

# Expert group joint opinion

Evaluation Procedure: Assessment of Study Field

Higher Education Institution: Riga Technical University

Study field: Social Welfare

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

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The expert group has undertaken a comprehensive evaluation of the study field Social Welfare and the associated study programmes at RTU LA and RA. The assessment confirms that the study field makes an essential contribution to Latvian higher education and society by preparing professionals who can address urgent social challenges; yet, it also reveals structural, managerial, and developmental limitations that must be addressed to ensure sustainability and competitiveness.

The management of the study field was found to be coherent and development-oriented. The objectives of the field are clearly formulated, aligned with RTU's strategic goals and with national policy documents such as the National Development Plan and Public Health Guidelines. The interconnection of the programmes — from the short-cycle Social Rehabilitator to the bachelor's Social Worker and the master's Social Work Management — creates a logical vertical progression, facilitating efficient learning pathways. Strengths also include the integration of comprehensive SWOT analyses into institutional planning and the establishment of participatory governance structures that involve employers and students. At the same time, challenges remain: the transition to the newly optimised programmes requires careful monitoring to ensure compatibility of credits and learning outcomes, and the distribution of resources between Liepāja and Rēzekne has yet to achieve full parity.

The internal quality assurance system is robust, transparent, and integrated into RTU's institutional excellence model, ensuring compliance with the ESG standards. Procedures for programme review, student feedback, complaints, and data collection are clearly defined and systematically implemented. Notable strengths include the structured use of student and graduate surveys, regular monitoring of performance indicators, and the alignment of decision-making processes with evidence-based management. However, experts noted the need to strengthen employer involvement in curriculum development and to develop more systematic channels for alumni engagement. Furthermore, while the feedback system is effective, greater visibility of follow-up actions would reinforce trust among students.

In terms of resources and provision, the study field benefits from institutional infrastructure, e-learning platforms, and libraries that support teaching and research. Nevertheless, limitations persist in modern facilities — the even distribution of resources between the two regional academies. The uneven development of infrastructure risks creating disparities in student experience depending on location.

The analysis of research and artistic creation highlights incremental progress in strengthening scientific capacity. Cooperation with municipalities, NGOs, and professional institutions provides a basis for applied research, contributing to the relevance of the studies. Yet international publication output remains modest, research funding is limited, and the involvement of academic staff in larger-scale projects is insufficient. The potential to link emerging themes such as digitalisation or technological innovations with social work remains underexploited.

Cooperation and internationalisation demonstrate a clear commitment to building networks and mobility opportunities. However, the actual mobility rates of students and staff are still low, and international visibility of the programmes is limited. More systematic interdisciplinary collaboration—particularly with technology and health — could both reinforce international partnerships and create a unique profile for RTU in the social welfare domain.

The implementation of recommendations from previous evaluations shows that the institution has responded to earlier criticisms by consolidating programmes and introducing new managerial practices. Nevertheless, the sustainability of these changes depends on consistent monitoring and transparent communication with all stakeholders.

Overall, the study programmes within the field are valued by students and employers alike, and

their design reflects societal needs, particularly in relation to demographic changes, the shift to community-based services, and the shortage of qualified professionals. Students benefit from dedicated academic staff, transparent admission and assessment systems, and a strong culture of academic integrity, underpinned by the use of plagiarism-detection tools and active participation in European integrity networks.

At the same time, persistent challenges threaten the long-term development of the field. These include uneven institutional development across regions, modest scientific capacity and internationalisation, limited employer involvement in shaping advanced-level specialisations, and insufficient differentiation from competing institutions. Addressing these weaknesses requires the systematic inclusion of key performance indicators in strategic planning, targeted investment in staff mobility and research, and the creation of interdisciplinary niches that draw on RTU's strengths as a technical university.

In conclusion, the expert group finds that the study field of Social Welfare demonstrates substantial strengths in management, quality assurance, and alignment with labour market needs, and provides students with meaningful learning opportunities. However, significant improvements are needed in research capacity, internationalisation, and infrastructural balance to ensure that the field not only sustains its current achievements but also positions itself as a leader in social work education in Latvia and beyond.

