

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

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

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

Scale of Assessment

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

**Name, surname of
experts**

- Heikki Hiilamo (Chair)
- Peteris Leiskalns
- Inguna Zarina
- Dace Erkena
- Rudi Roose (Secretary)

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Name of institution of higher education or college	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Baltic International Academy
Name of study direction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social Welfare
Study programmes of the relevant study direction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First level Professional Higher Education Programme 'Social Assistance Organizer' • Professional Bachelor Programme 'Social Work' • Second level Professional Higher Education Master Programme 'Social Work'
Date of external assessment visit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 20 – 23 February 2017

I. Management of the Study Direction (2)

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

2	<p>The expert team evaluates minimum requirements are met. The team sees a clear logic in the diversity of the three study programs. Where the first level program <i>Social assistance organiser</i> educates people to be able to support people with administrative tasks, the bachelor and master in social work are educated to help people form a broader perspective and the (professional) master is also educated for leadership and to read research and do research in a more profound manner than the bachelor.</p> <p>However, as the demand for professionals in social work is getting higher in Latvia, the expert team advises the HEI to consider whether the first level program of <i>Social assistance organiser</i> will maintain relevant in the future in relation to the demands of the labour market. Enrolment in the bachelor program allows students to work as social workers while this is not the case for the students in the first level program. One branch – Jekabpils – already stated not to promote the first level program as there was not enough return on investment. Also, after graduation there is no valid professional standard, which raises questions concerning the sustainability of the program.</p> <p>The expert team evaluates the succession of the first level program and the bachelor in social work as logical and coherent. This in relation to the alignment of the program (the first level is more focused on organisation and the bachelor is a more generalist specialist), as well as in relation to transfer of students from the first level to the bachelor program.</p>
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	<p>The expert team also evaluates the alignment between the professional bachelor in social work and the master in social work as sufficient. A point of discussion however is that also here, there is only one professional standard. This raises the question how the HEI deals with this lack of differentiation.</p> <p>However, also students from other bachelor programs (psychology, political sciences) can enrol in the master program with an extra semester. However, here the expert team evaluates this alignment of bachelor and master as insufficient. Although the SER refers to an extra semester, this is not worked out sufficiently. Student respondents coming from another bachelor program then social work stated that they did not know what the extra curriculum was and also stated that they had insufficient chances to develop practical skills in relation to bachelors in social work. Hence, students seem to graduate from the master with different competences. Hence, a high standard conversion program should be developed, based on a perspective of the relation between each separate bachelor program and the master in social work.</p> <p>Succession to a PhD program cannot be evaluated since currently there are not such programs available in Latvia. It was confusing, though, that Ozolnieki branch was planning to introduce a PhD program in social work despite that fact that the volume of social work teaching was the lowest among all four branches.</p> <p>The code for the master program in the SER report is wrong, however we understood this was already corrected by the HEI.</p>
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1.2. Has the analysis of the strong and weak points, opportunities and threats of the study programme been performed in high-quality? Have the internal and external conditions for the development of the study direction been assessed unbiasedly?

1	<p>A SWOT analysis has been done in the SER, also pointing out different challenges for the study direction <i>Social welfare</i>. However, the expert team felt that it was extremely hard in the conversations with the staff to come to reflections about the challenges for the social welfare study direction in the HEI. The critical discussion on weaknesses and threats was almost completely missing. Although a number of problems were mentioned, these mostly referred to elements outside of the programs itself. For instance the lack of budget places in private institutions, the low pay for social workers and the risk of burnout, etc. Although the expert team of course acknowledges the important impact of these problems on the development of the social welfare study direction, the team also hoped to hear more about the 'internal' challenges and weak points of the study direction and the ways to address these. As such, the expert team experienced the reactions to questions on possible improvements to be sometimes 'defensive', as if it would be not allowed to have critique on the study direction and the management of the study direction (mainly in Daugavpils and Ozolnieki branches), while critical reflection on strengths but also challenges is a key element of quality management.</p>
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1.3. Have the demands of the labour market taken into consideration in planning the development of the study direction and in its implementation?

3	<p>The expert team acknowledges the relevance of the study program for the labour market. The demands of the labour market have been taken into account into the program, as there is a great need for specialised social workers on bachelors and masters level.</p> <p>The labour market is also closely involved in the development of the study direction, for instance through the organisation and guidance of student internships, but also through the involvement in the program as lecturers. There is a close link to the labour market, as lecturers are often involved in teaching and the program and bring in needs for the program. Also students often work, so they bring in the demands for the practice.</p> <p>Also the internships can sometimes lead to a job offer for the graduates.</p> <p>A challenge for the study direction in the future is the way they will deal with the tension between the focus on generalist social work and the demand for more specialisation on specific domains such as social work with drug users and people with mental health problems. The expert team thinks it is important to sustain a strong view on what social work is and to not 'jump' into every question which is asked by from the labour market.</p> <p>Another challenge is to maintain the level of quality of the program in relation to the labour market demand: as there are many job offers and there is an urgent need for more qualified social workers, the risk is that all students can graduate as the need of the labour market prevails and as such quality demands are ignored. This question is all the more urgent, as the expert team had no clear view on the demands of the students to 'pass' the course and to get the degree. Failing a class was only the case for lazy or unmotivated clients, so students told us. All students who participate and do the work can also obtain the degree, so the team was told by the students. This raises questions concerning the standard, which are placed in the institution for people who enrol. This is especially the case in a privatised educational environment.</p> <p>In the development of the curriculum the study direction managers need to take into account that besides educating professionals to fill vacant positions the labour markets also expects academic institutions to innovate and to bring change into professional practices.</p>
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1.4. Is the management of the implementation of the study process effective for reaching the aims set for the study direction? Is it democratic, with clearly defined obligations and responsibility of the administrative staff, the academic staff, and students?

2	<p>The expert teams assesses it as a positive fact that there is a lot of openness of the lecturers towards the students. Although also formal participation exists, for instance students have a voice in the student parliament, there is a lot of informal contact with students and they can tell what interests them and as such</p>
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	<p>have an influence on the program and the organisation of the study direction.</p> <p>Also, lecturers and staff have meetings discussing the program in the different branches.</p> <p>However, the expert team evaluates it possibly problematic that many of the coordination work lies in the hand of Andra Mite, the program manager. Although the expert team appreciates the competences and engagement of Andra Mite, the team sees it as problematic that the weight of the study direction lays in such a big manner on the shoulders of one person. Especially since it is a very complex study direction with programs on three levels, many courses, many teaching staff members and different branches. The expert team advises the HEI to organise sufficient support and a more elaborated structure to sustain the program and to support the program manager.</p> <p>The expert team also encourages more critical reflection with teaching staff members and students to develop the program towards higher academic standards.</p>
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II. Resources and Provisions of Study Directions (3)

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

2	<p>The expert team lacks concrete numbers of revenues of the study direction, but the management in the different branches stated that the programs are still profitable, although for instance in Jekabpils it was stated that investing in the study program <i>Social assistance organiser</i> was not profitable in the long run.</p> <p>The salary level of the staff seems to be competitive.</p> <p>Although accommodations are sufficient and the programs function, management, staff and students refer to the need for more investments, for instance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Funding for publishing book and attend (international) conferences; - Funding for purchasing SPSS and other online tools; - The need to invest in faster internet connections; - Investing in an English Website for the study direction; - Investing in a Moodle in Latvian instead of Russian. More investment in SOPA, as this is also used in practice. Control over the financial resources rests with the central management. Central management lamented the fact that despite recurrent applications for state support no support seems to be forthcoming. This raises the issue with sustainability of the study direction since the central BIA management does not seem to be committed for extra investments for the programme unless continued profits are ensured.
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2.2. Is the professionalism of the academic staff of the institution of higher education or the college involved in the implementation of the study direction

sufficiently high for implementing high quality studies in the view of professional qualification in the respective field and the didactics of higher education? Is this professionalism appropriate for implementing study programmes of the relevant study direction? Do the members of teaching staff have sufficient level proficiency in English or in other foreign languages to prepare and implement a study programme or separate parts thereof in a foreign language?

