is cancelled 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.	X			RTU RTA confirmation (Annex 5 “P05_EN_Guarantee_for_compensation_of_losses”) states students are guaranteed compensation for losses if the study programme is not accredited or the licence of the study programme is revoked due to the actions of the RTU, and the student does not wish to continue the studies in another study programme.

13.	The joint study programmes comply with the requirements prescribed in Section 55 ¹ of the Law on Higher Education Institutions (if applicable)				Not applicable
14.	Compliance with the requirements specified in other regulatory enactments that apply to the study programme being assessed (if applicable). For instance, requirements for subprogrammes or foreign language usage in study programme implementation that specified in the Law on Higher Education Institutions .				Not applicable

Assessment of the requirement [4]

No.	Requirement	Fully compliant	Partially compliant	Non compliant	Justification
R4	Compliance of the study programme with the requirements set forth in the Law on Higher Education Institutions and other regulatory enactments	X			The study programme complies with the requirements set forth in the Law on Higher Education Institutions and other regulatory enactments.

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

The First Cycle SP “Border Guarding” meets the formal requirements of the study field and can be fully implemented in its declared part-time, Latvian-language format at RTU Rezekne Academy. The curriculum is coherent, up-to-date and well aligned with LQF/EQF level-6 descriptors and the professional standard “Senior Officer of the State Border Guard”; teaching, internships and final theses are strongly practice-oriented and closely linked to real tasks and strategic priorities of the State Border Guard, and stakeholders confirm that graduates achieve the intended competences and progress well in their careers. No deficiencies were identified that could not be addressed within the two-year accreditation period, and no obstacles were found that would prevent the programme from being implemented as described in the self-assessment (single implementation option: part-time extramural studies in Latvian at

RTU Rezekne, in close cooperation with the State Border Guard College and State Border Guard units).

The main strengths of the First Cycle SP “Border Guarding” are its topical, multidimensional content; strong sectoral relevance and integration with State Border Guard practice; structured progression from short-cycle to first-cycle level; and effective use of practice-based methods, internships and theses that directly support operational and strategic development. The main weaknesses relate to structural and developmental issues rather than basic compliance: a very small full-time academic core and a heavy reliance on practitioners; limited programme-level standardisation and documentation of assessment, internship equivalence, and feedback use; and the need for more systematic analysis and greater diversification of thesis topics across emerging thematic areas. These issues can be addressed within the accreditation period through targeted measures and do not prevent the continued implementation of the First Cycle SP “Border Guarding” in its current form.

In light of the above, the expert group concludes that the First Cycle SP “Border Guarding” clearly fulfils the requirements set for the study field and can be successfully implemented in its declared form. The programme is coherent, relevant and effectively linked to the professional standard and sector needs; identified shortcomings concern mainly structural development and quality-assurance refinements that can be addressed within the normal accreditation period. Therefore, the expert group considers the study programme to be of **Good** quality, as it meets the specified requirements and only minor, non-critical deficiencies have been identified.

Assessment of the study programme:

Excellent	<u>Good</u>	Average	Unsatisfactory
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2.6. Recommendations for the Study Programme “Border Guarding”

Short-term recommendations (within 1-2 years):

1. Simplify procedures for thesis, internship, and feedback to make them clear, straightforward, and balanced between State Border Guard requirements and students’ academic goals, while minimising unnecessary administrative workload.
2. Implement an annual thematic mapping of bachelor thesis topics to identify research gaps and proactively promote topics in strategic areas such as hybrid threats, AI, and digitalisation.
3. Establish a formal framework for internships that defines minimum tasks, supervision requirements and common assessment criteria across all units, and systematically use student and employer feedback to review placement selection, task design and support arrangements at least once per year.
4. Streamline feedback and communication channels between the service and the RTU Rezekne Academy, keeping those that clearly support the analysis and use of student/employer feedback (including on internships) and simplifying or removing redundant or low-value mechanisms.
5. Create job-shadowing and experience exchange programmes within SBG units for academic staff without a border guard background to help them incorporate real-life examples into their teaching.
6. Review and document the criteria and procedures for selecting teaching staff in Border Guarding, ensuring that RTU’s institutional requirements are clearly applied and transparently communicated for this study programme.

Long-term recommendations (within the accreditation period):

1. Gradually increase the number of full-time academic staff in Border Guarding at RTU Rezekne Academy and formally align their recruitment and promotion with RTU’s academic staff criteria, while assigning them clear responsibilities for study programme development, pedagogical innovation and quality assurance.
2. Establish a fundamental financial and risk-management framework for the study programme that identifies long-term development priorities (e.g. new courses, technological upgrades, internationalisation) and links them to earmarked funding and clear milestones in the study programme’s multi-year development plan.
3. Formalise arrangements between RTU central management and the SBG to determine the prioritisation and funding of border-guard-specific infrastructure investments and resource renewal within the consolidated university structure. Additionally, develop a multi-year technological renewal plan in collaboration with the State Border Guard to upgrade IT tools and training simulators, and establish long-term agreements to ensure consistent access to operational information systems and technical equipment for educational purposes.
4. Plan internationalisation activities that also help students build English-language skills for the next study level, for example short English-language modules, virtual courses and participation in international projects, and link these activities to dedicated funding in the study programme’s development plan.

III Assessment of the Requirements for the Study Programme

	Requirements	Fully compliant	Partially compliant	Non-compliant	Justification
R1	<i>The study programme for obtaining a master's or doctoral degree is based on the achievements and findings in the respective field of science or field of artistic creation.</i>				N/A
R2	<i>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.</i>	X			Resources in all key areas (teaching base, research environment, library and ICT, training facilities, and stable state funding) are sufficient and appropriate to deliver the First Cycle SP "Border Guarding" as designed and to achieve the intended learning outcomes.
R3	<i>Compliance of the qualification of the academic staff, 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</i>	X			The qualification of the academic and visiting staff is high and professional, fully complying with both the former Rezekne Academy standards and the current RTU institutional requirements. Although procedural alignment following the merger is still settling, required degrees, and practical experience ensure full compliance with regulatory enactments and a high-quality learning process without disruption
R4	<i>Compliance of the study programme with the requirements set forth in the Law on Higher Education Institutions and other regulatory enactments</i>	X			The study programme complies with the requirements set forth in the Law on Higher Education Institutions and other regulatory enactments.