## **I - Assessment of the Study Field**

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#### **1.1 Management of the Study Field**

##### **Analysis**

###### **1.1.1.**

The objective of the study field "Social Welfare" is to provide high-quality and competitive higher professional education in the field of social work, preparing competent professionals capable of effectively addressing contemporary social problems and adapting to the dynamic challenges of society. The objective also includes strengthening the social welfare system and contributing to the development of social work science in Latvia and the European Union (SAR, p. 17). The objective is clearly formulated and ambitious, focused on training competent professionals and developing the field of social welfare. Its achievement is supported by the integration of conceptual approaches (interdisciplinarity, systems analysis, orientation toward sustainable development) and alignment with labour market needs.

The report correctly identifies needs and trends and provides a clear justification for the relevance of the programmes, based on: a) Regional needs – alignment with regional development strategies (Liepāja; Rēzekne, Latgale); b) Demographic changes – growing need for social work focused on gerontology, in response to Latvia's aging population; c) Paradigm shift – transition from institutional to community-based, client-oriented care, requiring new professional competences and interdisciplinary cooperation (social work and health); d) Lack of specialists – significant shortage of social workers at national and regional levels (SAR, p. 17–18).

The study field is designed in synergy with the guiding principle of the Riga Technical University (hereafter RTU) Strategy (2023–2027), which emphasises proactive alignment with national economic needs and a focus on quality and efficiency. It contributes to RTU's vision of being a competitive science and technology university at the international level (SAR, p. 8, 19). There is also alignment with national strategic documents: "Latvia's National Development Plan for 2021–2027 (NDP 2021–2027)" and "Latvia's Public Health Guidelines 2021–2027" (SAR, pp. 18-19).

At the time of the experts visit, the Social Welfare study field included the following study programmes: "Social Rehabilitation" (short-cycle, implemented in Rēzekne); "Social Work and

Rehabilitation" (bachelor's (hereafter BA), implemented in Rēzekne); "Social Work" (BA, implemented in Liepāja); and "Social Work Management" (master's (hereafter MA), implemented in Liepāja). Starting with the academic year 2026–2027, as a result of the integration efforts of the two higher education institutions (Rēzekne Academy of Technologies and University of Liepāja) within RTU and the optimisation of the study field offer and costs, the following three study programmes are proposed to operate in both locations: "Social Rehabilitator" (short-cycle professional study programme, 41762); "Social Worker" (professional bachelor's study programme, 42762); "Social Work Management" (professional master's study programme, 47762). However, there is limited differentiation with regard to competing programmes at other universities.

The relationship between all study programmes is logical and clear. RTU envisages a vertical integration of the study programmes, ensuring flexible and efficient study pathways: graduates of the short-cycle study programme ("Social Rehabilitator") will be able to continue directly in the third year of the professional bachelor's study programme ("Social Worker"), with 120 ECTS fully recognised; graduates of the bachelor's study programme ("Social Worker") may continue to the master's study programme ("Social Work Management"), obtaining the qualification of Senior Social Worker. The proposed structure follows a logical hierarchy in professional development: 1. "Social Rehabilitator" – specialised support at lower/intermediate professional level, EQF level 5; 2. "Social Worker" – basic professional social work, EQF level 6; 3. "Social Work Management" – advanced managerial/leadership specialisation, EQF level 7. The interconnection is therefore not only logical but also efficient, offering short-cycle graduates a "bridge" toward the bachelor's level and, at the same time, enabling managerial specialisation at the master's level.

#### 1.1.2.

This criterion calls for an analysis of whether the institution has systematically identified the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) of the study field and integrated the results into its strategic and operational planning. The Social Welfare study field presents a detailed SWOT analysis, which is realistic and relevant to the development and strategic management of the programmes (SAR, pp. 22-24). For example, in the weaknesses category, point 1 (lack of specialists) reflects a labour market weakness but also represents a threat to the quality of practice and a challenge for faculty retention (cases where staff might choose a better-paid career in practice). Points 2 and 3 are typical internal weaknesses that require direct managerial interventions (e.g., fundraising training, ERASMUS+ mobility initiatives). Regarding opportunities, these are well aligned with national and European trends (e.g., demographics, digitalisation). Addressing the personnel shortage as an opportunity for increased recruitment represents a sound managerial perspective. Competition and inadequate funding (threats 1 and 2) are major external risks that could undermine development efforts. Threat 3, although internal, is a serious managerial risk that could hinder a rapid response to the identified opportunities and weaknesses.