1	<p>The expert team met engaged staff of lecturers, with much experience. As also practitioners are involved as lecturers, there is a guarantee that the study direction is sufficiently embedded in concrete practice.</p> <p>The expert team was provided with the SAR and the CV's of the academic staff. 17 from the study staff have doctoral degrees (psychology, pedagogy, engineering, philology, etc.), 8 master's degree (psychology, pedagogy, political science, legal science) and 2 master's degree in social science. For the development of the study course it is important to involve teaching staff members with the degree and qualification in social work. It will also facilitate the development of the research sector.</p> <p>However, the expert teams notices some problems here. Were the team sees the level of competence sufficient for the first level program and the bachelor program, it deems this as insufficient on the level of the master program.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - First, the expert team deems it necessary that a master program is run by a lecturer with a PhD. Although the expert team fully acknowledges the competences and the engagement of the current program director, the team advises to support her to find time to finish her PhD degree. - Second, and even more important, the expert team sees the level of English in the program as insufficient (all discussions during the visits were in Latvian language). Of course the team understands the importance of the knowledge of Russian in the Latvian context, as this is needed to work with many clients in social work. The team also recognises that there is important academic work that is done outside of the English language field. Nevertheless, the current situation is that in the field of social work, the lingua franca is English, for instance also in the academic databases. As such, developing a sound research base for a master in social work demands proficiency in the English language. This is still very much absent in the study direction, amongst staff and students. The expert team knows this is not solely the problem of the HEI and a question which concerns the whole Latvian school system. However, during a meeting with the HEI management the chairman of the board of directors of the HEI downplayed the importance of knowledge of the English language with the argument that students with proficiency in English would migrate from Latvia. The expert team does not accept this argument. It is of paramount importance that HEI aim to educate graduates as qualified as possible. <p>Another challenge for the study direction is how to attract young colleagues as members of the staff. Although the expert team acknowledges the importance of the demand for experience of the staff, the team advises the program to also look for a diversity of social work lecturers, as this might also bring new dynamics and forms of knowledge to the study direction.</p>
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2.3. Do the descriptions of study courses, study materials, informative base, including library resources, comply with the aims of the study programmes to be implemented in the respective study direction, their type, particularly distance learning, and a language? Are any resources planned for expanding the library resources (acquisition of literature and subscribing electronic data bases)?

1	<p>The team found some lack of clarity in the specific descriptions. For instance, it was stated in many courses that the course is in three languages (Latvian, Russian and English) while in reality it turns out this is only in one or two languages (no English).</p> <p>There is also a contradiction in the approach of distance learning. The program director stated that the distance learning possibility would be deleted from the study direction, because social work requires an 'interactive' approach and distance learning is not seen as suited for this. However, there is still a lot of 'learning trough streaming'. For instance, the study program in Ozolnieki mentioned mainly 'television streaming' as method of education. This seems problematic for the team, as it did not match with what was told (lecturers going there), but is also in contradiction with the critique that is formulated on the distance learning approach in social work by the management itself.</p> <p>Also, many courses include many different lecturers, but also often the same lecturers involved; For instance, the program director's name appears on many courses. This makes the expert team wonder who really is teaching these courses but also if all designated people are competent enough to teach such a diversity of subjects.</p> <p>The experts team was not informed of any substantial expansion of library resources.</p>
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2.4. Are the methodological and informative provisions for the study direction, including a library, periodicals, and electronic resources, sufficient for implementing studies based on contemporary scientific findings and requirements for the professional field and for developing scientific research? Do they comply with the provisions of regulatory enactments that regulate the respective profession?

2	<p>The expert team evaluates the libraries and access to study materials in Latvian language as sufficient. In comparison with the first evaluation report, there seems to be investments also in specific social work literature, although literature with a specific focus on social welfare is still scarce. This could still be improved in the future, especially in relation to the further development of the master program. The staff of the library refers to the fact that social work students read 'all kinds of different literature'. Although the expert team acknowledges the importance of sociological, psychological, philosophical, etc. literature for social work, the team advises the study direction to keep investing in specific social work and social welfare literature and especially in most up-to-date social work literature in English language.</p> <p>The staff of the study direction also complains about a lack of good study materials in Latvian. Although the expert team understands this remark, this is</p>
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	also the case for other small countries. This again raises the urgency for better access to publications in the English language. Where there are several good publications in English in the main branches (Riga and Daugavpils), this was lacking in the other branches.
	The library funds report also provides info on the size of funds, the number of visitors, the issued units, but not on the intensity of the use of scientific data in the databases.

2.5. Are library opening times convenient for students, and do its services, equipment, arrangement facilitate independent studies?

4	The expert team evaluates opening hours as convenient, as the library also opens in the evening and weekends when part-time students have their classes. Hence, as it concerns working students these hours are adapted to their needs.
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2.6. Is the support by the administrative and technical staff sufficient to ensure that study outcomes are reached?

3	The expert team evaluates this as good, as the staff mentions that there is a good relationship between the academic and the administrative and technical staff. Lecturers also state that they get sufficient support in relation to technical aspects of teaching, although they also stated that they often have a bad connection on television in case of teaching through the TV bridge.
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2.7. Do the material technical provisions for the study direction, for example, specific laboratories, equipment, studios, comply with the requirements of the study programmes to be implemented in the framework of the study direction and to the development level of contemporary technologies? Are the study premises equipped with sufficient number of electricity outlets for students' portable computers?

3	The expert team evaluates this as good. There is a diversity of teaching rooms, computer classes, and places for students to work. Although not all the rooms are ideal, and staff would appreciate even better facilities (faster internet, better TV connection, better access to statistical programs), the current situation does not hinder the realisation of the program. Students did not complain about a lack of electricity outlets for students' portable computers.
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III. Scientific Research or Creative Work of Academic Staff and Students (1)

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

1	The expert team evaluates this element as completely insufficient, especially given the organisation of a master program. It appears that the teaching staff does not have any paid work time, or very little paid work time to carry out research.
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	<p>Academic teaching should be research based with a strong emphasis on academic staff's own research input. The funding of the study program is based on the student's fee. There is no extra funding inside BIA to be used for research. Still, there is an urgent need to support teaching staff members to complete their PhD's, for example.</p> <p>Although it is a professional and not a scientific master, a social work program needs a sound research base. The expert team understands that a PhD in social work is lacking in Latvia, but even on a masters level there needs to be a more in depth perspective on research as a base for the program. For instance, the team asked what the perspective was on 'evidence based social work' and the response was 'we do it in the program'. The expert team has the feeling the staff did not fully comprehend the theoretical debates concerning evidence based social work (for instance the stream of literature 'against' evidence based social work).</p> <p>The team appreciates the efforts done by the staff to focus more on research, for instance through the participation in conferences and through the development of master theses. However, the research capacity seems to be all in Riga, which questions the capacity of the branches, as these attract the people from Riga but do not include the practitioners teaching staff members, who all are attracted to the institute because of the practical competences.</p> <p>The staff mentioned that they do not participate in the applications for research funding, as they do not reach the criteria for (international) funding. Hence, efforts will have to be increased if the study direction wants to be competitive and up to date. The lecturers referred to the need for more time to do research. This indicates motivation for research. Another possibility is to team up with international partners to be involved in applications (but then of course again the need to write and speak English becomes apparent).</p> <p>Also the conferences are mainly professional conferences, not scientific ones.</p>
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3.2. Are the resources allocated for research appropriate for the needs? Is the research (creation) work of the academic staff, including participation in scientific conferences or activities of artistic creation, planned in and paid for from the budget of the institution of higher education or the college?

1	<p>The team evaluates this as insufficient. As stated above, the lecturer staff demands more funds and time for scientific work. The study direction will have to look funding for participation in (international) scientific conferences.</p> <p>To support especially the master program the HEI should allocate specific time for teaching staff members to dedicate to research.</p> <p>A specific topic is the development of a PhD program. Although the Ozolnieki branch mentioned to have plans for the development of a PhD program, the team does not see how the study direction will have the capacity to do this on their own. The team understands that the development of a PhD program might be a way to develop a more underpinned research base. However, the expert team</p>
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	would advise to team up with other partners in Latvia to organize such a program.
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3.3. Is the research (creation) work of the students, including participation in scientific conferences or activities of artistic creation, planned in and paid for from the budget of the institution of higher education or the college?