The SWOT analysis is used to support the development directions of the study field, which include: expansion (opening the master's study programme at Rēzekne Academy), quality improvement (revision of study standards), and responding to market needs (redefining existing programmes and developing new specialisation directions through the provision of five optional study course packages at the master's level). For example, in response to one of the identified opportunities/threats (lack of specialists and the establishment of a new prison in Liepāja), it was proposed, through the planning of a study course package, to offer the possibility of a specialisation in social work management in the penitentiary system. In response to demographic decline, which also affects potential candidates, the limited capacity to attract fee-paying students, and the uneven socio-economic development in Latvia, the unification of programmes from the two academies and integration of teaching staff is proposed (online courses delivered by the same staff for both locations; face-to-face practical activities with local staff in each of the two cities).

In the annexe "Development Plan\_Social Welfare\_2025-2031", RTU presents its vision, strategic

objectives, and planned actions for the field of study Social Welfare over six years. The Development Plan includes a set of specific and measurable key performance indicators (KPIs), designated responsibilities, deadlines, and expected outcomes, demonstrating the institution's commitment to data-driven management. The Development Plan (DP) highlights a strong strategic alignment and excellent managerial coherence with the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats identified in the SWOT analysis (SAR, pp. 21–26). A relevant example of how RTU translates a weakness into a set of measurable performance indicators—thus demonstrating a rigorous, results-oriented managerial approach—is the following: to address the weakness identified in the SWOT analysis concerning mobility, labelled "Low Mobility of Academic Staff and Students" (W3, p. 23), the Development Plan includes Task No. 4 – ensuring the annual mobility of at least four academic staff members (through the ERASMUS+ programme) and at least ten students participating in Blended Intensive Programmes (BIP).

### 1.1.3.

The study field's management structure is detailed in the internal evaluation report and its annexes (SAR, pp. 26–29). The structure is designed to manage the implementation of study programmes across two locations (Liepāja and Rēzekne), demonstrating capacity for expansion and strategic development. Given that the study programmes are implemented in two locations – Liepāja and Rēzekne – this structure is of a matrix type. It consists of: Study Field Director (from Liepāja Academy): holds overall responsibility for the "Social Welfare" study field and its programmes, playing a key role in ensuring the coherence and quality of the study programmes, including: management of study programme development; improvement of the curriculum in accordance with the requirements of scientific fields or national economic sectors; implementation of quality assurance; supervision of study plan development; promotion of internationalisation; cooperation with the RTU Study Department to input data into the information system; collaboration with other RTU departments involved in study programme implementation (SAR, p. 27); Study Field Deputy Director (from RTU Rēzekne Academy - hereafter RTU RA): contributes to coordination and assumes delegated responsibilities; Study Programmes Directors: (the Director of the short-cycle professional higher education study programme represents RTU RA, while the Deputy Director represents RTU Liepāja Academy (hereafter RTU LA); Directors of the professional bachelor's and master's study programmes represent RTU LA, while the Deputy Directors represent RTU RA) who have responsibilities similar to those of the Study Field Director but applied at the programme level; Study Field Committee: includes the directors of all study programmes within the "Social Welfare" field, leading members of the academic staff, employer representatives and a student representative (SAR, p. 26–27; annexe - Study\_Field\_Management\_Structure.jpg).

Key decisions regarding study programme content, learning outcomes and improvements are developed within the Study Field Committee. The decision-making process operates as a continuous, evidence-based cycle: annual monitoring of study programme content and implementation quality in relation to the objectives of the study field, the requirements of the relevant scientific discipline and the labour market; feedback collected from graduates, academic staff, employers and students is analysed, and proposals for improvement are formulated and approved by university structures (Faculty Council, Senate Study Quality and Programmes Committee, Senate) (SAR, pp. 27–28). The inclusion of employer representatives in the Study Field Committee highlights the field's orientation towards external development, ensuring that decisions on curriculum and learning objectives are aligned with labour market needs and socio-economic trends.

The report also emphasises the importance of support staff (administrative and technical), who are responsible for: communicating with students; organising the study process and maintaining documentation; ensuring access to libraries, IT resources, databases (electronic libraries) and e-learning platforms – all essential aspects for a geographically expanding field.

Although the management of the Social Welfare field is complex, due to the implementation of study

programmes across two locations separated by a considerable distance, in experts' view, the way it is conceived represents an expression of recognition of each team's expertise (RTU LA and RTU RA). It also serves as a means of establishing a balance of power between the two groups. Experts consider that the adopted model is well-reasoned, coherent, and fosters effective collaboration between teams.

#### 1.1.4.

This criterion evaluates the existence and effectiveness of established systems and procedures related to student admission, recognition of prior learning and experience, and assessment of learning outcomes. The admission process across all three study programmes (short-cycle, bachelor's, and master's) is governed by the RTU Admission Regulations (<https://www.rtu.lv/lv/studijas/uznemsana/uznemsanas-noteikumi>; <https://www.rtu.lv/en>), which are reviewed and approved annually. The process fully complies with national legislation, including the Law on Higher Education Institutions and the Cabinet of Ministers Regulations No. 846, No. 398, and No. 795. Admission procedures are standardised at the university level, ensuring transparency, fairness, and compliance with legal requirements (SAR, pp. 29–30). The internal documentation clearly outlines the admission criteria and their respective weightings, indicating a well-structured and transparent system.

For undergraduate study programmes, candidates may apply either through the Joint Enrolment Undergraduate Study Programme Information System ([www.latvija.lv](http://www.latvija.lv)) or in person, depending on their circumstances (SAR, p. 30). Admission to master's study programmes is managed through the university's digital platform, ORTUS. The Master's study programme in Social Work Management applies admission criteria that are consistent with its professional orientation. Applicants are required to hold a higher education qualification in a field relevant to social work. According to institutional plans, the experts learned during the on-site visit meetings with the study programme directors that, starting from the 2026–2027 academic year, candidates with a background in Social Work will have the option to complete their studies in three semesters (earning 90 ECTS), while candidates from other related fields will study for four semesters (120 ECTS). This planned measure reflects a rational and flexible approach to the recognition of prior learning.

Information regarding procedures (admission, recognition, and assessment) is publicly available on the RTU website (<https://www.rtu.lv/lv/studijas/uznemsana/uznemsanas-noteikumi> & <https://www.rtu.lv/en>). The online availability of this information ensures transparency and accessibility for all stakeholders, which is a fundamental element of an efficient quality management system.

RTU has established a comprehensive framework for the recognition of formal, non-formal, and professional learning in accordance with institutional regulations. The procedures for the recognition of competences acquired through professional experience or non-formal education are formally defined (see:

[https://www.rtu.lv/writable/public\\_files/RTU\\_09.\\_procedure\\_for\\_recognition\\_of\\_competencies\\_developed\\_outside\\_formal\\_education.pdf](https://www.rtu.lv/writable/public_files/RTU_09._procedure_for_recognition_of_competencies_developed_outside_formal_education.pdf)) and are applied in practice, although their frequency of use is not specified. These mechanisms demonstrate institutional responsiveness to the needs of adult and lifelong learners. Relevant provisions are contained in the Regulation on the Recognition of Courses Completed at Other Universities and RTU Study Programmes (annexe: [iesniegums\\_studiju\\_kursu\\_atzisanai](#)) and "Recognition of the Courses Completed at other Universities and RTU Study Programs" (see: [https://www.rtu.lv/writable/public\\_files/RTU\\_10.\\_regulation\\_on\\_the\\_recognition\\_of\\_the\\_courses.pdf](https://www.rtu.lv/writable/public_files/RTU_10._regulation_on_the_recognition_of_the_courses.pdf)) and in the "Procedure for Recognition of Competencies Developed Outside Formal Education or from Professional Experience and Learning Outcomes Achieved in Previous Education at Riga Technical University" (see: [https://www.rtu.lv/writable/public\\_files/RTU\\_09.\\_procedure\\_for\\_recognition\\_of\\_competencies\\_developed\\_outside\\_formal\\_education.pdf](https://www.rtu.lv/writable/public_files/RTU_09._procedure_for_recognition_of_competencies_developed_outside_formal_education.pdf))

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A notable example of good practice is the full recognition of 120 ECTS credits for graduates of the short-cycle professional higher education study programme "Social Rehabilitator" who progress to the bachelor's study programme "Social Worker". This procedure provides a coherent academic pathway, prevents duplication of learning, and ensures efficient use of students' prior achievements and time (as also highlighted under experts' analysis of Criterion 1.1.1). The documentation (SAR, p. 31) further indicates that within the RTU RA professional bachelor's study programme, students have had prior learning outcomes recognised in amounts ranging from 3 to 84 ECTS credits for studies completed at various higher education institutions in Latvia or abroad. Although the transition from "Social Rehabilitator" to "Social Worker" is logical and efficient in terms of credit transfer (120 ECTS recognised), major changes (such as programme revisions currently taking place) must be communicated transparently, involving all stakeholders (academic staff, students and partners) to ensure successful acceptance and implementation. Experts considered that this transition should be carefully monitored over the next three years, as there is currently no full compatibility between the ECTS of the short-cycle study programme and those of the bachelor's study programme. Similarly, the conversion of the current bachelor's in Rēzekne ("Social Work and Rehabilitation") into a bachelor's in "Social Work" raises the same issues.