2	Although a diversity of conferences but also international experiences are organised, there seems to be no budget besides the traditional funding channels (Erasmus) allotted for students to participate in domestic or international conferences. However, this traditional funding does not match for many students, as they are also working. Hence, conferences and international experiences become a prerogative for those who are able and willing to pay. The expert team appreciated that students were engaged enough to do this in some cases. Also, the HEI offers discounts for students and tries to support them to be engaged in extracurricular activities. The team also acknowledges that this is not a problem solely for the HEI but for educational programs in general. Hence, a challenge lies in organising opportunities for 'all' students and not only for those who can afford it.
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3.4. Are topics of the scientific research work or creative work of the academic staff relevant and related to the content of the study direction in the respective study programmes?

2	There was very little research carried out by the academic staff on social work. The team appreciates the evolution of the study direction, though. Where in the past – given the history of the BIA - the focus lied on psychological approaches more then on social work, the expert team sees a shift in the current topics where a social work focus becomes more visible in the courses, the used literature and the research topics.
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3.5. Are topics of the scientific research work or creative work of the students relevant and related to the content of the study direction and respective study programmes?

3	The team evaluates this as good, as the topics of the selected theses relate to the content of the courses and the relevant problems social work has to deal with in the Latvian context.
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3.6. Have research outcomes been published in internationally available and reviewed editions (exhibitions, shows, performances, etc.) and used in practice?

2	Given the amount of staff members, the research output is very limited. The team appreciates the efforts of the program manager to create a social work journal (commissioned by the government), as there is a clear lack of social work publications in the Latvian context. Although this journal can be very relevant and an interesting opportunity for also students to publish results out of master theses, the study direction also has to raise efforts for other types of publications
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	if it wants to sustain, especially on a masters level.
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3.7. Is the study programme linked to related grants or projects?

1	<p>The expert team evaluates this as insufficient. As mentioned before, the study directions states not to apply for grants as they do not meet the criteria. This seems to become a vicious circle when there is no increase in international publications, participation in international collaboration, and in turn no opportunity to seek grants or paid projects.</p> <p>Hence, the expert team urges the HEI to invest in possibilities to raise the quality of scientific output and so to be able to be competitive in funding applications.</p>
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3.8. Other comments, if any, with regard to the implementation of science-based studies in the framework of the study direction.

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IV. Cooperation and Internationalisation (2)

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

1	The information on the cooperation with the other institutions of higher education in Latvia or abroad on a joint study programs and study course creation and implementation was not obtained.
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4.2. Are there any possibilities to acquire separate study modules, study courses or take a traineeship (fully or partially) in the study programmes of foreign institutions of higher education or colleges, for example, are there any cooperation agreements concluded on implementing joint study programmes or study modules, exchange of the academic staff?

2	<p>Formally, there is a possibility for students to have international experiences.</p> <p>Also an internship abroad is formally possible, yet this requires that the employers allow this. Many students suggested that the staff would invest more in convincing employers to support their employees to gain international experiences.</p> <p>As not many students have access to these experiences abroad, the expert team advises the study direction to invest more systematically in a program 'Internationalisation at home'. Although some guest lecturers come to teach in the study direction, this is very limited.</p>
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4.3. Is the exchange of the academic staff and the implementation of other cooperation projects taking place?

1	The expert teams had observed that there are some possibilities, however, the use seems very limited. Only one teaching staff member informed that she had had one week exchange in a foreign institution. Negotiations with the academic staff and self-evaluation report does not show information about the realised joint projects and investigations with cooperation partners.
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4.4. Is the international mobility of students, the implementation of ERASMUS and other cooperation projects ensured?

2	The study direction has several Erasmus contracts and partnerships, mainly in the Baltic countries, but also for instance in Germany. Although some students make use of these opportunities, this is very limited as the students are working students and it is often not possible for them to be away for such a long period. The HEI should support students to increase mobility. That could be arranged through negotiations with employers. The expert team advises the HEI to convince the employers of the mutual benefits of student exchange.
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4.5. Does the cooperation with employers' organisations and other partners of cooperation leave any impact upon the implementation of the study direction?

3	<p>The expert team evaluates this as good. The study direction has a good relationship with employers. The employers give the possibility for internships, they co-assess students for internships. Also, employers are involved as teachers in the study directions. Students assess this as positive, as they talk out of experience and the real life world of clients.</p> <p>Also, the employers can hire people who graduate.</p> <p>Although this relationship is deemed positive, the expert team would advise to make this more structural and for instance to install an advisory body of employers in the Study direction (as many educational programs in Europe do). Such a body can advise the staff in relation to the curriculum and master thesis projects.</p> <p>Having said that on the one hand, the expert team also advises the study direction to develop a more critical relationship towards practice. In the current situation, the study direction seems to need to deliver the professionals for the labour market to meet the demand. However, social professionals also need to be 'innovative' and look critically towards practices. Although employers told the expert team that they also learned from students, it would be good to develop the relationship between practical demand of the labour market and social work as an 'autonomous' profession more thoroughly.</p>
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4.6. Other comments, if any, regarding the management of the study direction and cooperation with Latvian and international partners.

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V. Quality Assurance and Guarantees (2)

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

2	The expert team notices that there are forms of stakeholders participation, but – keeping in mind the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG), engagement of internal and external stakeholders could be increased and strengthened. This can be done for instance through the implementation of diverse QA procedures and according to ESG more than one method is suggested to reach better results (e.g. feedback procedures including surveys and focus groups).
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5.2. Does the development and approval of study programmes, continuous monitoring of the quality of study programmes, comply, assessing whether and to what extent with the following requirement: "An institution of higher education or a college shall establish mechanisms for the development and approval of study programmes. The programmes shall be developed in a way to make them comply with the aims that have been set, *inter alia*, the intended study outcomes. The qualification to be acquired in the programme shall be clearly defined and explained, and it shall refer to the correct level in the national qualifications infrastructure of higher education and, thus, also to the qualifications framework of the European Higher Education Area."?

1	<p>The expert team evaluates this element as insufficient on different levels:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - As mentioned, on the masters level, students from different bachelors come together, without a clear differentiation between the competences which need to be present to start the master program. - There can be a combination of students of the different level programs in joint lectures. Although this could be fruitful, for instance because of the interaction between the students, the goal of bringing these students together is not always clear and these joint lectures hold the risk of leading to unclear objectives of the programs. - Besides bachelor and master thesis projects there was no research effort to support the development of study directions.
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5.3. Does the ensuring of a student-centred study process, the assessment of students' performance comply, assessing whether and to what extent with the following requirement: "The institution of higher education or the college shall ensure that the study programmes are delivered in a way that encourages students to take an

active role in the developing the study process, and the assessment of students shall reflect this approach.”?

2	<p>The study direction encourages academic staff to use diverse teaching methods during the study process, including methods that require students’ active involvement. However, more methods and tasks could be used to improve students’ analytical and research skills as well as knowledge of the English language. The need for assessment of students’ attendance in classes should be revised to make the study process more student centered. The assessment results shows that the difficulty of methods or given tasks could be increased to reach a higher level of academic standards.</p> <p>A major challenge for the study direction is the fact that clear majority of students are already working full time. The HEI should develop strategies to encourage also part-time students in developing the study programs.</p>
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5.4. Do the rules of admission, studying and graduation, procedures, their publicity and compliance, comply, assessing whether and to what extent, with the following requirement: “The institution of higher education or the college shall consistently apply pre-determined and published regulations covering all phases of to the student “life cycle” - student admission, progression, recognition, and conferring the degree.”?

2	<p>The expert team evaluates that the admission criteria are clear, but it seems that they are not used properly, in the master level study program (see above).</p> <p>All study course descriptions include predetermined requirements that need to be fulfilled to pass the study courses. Attendance is usually one of the criteria, however the expert team would strongly suggest to revise this requirement as it does not prove achievement of any of intended learning outcomes mentioned in the curricula.</p> <p>Also, the recognition of prior learning should be further developed. Recognition of formal learning is in place but recognition of non formal and informal learning is not implemented properly according to Cabinet Regulations No. 36 about the recognition of study outcomes concerning previous education or professional experience.</p>
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5.5. Do the mechanisms for recruiting academic staff and their continuous professional development comply with, assessing whether and to what extent, with the following requirement: “An institution of higher education or a college shall assure themselves of the competence of its teaching staff. Fair and transparent mechanisms shall be used in staff recruitment and professional development.”?

2	<p>The expert team assesses this as sufficient. Given the demand for a better academic underpinning of the master program, attracting teaching staff members with a PhD is vital and also attracting enough lecturers with proficient knowledge of the English language.</p>
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5.6. Does the management of study information: acquisition of data and use thereof in decision taking comply with, assessing, whether and to what extent the following requirement: "The institution of higher education or the college shall ensure that it collects, analyses, and uses information necessary for effective management of study programmes and other activities."?

3	The expert team acknowledges that the internal QA policy requires to collect and analyze a lot of factual criteria (student enrollment, drop-out rate, students' academic achievements, students' employment rates, publications of academic staff etc.). However, the expert team would suggest to collect also opinion based feedback, send anonymous open surveys and organize focus groups that allows also to get information and new facts that the study direction might not have considered about before.
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5.7. Does the public published information about the activities of the institution of higher education or the college, the content of information, ways of disseminations and feed-back from society comply, assessing whether and to what extent with the following requirement: "An institution of higher education or a college shall inform about its activities (study programmes including). Information shall be clear, accurate, unbiased, relevant, and easily available."?

2	<p>The majority of the information about HEI and the study direction is published on HEIs' web page. The information that is published on the web page also differs according to the chosen language of the web page. For instance, the information about the social welfare study programs are published in the Latvian version of the web page, but they are not published in English. According to the director of the Social welfare study direction a new web page and student information system is being developed and should be available for use of students by the beginning of the next academic year. This new system would be very helpful for students to receive information from the HEI (study materials, schedules, assessment results, etc.).</p> <p>The use of one e-mail address is not seen by the expert team as a good system for delivering all information, especially because it includes also students' personal data and these data should be processed according to the "Personal Data Protection Law".</p>
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5.8. Does the periodic external quality assessment comply, assessing whether and to what extent comply with the following requirement: "An institution of higher education or a college shall conduct periodic external quality assurance."?

4	The Management of HEI and the Social Welfare study direction conducts periodic external quality assurance according to "Law On Institutions of Higher Education" and Cabinet regulations No. 407. In the framework of the ESF project, the study direction even applied for an evaluation before the deadline of the former assessment had passed.
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6. The implementation of recommendations received during the previous accreditation, if any.

2	<p>Although the expert team acknowledges some evolutions in comparison with the former evaluation, not all recommendations given by previous expert panels were taken into account and implemented, e.g.:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - More books and literature are needed in English and German language. Although there is an improvement, there is still a lack of material in foreign languages, especially in the Jekabpils and Ozolnieki branch. - More SW practices / approaches could be learned from UK and German experience as these countries have developed good SW support and services. Also here the expert team sees some evolution, yet very limited as internationalisation often stays within the region. - Supervision of students in internship should be improved. - Language knowledge of students could be improved as it is very important for reading international materials, doing research and it is necessary in their future work with people in crisis. - Academic staff should learn more knowledge about latest research topics in SW field. - Improve research of academic staff and promote use of more SW issues in their research papers.
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VI. Assessment of a Study Programme

Social Welfare

First level Professional Higher Education Programme 'Social Assistance Organizer' –
code 41 763

Scale of Assessment

No.	Explanation of assessment of study programme	Assessment (points)
1.	In the context of the criterion to be assessed, the study programme is on an excellent level. The performance is described by an excellent assessment in all issues subject to the particular criterion. Also on this, the highest level of assessment, some minor deficiencies could be detected in connection with the assessment criterion, for the elimination of which major improvements are not required.	4
2.	In the context of the criterion to be assessed, the study programme is on a good level, complies with all requirements. Strong points dominate, and significant deficiencies are not observed. The deficiencies that have been detected can be easily eliminated.	3

3.	In the context of the criterion to be assessed, the study programme meets the minimum requirements. The performance is described by a comparatively high proportion of deficiencies and significant shortcomings with respect to the specific indicator. Detailed planned long-term actions are required to eliminate the shortcomings, as well as stakeholders' support and additional resources.	2
4.	In the context of the criterion to be assessed the study programme does not meet the minimum requirements, significant deficiencies prevail.	1

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

4	The expert team evaluates this as correct. The study program is focused on social workers' professional development and in-depth study of social assistance to different client groups. The study program is created and being implemented according to the Law on Institutions of Higher Education of the Republic of Latvia, Chapter V of the Vocational Education Law that defines content of the professional education (Section 22) and according to regulatory documents of the Republic of Latvia that include European and world experience in the field of professional education, including social work, also specific conditions of Latvia were taken into account.
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2. Are the admission rules of the study programme appropriate for the aims and objectives of the study programme?²

4	The expert team evaluates this as correct. Student admission is performed according to requirements set by the Ministry of Education and Science of Latvia (Law on Institutions of Higher Education, Section 46(5)). Admission to the study program is performed according to BIA rules of admission.
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3. Does the content of the study programme comply with the aims and objectives set for the study programme?

4	The expert team evaluates the content matching the aims and objectives of the study program. These objectives are to educate social assistance organizers and to prepare them for such a professional activity which would promote respecting general principles of human rights in the country and society, ensure the provision of social assistance to needy persons in order to satisfy the basic needs of these persons to the minimum extent. All these elements are reflected in the study program.
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4. Does the content of the study programme comply with the degree, degree and professional qualification or professional qualification (standard of profession) to be conferred, as well as to the requirements of the qualifications framework?

2	The study program is created and being implemented according to the Law on Institutions of Higher Education of the Republic of Latvia and according to professional qualifications standards. Chapter V of the Vocational Education Law that defines content of the professional education (Section 22) and according to regulatory documents of the Republic of Latvia that include European and world experience in the field of professional education, including social work. Also specific conditions of Latvia were taken into account. However, evaluating the information included in the self-assessment and comparing it with a profession standard register, it can be concluded that currently there is not a valid accreditation of the profession standard Social Assistance Organiser which is contrary to the provisions of the Cabinet Regulations No 407, annex 8. The current situation does not allow to have confidence in the systematic update of the content of the program.
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5. Does the content of studies in the programmes of academic and doctoral studies comply with the most recent findings in the respective branch of science?

	This element is not relevant for the first level program.
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6. Does the students' workload in the acquisition of the study programme comply with the work of 40 academic hours per one credit point?

4	The expert team evaluates this as correct: every credit point in the program stands for 40 academic hours. When asked, the students agreed this was correct.
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7. Is the traineeship in professional study programmes related to the theoretical part and complies with its content? Has the organisation and the management of traineeship been developed in a study programme (if it is a professional study programme) in compliance with the aims of the study programme? Have the objectives of the traineeship been clearly defined, and are instructions and rules accessible and controlled?

2	The expert team evaluates this as good. Students undergo three trainings (16 credit points). Each of these trainings has its own objectives and tasks, as reflected in the training documents. The total evaluation of training consists of the evaluation of the training report and a report by the training mentor in a workplace. Training work is seen as a scientific research, where the student on the basis of theoretical knowledge and practice gained during the practical observations; reviews a particular problem discovered during training and make conclusions on solution possibilities. The goals and assessment of the training are clear. However, the following problems are identified by the HEI concerning this: improvement of the social work practice and support for the establishment of a system of practice supervisors, support for strengthening a scientific research basis in cooperation with doctoral students/teaching staff when ordering field-significant research, study courses, improving the base of study literature in the state language in the field of social work.
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8. Is the plan of the study programme and the content of study courses, and modules of high quality, and comply with the aims and objectives of the study programme and the planned study outcomes?

2	The expert team evaluates this as sufficient with regard to this first level program. The content of the study program is sufficient for reaching the study outcomes. However, a remark is that the course consists of many small courses and maybe could be rationalised in the future to gain more in depth knowledge on different subjects.
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9. In the case that the study programme is implemented in the form of distance learning, are there any specially structured study materials, an individualised pace of learning intended in the organisation of the study process, particularly an organised assessment of study achievements, as well as the use of diverse technical and electronic means of communication?

1	The expert team evaluates this as insufficient. As the program managers mentioned, distance learning will be cancelled in the future as it is seen as unsuitable for this study direction; Yet a lot of 'televised' lessons are still taking place, without real good support. The experts team also evaluate the assessment of study achievements as insufficient, and also evaluate the use of diverse technical and electronic means of communication as insufficient.
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10. Do the admission requirements comply with reaching of study outcomes and does the admission of students proceed in accordance with the approved procedures and criteria?

2	The admission requirements are sufficient for reaching the study outcomes. The expert team had the impression that all applicants who fulfilled formal criteria were accepted. There is a business logic to accept as many students as possible. All units must make profit and profit comes from students' tuitions.
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11. Is there any possibility to recognise prior non-formal education and professional experience, and is it used?

2	Recognition of prior learning should be developed. Recognition of formal learning is in place but recognition of non formal and informal learning is not implemented properly according to Cabinet Regulations No. 36 as mentioned before.
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12. Do the final theses or other indicators prove that the study outcomes have been reached? Is this approved by the graduates of the study programme and employers?

4	The expert team evaluates this as sufficient. Students have to write a qualification paper which is seen as up to standards for the first level program.
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13. Does the development, approval and update of programmes take place in accordance with the procedure approved by the management of the study direction?

2	The expert team found it difficult to really understand the way in which the program was evaluated and adjusted. The management and staff ensured the expert team this was the case but could not provide convincing evidence. The expert team was not informed, for example, of standards and practices, where student's feedback was taken into account in developing, approving and updating the program.
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14. Does the planning and supervision of the learning (study) process, the acquisition of the programme and quality control take place in accordance with the procedure approved by the management of the study direction?

2	The expert team found it difficult to really understand the way in which this would happen. The management and staff ensured the expert team this was the case but could not provide convincing evidence. The expert team was not informed, for example, of standards and practices, where student's feedback was taken into account in planning and supervision of the learning (study) process, the acquisition of the program and quality control.
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15. Does the development, update and use of study course descriptions take place in accordance with the procedure approved by the management of the study direction?

2	The expert team found it difficult to really understand the way in which this happened. The management and staff ensured the expert team this was the case but could not provide convincing evidence. The expert team was not informed, for example, of standards and practices, where student's feedback was taken into account in development, update and use of study course descriptions.
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16. Is the professionalism of the academic staff of the institution of higher education or the college involved in the implementation of study programme sufficiently high for the implementation of high quality studies, in the view of professional qualification in the respective sector and didactics of higher education? Do the faculty members have sufficient level proficiency in English or in other foreign languages to prepare and implement a study programme or a separate part thereof in a foreign language?

3	The expert team evaluates this as good for the first level program as qualified and experienced teaching staff members are in place. Proficiency in English is insufficient, but the expert team does not see this as a problem in this first level program as this is mainly practical and not scientific.
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17. Is the methodological and informative provision of the study programme, including library books, periodicals and electronic resources, sufficient for implementing studies based on relevant scientific findings and requirements of the professional field and for the development of scientific research? Does it comply with the provisions of regulatory enactments that regulate the respective professions? Is the mandatory literature included in course descriptions available at the library in sufficient quantity?

3	The expert team evaluates this as good with regards to the first level program as materials are present in the library. A problem is that there are not many Latvian sources on social work, social assistance, social welfare but this is of course not a responsibility of the program itself.
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18. Do the material technical provisions for the study programme, for example, specific laboratories, equipment, studios, comply with the requirements of the study programme to be implemented in the framework of the study programme and the development level of contemporary technologies?

3	The expert team evaluates this as good with regards to the first level program. There could be an improvement in the support of access to and use of SOPA, as professionals have to also use this in practice.
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19. Does the compliance and improvement of the infrastructure, informative and technical provision necessary for the implementation of programmes proceed in accordance with the procedure approved by the management of the study direction?

3	The expert team evaluates that there is a constant negotiation between the program managers and the management of the HEI to invest in the Social Welfare Study direction. The management of the HEI still invests in the different programs of the study direction, e.g. infrastructure, the library.
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20. Is the study programme sustainable in view of the employment of graduates?

2	The expert team has mixed feelings concerning the sustainability of this program: although employers refer to the importance, the managers in Jekabpils told us not to invest any further in this program and also employers mentioned the growing need for more schooled professionals (bachelors and masters). However, a problem is that because of financial reasons some people do not go into the bachelor program. The SER mentions "When evaluating the employment of BIA's graduates, it is high. A low indicator is the willingness of students to obtain a Bachelor's degree that is closely related with financial problems and insufficient state support."
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21. The implementation of recommendations (if any given) received in the framework of the previous accreditation of a study direction (if any) or licensing the study programme.

1	The SER of the program only mentions that the program was accredited, but does not mention any previous recommendations.
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22. Recommended measures and tasks to be mandatorily performed for eliminating the deficiencies and shortcomings that have been detected for the improvement and development of the study programme.

The expert team declines to give recommendations for this program since the team was unofficially informed that this program would be discontinued. The branches –

especially in Jekabpils - also indicated that there is no demand for this program. The fact that employers accept those who study social work at bachelor program as qualified social workers but not those who study to become social assistance organizers effectively eliminated demand for this program.

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

VII. Assessment of a Study Programme

Social Welfare

Professional Bachelor programme social work – code 42 762

Scale of Assessment

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

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

3	The expert team evaluates this as correct. The HEI presents students with an opportunity to obtain higher professional education in social work by providing a Bachelor's degree in social work and qualification of a social worker. The study program is created and being implemented according to the Law on Institutions of Higher Education of the Republic of Latvia, Chapter V of the Vocational Education Law that defines content of the professional education (Section 22) and according to regulatory documents of the Republic of Latvia that include European and world experience in the field of professional education, including social work, also specific conditions of Latvia were taken into account.
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2. Are the admission rules of the study programme appropriate for the aims and objectives of the study programme?

3	The expert team evaluates this as correct. Student admission is performed according to requirements set by the Ministry of Education and Science of Latvia (Law on Institutions of Higher Education, Section 46(5)). Admission to the study program is performed according to BIA rules of admission.
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3. Does the content of the study programme comply with the aims and objectives set for the study programme?

3	The expert team evaluates the content matching the aims and objectives of the study program. The goal of the program is to prepare educated, highly qualified, competent and competitive professionals, who can initiate and manage social projects of various scale; to provide support and solve social problems not only locally, but also on a regional level in a multicultural environment based on knowledge about development tendencies of social work in Europe; to promote overall welfare in Latvia. All these elements are reflected in the study program.
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4. Does the content of the study programme comply with the degree, degree and professional qualification or professional qualification (standard of profession) to be conferred, as well as to the requirements of the qualifications framework?

3	The team evaluates this as correct. The study program is created and being implemented according to the Law on Institutions of Higher Education of the Republic of Latvia, Chapter V of the Vocational Education Law that defines content of the professional education (Section 22) and according to regulatory documents of the Republic of Latvia that include European and world experience in the field of professional education, including social work. Also specific conditions of Latvia were taken into account. The professional
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	qualifications (standard of profession) are met but there is a need for a more critical approach towards developing social work in Latvia (see below).
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5. Does the content of studies in the programmes of academic and doctoral studies comply with the most recent findings in the respective branch of science?

	This does not apply since this is a professional program.
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6. Does the students' workload in the acquisition of the study programme comply with the work of 40 academic hours per one credit point?

4	The expert team evaluates this as correct: every credit point in the program stands for 40 academic hours. When asked, the students agreed this was correct.
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7. Is the traineeship in professional study programmes related to the theoretical part and complies with its content? Has the organisation and the management of traineeship been developed in a study programme (if it is a professional study programme) in compliance with the aims of the study programme? Have the objectives of the traineeship been clearly defined, and are instructions and rules accessible and controlled?

2	<p>The expert team evaluates this as meeting the minimum requirement. An integral part of the study program is active professional practice, that can be carried out in different organizations and in different regions of Latvia. The students have 4 practices for a total amount of 26 CP. The basis of every practice is the acquired knowledge of a student and social worker skills. For example after completion of the third year in academy students are able to use acquired methods in real life which have an important role in professional study program. During practice students use their acquired knowledge, work in various governmental, self-governmental and non-governmental social sphere institutions. The main document of test practice is practice report and presentation that is defended in practice seminar.</p> <p>However, the following problems are identified by the HEI concerning this:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - improvement of the social work practice and support for the establishment of a system of practice supervisors, - support for strengthening a scientific research basis in cooperation with doctoral students/teaching staff when ordering field-significant research, study courses, improving the base of study literature in the state language in the field of social work.
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8. Is the plan of the study programme and the content of study courses, and modules of high quality, and comply with the aims and objectives of the study programme and the planned study outcomes?

1	The expert team evaluates this as insufficient with regard to this bachelor program. The course consists of many small courses and maybe could be rationalised in the future to gain more in depth knowledge on different subjects.
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	The program states that it is determined to teach skills in scientific research and project realization, as well as quantitative and qualitative data processing methods and that while studying at the Bachelor program of social work, students acquire the necessary knowledge, skills and abilities for further studies in Master programs by using the latest academical and practical scientific discoveries in Europe and across the world. The expert team evaluates that this is not necessarily a goal for a bachelor program but for a master in social work. Albeit, this goal is also not reached in the opinion of the expert team as the scientific underpinning is not really up to date and sufficiently international.
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9. In the case that the study programme is implemented in the form of distance learning, are there any specially structured study materials, an individualised pace of learning intended in the organisation of the study process, particularly an organised assessment of study achievements, as well as the use of diverse technical and electronic means of communication?

1	The expert team evaluates this as insufficient. The SER mentions that an “often used method in the program is distance learning (lectures online or in CD's, Skype in the place of work etc.) that gives an opportunity to provide qualitative education for part time students or those who live in regions of Latvia or in foreign countries.” However, during the visit, the program manager mentioned that distance learning will be cancelled in the future as it is seen as unsuitable for this study direction; Yet a lot of ‘televised’ lessons are still taking place, without real good support. The expert team also evaluates the assessment of study achievements as insufficient. The expert team also evaluates the use of diverse technical and electronic means of communication as insufficient.
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10. Do the admission requirements comply with reaching of study outcomes and does the admission of students proceed in accordance with the approved procedures and criteria?

2	The expert team had the impression that all applicants who fulfilled formal criteria were accepted. There is a business logic to accept as many students as possible. All units must make profit and profit comes from students’ tuitions. However there are not enough resources for a high quality BA social work program.
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11. Is there any possibility to recognise prior non-formal education and professional experience, and is it used?

1	Recognition of prior learning should be developed. Recognition of formal learning is in place but recognition of nonformal and informal learning is not implemented properly according to Cabinet Regulations No.36.
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12. Do the final theses or other indicators prove that the study outcomes have been reached? Is this approved by the graduates of the study programme and employers?

2	The expert team evaluates this as meeting the minimum requirements. The
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	<p>professional bachelors degree and diploma for acquired second level professional highest education can only be obtained by students that have fully acquired the study program and successfully defended their diploma paper. However, the expert team has doubts on the acquired scientific level, as the use of scientific literature and methods is very limited. The program states that it is determined to teach skills in scientific research and project realization, as well as quantitative and qualitative data processing methods and that while studying at the Bachelor program of social work, students acquire the necessary knowledge, skills and abilities for further studies in Master programs by using the latest academical and practical scientific discoveries in Europe and across the world. The expert team evaluates that this is not necessarily a goal for a bachelor program but for a master program in social work. Albeit, this goal is also not reached in the opinion of the expert team as the scientific underpinning is not really up to date and sufficiently international.</p>
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13. Does the development, approval and update of programmes take place in accordance with the procedure approved by the management of the study direction?

1	<p>The expert team found it difficult to really understand the way in which the program was evaluated and adjusted. The expert team was not informed, for example, of standards and practices, where student's feedback was taken into account in developing, approving and updating the program. The SER states that "the concept of the study program is created and maintained by the council of the study program that delegates rights to manage administration of the program process to the program director who accordingly attracts teaching staff for further course lecturing. Lecturers create their study courses according to requirements of modern higher education pedagogy, thus promoting perfection of knowledge, skills and competences".</p>
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14. Does the planning and supervision of the learning (study) process, the acquisition of the programme and quality control take place in accordance with the procedure approved by the management of the study direction?

1	<p>The expert team found it difficult to really understand the way in which this happened. The management and staff ensured the expert team this was the case but could not provide convincing evidence. The expert team was not informed, for example, of standards and practices, where student's feedback was taken into account in planning and supervision of the learning (study) process, the acquisition of the program and quality control.</p>
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15. Does the development, update and use of study course descriptions take place in accordance with the procedure approved by the management of the study direction?

1	<p>The expert team found it difficult to really understand the way in which this happened. The management and staff ensured the expert team this was the case but could not provide convincing evidence. The expert team was not informed, for example, of standards and practices, where student's feedback was taken into account in development, update and use of study course descriptions.</p>
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16. Is the professionalism of the academic staff of the institution of higher education or the college involved in the implementation of study programme sufficiently high for the implementation of high quality studies, in the view of professional qualification in the respective sector and didactics of higher education? Do the faculty members have sufficient level proficiency in English or in other foreign languages to prepare and implement a study programme or a separate part thereof in a foreign language?

2	The expert team evaluates this as meeting the minimum requirements for a bachelor degree, as qualified and experienced teaching staff are in place. However, proficiency in English is insufficient, which is a problem if the program wants to have a sound scientific underpinning as they say they do.
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17. Is the methodological and informative provision of the study programme, including library books, periodicals and electronic resources, sufficient for implementing studies based on relevant scientific findings and requirements of the professional field and for the development of scientific research? Does it comply with the provisions of regulatory enactments that regulate the respective professions? Is the mandatory literature included in course descriptions available at the library in sufficient quantity?

3	The expert team evaluates this as good with regards to the BA program as materials are present in the library. A problem is that there are not many Latvian sources on social work, social assistance, social welfare but this is of course not a responsibility of the program itself.
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18. Do the material technical provisions for the study programme, for example, specific laboratories, equipment, studios, comply with the requirements of the study programme to be implemented in the framework of the study programme and the development level of contemporary technologies?

3	The expert team evaluates this as good with regard to the bachelor program. There could be an improvement in the support of access to and use of SOPA, as professionals have to also use this in practice.
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19. Does the compliance and improvement of the infrastructure, informative and technical provision necessary for the implementation of programmes proceed in accordance with the procedure approved by the management of the study direction?

3	The expert team evaluates that there is a constant negotiation between the program managers and the management of the HEI to invest in the Social Welfare Study direction. The management of the HEI still invests in the different programs of the study direction, e.g. infrastructure, the library.
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20. Is the study programme sustainable in view of the employment of graduates?

3	The expert team evaluates this as sufficient. The SAR mentions that the employment of BIA's graduates is high. A low indicator is the willingness of
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	students to obtain a Master's degree that is closely related with financial problems and insufficient state support. The Academy keeps track and is informed about graduates' employment as well as informs them about vacancies in the labour market."
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21. The implementation of recommendations (if any given) received in the framework of the previous accreditation of a study direction (if any) or licensing the study programme.

1	The SER of the program only mentions that the program was accredited, but does not mention any previous recommendations.
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22. Recommended measures and tasks to be mandatorily performed for eliminating the deficiencies and shortcomings that have been detected for the improvement and development of the study programme.

1. More books and literature have to be provided in English and German language. Although there is an improvement, there is still a lack of material in foreign languages, especially in the Jekabpils and Ozolnieki branch.
2. More SW practices / approaches could be learned from UK and German experience as these countries have developed good SW support and services. Also here the expert team sees some evolutions, yet very limited as internationalisation often stays within the region. The internationalisation aspect has to be developed. The Jekabpils branch was ahead of other branches with their German exchange program, which was evaluated as very positive by the students
3. Supervision of students in internship has to be improved in all branches.
4. Language knowledge of students has to be improved in all branches as it is very important for reading international materials, doing research and it is necessary in their future work with people in crisis.
5. Academic staff in all branches has to gain more knowledge about latest research topics in SW field.

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

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VIII. Assessment of a Study Programme

Social Welfare

Second level Professional higher Education Master Programme Social Work – code
47 762

Scale of Assessment

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

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

3	The expert team evaluates this as correct. The master is focused on the professional as a leader. The SER states that the implementation of social changes is not possible without performers of social changes and powerful management. A social worker of a community must be able to be a leader. Social workers, working in communities as macro-practitioners, become such leaders that are capable of changing social, political and economic factors that will influence the community's life by contributing to the improvement of social environment.
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2. Are the admission rules of the study programme appropriate for the aims and objectives of the study programme?

2	The expert team evaluates this as formally correct. Regulation regarding rules of admission and order of matriculation at Baltic International Academy for the study year 2016/2017 comprises the following statement "Rights of admission to the BIA professional Master study program "Social work" are given to people who have a Bachelor degree or second level professional higher education (or equal higher education) in the thematic group of humanities and art, education, social sciences, commerce and law, healthcare and social welfare education, as well as those with a Bachelor degree or second level professional higher education in another thematic group of education and at least six months of practical experience in the field of social welfare." However, as mentioned, the expert team sees the lack of diversity in the program for the different bachelor programs as problematic as there should be a more clearly profiled linkage program. Although the SAR states that an additional semester is ensured in order to promote acquisition of knowledge and skills of general social work, this was apparently not clear for students themselves and they stated they missed the change to develop social work skills on a sufficient level.
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3. Does the content of the study programme comply with the aims and objectives set for the study programme?

2	The expert team evaluates the content matching the aims and objectives of the study program, except for the scientific element of the program. The goal of the study program is to prepare highly-qualified, competent and competitive professionals with modern education who can initiate and lead social changes, organize and plan changes in an organization and community, to initiate and manage social projects of different scale, provide support and enable social changes on local, regional and international level, multicultural environment basing on the development trends of social work in Europe and world by promoting social welfare in Latvia and give students an opportunity to obtain the higher professional education in social work by acquiring Master degree in social work and to further personal growth with possibility to continue studies at Doctoral level. Most of these elements are reflected in the study program, however the expert team evaluates the scientific preparation for the continuation on a PhD level as insufficient, which has especially to do with the lack of access to international knowledge.
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4. Does the content of the study programme comply with the degree, degree and professional qualification or professional qualification (standard of profession) to be conferred, as well as to the requirements of the qualifications framework?

1	The expert team evaluates this as insufficient. The goal of the study program is to prepare highly qualified, competent and competitive professionals with modern education who can initiate and lead social changes, organize and plan changes in an organization and community, to initiate and manage social projects of different scale, provide support and enable social changes on local, regional and international level, multicultural environment basing on the development trends of social work in Europe and world by promoting social
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	<p>welfare in Latvia and give students an opportunity to obtain the higher professional education in social work by acquiring a Master degree in social work and to further personal growth with the possibility to continue studies at Doctoral level. Most of these elements are reflected in the study program, however the expert team evaluates the scientific preparation for the continuation on a PhD level as insufficient, which has especially to do with the lack of access to international knowledge.</p> <p>The Study program Social work bachelor and masters' levels have only one profession standard which rises a risk for acquisition of each of the programs' professional knowledge, skills and allocation of the competences.</p>
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5. Does the content of studies in the programmes of academic and doctoral studies comply with the most recent findings in the respective branch of science?

	This element is not relevant as it is a professional program.
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6. Does the students' workload in the acquisition of the study programme comply with the work of 40 academic hours per one credit point?

4	The expert team evaluates this as correct: every credit point in the program stands for 40 academic hours. When asked, the students agreed this was correct.
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7. Is the traineeship in professional study programmes related to the theoretical part and complies with its content? Has the organisation and the management of traineeship been developed in a study programme (if it is a professional study programme) in compliance with the aims of the study programme? Have the objectives of the traineeship been clearly defined, and are instructions and rules accessible and controlled?

3	The expert team evaluates this as sufficient. There are 9 ECTS of practice for the students with a bachelor in social work and practice and the writing of the master thesis are intertwined which the expert team evaluates as positive.
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8. Is the plan of the study programme and the content of study courses, and modules of high quality, and comply with the aims and objectives of the study programme and the planned study outcomes?

1	<p>The expert team evaluates this as insufficient with regard to this Master level program. The course consists out of many small courses and maybe could be rationalised in the future to gain more in depth knowledge on different subjects. The goal of the study program is to prepare highly qualified, competent and competitive professionals with modern education who can initiate and lead social changes, organize and plan changes in an organization and community, to initiate and manage social projects of different scale, provide support and enable social changes on local, regional and international level, multicultural environment basing on the development trends of social work in Europe and world by promoting social welfare in Latvia and give students an opportunity to obtain the higher professional education in social work by acquiring a Master degree in</p>
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	social work and to further personal growth with the possibility to continue studies at Doctoral level. Most of these elements are reflected in the study program, however the expert team evaluates the scientific preparation for the continuation on a PhD level as insufficient, which has especially to do with the lack of access to international knowledge.
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9. In the case that the study programme is implemented in the form of distance learning, are there any specially structured study materials, an individualised pace of learning intended in the organisation of the study process, particularly an organised assessment of study achievements, as well as the use of diverse technical and electronic means of communication?

1	The expert team evaluates this as insufficient. As the program manager mentioned, distance learning will be cancelled in the future as it is seen as unsuitable for this study direction; Yet a lot of 'televised' lessons are still taking place, without real good support. The expert team also evaluates the assessment of study achievements as insufficient. The expert team also evaluates the use of diverse technical and electronic means of communication as insufficient.
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10. Do the admission requirements comply with reaching of study outcomes and does the admission of students proceed in accordance with the approved procedures and criteria?

2	The expert team had the impression that all applicants who fulfilled formal criteria were accepted. There is a business logic to accept as many students as possible. All units must make profit and profit comes from students' tuitions.
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11. Is there any possibility to recognise prior non-formal education and professional experience, and is it used?

2	Recognition of prior learning should be developed. Recognition of formal learning is in place but recognition of nonformal and informal learning is not implemented properly according to Cabinet Regulations No.36.
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12. Do the final theses or other indicators prove that the study outcomes have been reached? Is this approved by the graduates of the study programme and employers?

2	The expert team evaluates this as meeting minimum requirements. Students have to write a master thesis. Although the topics are relevant for social work, the chosen research methods are very limited (often surveys) and the international literature base is rather limited.
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13. Does the development, approval and update of programmes take place in accordance with the procedure approved by the management of the study direction?

2	The expert team found it difficult to really understand the way in which the program was evaluated and adjusted. We were not informed, for example, of standards and practices, where student's feedback was taken into account in
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	developing, approving and updating the program. The SER states that “the concept of the study program is created and maintained by the council of the study program that delegates rights to manage administration of the program process to the program director who accordingly attracts teaching staff for further course lecturing. Lecturers create their study courses according to requirements of modern higher education pedagogy, thus promoting perfection of knowledge, skills and competences”.
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14. Does the planning and supervision of the learning (study) process, the acquisition of the programme and quality control take place in accordance with the procedure approved by the management of the study direction?

2	The expert team found it difficult to really understand the way in which this happened. The management and staff ensured the expert team this was the case but could not provide convincing evidence. The expert team was not informed, for example, of standards and practices, where student’s feedback was taken into account in planning and supervision of the learning (study) process, the acquisition of the programme and quality control.
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15. Does the development, update and use of study course descriptions take place in accordance with the procedure approved by the management of the study direction?

2	The expert team found it difficult to really understand the way in which this happened. The management and staff ensured the expert team this was the case but could not provide convincing evidence. The expert team was not informed, for example, of standards and practices, where student’s feedback was taken into account in development, update and use of study course descriptions.
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16. Is the professionalism of the academic staff of the institution of higher education or the college involved in the implementation of study programme sufficiently high for the implementation of high quality studies, in the view of professional qualification in the respective sector and didactics of higher education? Do the faculty members have sufficient level proficiency in English or in other foreign languages to prepare and implement a study programme or a separate part thereof in a foreign language?

1	The expert team evaluates this as insufficient for the masters program. Although qualified and experienced teaching staff members are in place, there is a lack of teaching staff with PhD’s and proficiency in English is insufficient, which is problematic on a masters level.
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17. Is the methodological and informative provision of the study programme, including library books, periodicals and electronic resources, sufficient for implementing studies based on relevant scientific findings and requirements of the professional field and for the development of scientific research? Does it comply with the provisions of regulatory enactments that regulate the respective professions? Is the mandatory literature included in course descriptions available at the library in sufficient quantity?

2	The expert team evaluates this as sufficient with regard to the Master level program as materials are present in the library. A problem is that there are not many Latvian sources on social work, social assistance, social welfare but this is of course not a responsibility of the program itself. Also there is not so much material and social welfare and – especially in the Ozolnieki and Jekabpils – not many English publications.
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18. Do the material technical provisions for the study programme, for example, specific laboratories, equipment, studios, comply with the requirements of the study programme to be implemented in the framework of the study programme and the development level of contemporary technologies?

3	The expert team evaluates this as good. There could be an improvement in the support of access to and use of SOPA, as professionals have to also use this in practice.
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19. Does the compliance and improvement of the infrastructure, informative and technical provision necessary for the implementation of programmes proceed in accordance with the procedure approved by the management of the study direction?

3	The expert team evaluates that there is a constant negotiation between the program managers and the management of the HEI to invest in the Social Welfare Study direction. The management of the HEI still invests in the different programs of the study direction, e.g. infrastructure, the library.
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20. Is the study programme sustainable in view of the employment of graduates?

3	The expert team evaluates this as good. Based on available information on job vacancies for heads working in the field of social welfare, the most popular are vacancies for heads of social services. The employers claim they need trained professionals in their services.
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21. The implementation of recommendations (if any given) received in the framework of the previous accreditation of a study direction (if any) or licensing the study programme.

1	<p>The SER does not mention any previous recommendations. However, the former report on the licencing of the program does mention some. A such, the expert team finds it strange these are not addressed in the SER of the program, as it cannot be the purpose that the team has also to study former audit reports to get information.</p> <p>As mentioned, although the expert team acknowledges some evolutions in comparison with the former evaluation, not all recommendations given by previous expert panels were taken into account and implemented</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - More books and literature are needed in English and German language. Although there is an improvent, there is still al lack of material in foreign
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	<p>languages, especially in the Jekabpils and Ozolnieki branch.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - More SW practices / approaches could be learned from UK and German experience as these countries have developed good SW support and services. Also here the expert team sees some evolution, yet very limited as internationalisation often stays within the region. - Supervision of students in internship should be improved. - Language knowledge of students could be improved as it is very important for reading international materials, doing research and it is necessary in their future work with people in crisis. - Academic staff should learn more knowledge about latest research topics in SW field. <p>Improve research of academic staff and promote use of more SW issues in their research papers.</p>
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22. Recommended measures and tasks to be mandatorily performed for eliminating the deficiencies and shortcomings that have been detected for the improvement and development of the study programme.

1. More books and literature have to be provided in English and German language. Although there is an improvement, there is still a lack of material in foreign languages, especially in the Jekabpils and Ozolnieki branch.
2. More SW practices / approaches could be learned from UK and German experience as these countries have developed good SW support and services. Also here the expert team sees some evolution, yet very limited as internationalisation often stays within the region. Internationalisation aspect has to be developed.
3. Supervision of students in internship has to be improved in all branches.
4. Language knowledge of students in all branches has to be improved as it is very important for reading international materials, doing research and it is necessary in their future work with people in crisis
5. Academic staff in all branches has to gain more knowledge about latest research topics in SW field.

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

For **the future development** of the study direction the expert team gives following recommendations:

1. As the expert team evaluated the first level program and the bachelor program as sufficient, the master program is still seen as insufficient. The panel proposes to make amendments to this program. 2. The expert team sees the level of English in all of the three program as insufficient. The current situation is that in the field of social work, the lingua franca is English, for instance also in the academic databases. As such, developing a sound research base for a master in social work demands proficiency in the English language.

2. The experts evaluate the resources and research work as insufficient. The academic staff demands more funds and time for scientific work. The study direction will have to look for funding for participation in (international) scientific conferences and for research time. There is an urgent need to support teaching staff to complete their PhD's. To support especially the master program the HEI should allocate specific time for teaching staff members to dedicate for research. Efforts will have to be increased if the study direction wants to be competitive and up to date.
3. The expert team advises to develop a clear linking program to the master program, to make sure the diversity of bachelor students graduate with the same competences.
4. The expert team also would advise the study direction to develop a more critical relationship towards practice. Social professionals also need to be 'innovative' and look critically towards practices. It would be good to develop the relationship between practical demand of the labour market and social work as an 'autonomous' profession more thoroughly.
5. The expert team understands that the development of a PhD program might be a way to develop a more underpinned research base. The expert team would advise to team up with other partners in Latvia to organize such a program, as the HEI does not have this capacity on its own.

Other general recommendations are:

1. As the demand for professionals in social work is getting higher in Latvia, the expert team advises the HEI to consider whether the first level program of *social assistance organiser* will maintain relevant in the future in relation to the demands of the labour market.
2. The study direction is very much dependent on work input of a single individual who is the current manager of the study direction. Although the team appreciates her competences and engagement, the experts see it as problematic that the weight of the study direction mainly lays on the shoulders of one person. It is necessary that a master program is run by a lecturer with a PhD. Although the team fully acknowledges the competences and the engagement of the current program director, the experts advise the HEI to support her to find time to finish her PhD degree. The expert team also advises the HEI to organise sufficient support and a more elaborated structure to sustain the programs.
3. It is also necessary for the sustainability of the study direction to attract young colleagues as members of the staff. Although the expert team acknowledges the importance of the demand for experience of the staff, the experts advise the program to also look for a diversity of social work lecturers.
4. In comparison with the first evaluation report, the library also has invested in specific social work literature. However, this could still be improved in the future, especially in relation to the further development of the master program. The experts advise the study direction to keep investing in specific social work and social welfare literature and especially in most up-to-date social work literature in English language.
5. As not many students have access to foreign experiences, the expert team advises the study direction to invest more systematically in a program 'Internationalisation at home'. The HEI could also support students to increase mobility, for instance through negotiations with employers.

6. Although this relationship between academic staff and stakeholders is deemed positive, the expert team would advise to make this more structural and for instance to set up an advisory body of employers in the study direction.
7. The need for assessment of students' attendance in classes should be revised to make the study process more student centered. The assessment results show that the difficulty of methods or given tasks could be increased to reach a higher level of academic standards. The recognition of prior learning should be further developed.

The panel advises to accredit the study direction for 2 years.

Signatures of experts:

Heikki Hiilamo



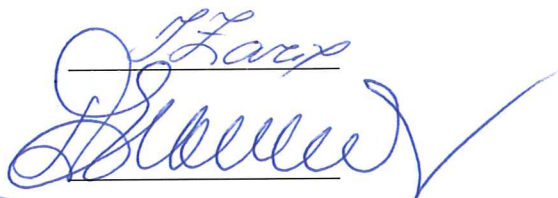
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Rudi Roose



03.05.2017

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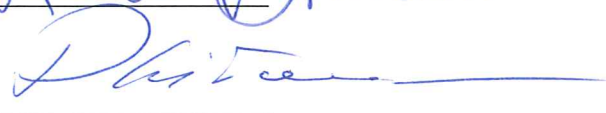
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Peteris Leiskalns



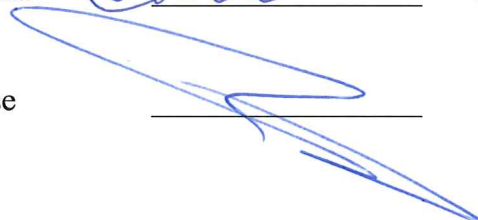
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