The institutional framework established for the recognition of prior learning — supported by formal procedures targeting non-formal and professional experience, as well as by the best-practice model of full credit recognition for short-cycle graduates — clearly, coherently, and effectively facilitates pathways for continuous learning.

#### 1.1.5.

The evaluation of this criterion focuses on whether the institution has developed clear and well-founded principles, methods, and procedures for assessing students' achievements. The assessment system is governed by the RTU Study Regulations (available on the Studies Regulations page of the RTU website, see: <https://www.rtu.lv/lv/rtusp/sp-studijas/stud-process/studiju-rezultatu-vertesana>) and is based on the learning outcomes defined at the study programme level, which are included in the specific documentation of each study programme. The assessment methods are specified in the study course or module descriptions (which are accessible to students), and students are informed about the methods and the assessment system during the first class of each study course.

Within the "Social Welfare" study field, RTU applies a summative assessment system to evaluate student performance. Experts learned that under this system, the final grade is composed of several components, including oral and written examinations, practice reports, seminars, project presentations, and, finally, qualification papers (bachelor's or master's theses, or final study course projects).

This diversity of assessment methods is necessary to evaluate the full spectrum of learning outcomes – knowledge, skills, and competences/attitudes – and accommodates different student learning styles. Furthermore, the use of continuous assessment, accounting for at least 50% of the final grade (through seminar activities, projects, etc.), rather than relying solely on a single final examination, enables students to monitor their progress and reduces the stress typically associated with final exams.

#### 1.1.6.

The evaluation of this criterion focuses on whether the college has clearly defined and implemented principles of academic integrity, ensuring that they are effectively upheld through established mechanisms and tools. The principles of academic integrity are firmly established at Riga Technical University (RTU) and formalised through internal regulatory documents. The existence of a Code of Ethics (see: [https://www.rtu.lv/writable/editor\\_files/files/rtu\\_etikas\\_kodekss\\_2025\\_en.pdf](https://www.rtu.lv/writable/editor_files/files/rtu_etikas_kodekss_2025_en.pdf)) and an Academic Integrity Code (see:

[https://www.rtu.lv/writable/public\\_files/RTU\\_rtu\\_studiju\\_reglaments\\_7.1.1.4.pdf](https://www.rtu.lv/writable/public_files/RTU_rtu_studiju_reglaments_7.1.1.4.pdf) or annexe 38 of the List of the governing regulatory enactments and regulations of the higher education institution) provides a solid foundation for promoting integrity across the institution. These documents clearly define what constitutes plagiarism, academic fraud, and other violations, while specifying corresponding sanctions. Both students and academic staff have access to the Glossary for Academic Integrity, published by the RTU Publishing House (English version available at <http://www.academicintegrity.eu/wp/glossary/>), further supporting consistent understanding and implementation of these principles (SAR, pp. 32-33).

RTU employs an institution-wide anti-plagiarism system as well as a national-level verification platform (the Joint Computerised Plagiarism Control System, JCPCS) shared across Latvian universities. The use of plagiarism detection software (e.g., Turnitin or equivalent) constitutes a sine qua non practice in contemporary higher education quality management. Major student outputs, including bachelor's and master's theses, are subjected to these checks (SAR, p. 32).

An effective academic integrity system, however, extends beyond mere detection. RTU's approach combines prevention and detection: students are informed about the principles and mechanisms of academic integrity; they receive training in correct citation, paraphrasing, and academic responsibility; and they are required to upload electronic versions of their graduation papers to the ORTUS portal. During the experts' on-site meeting with RTU's stakeholders, RTU's developed CAPS anti-plagiarism tool was also mentioned and praised as a notable tool in plagiarism eradication. It was an expert's understanding that this tool is also being introduced in RTU RA and RTU LA.

RTU's proactive engagement in international (European Network for Academic Integrity - ENAI) and national networks (collaboration with MES, UL, and RSU) further demonstrates a commitment to strategic benchmarking and continuous improvement in academic integrity practices.

The verification mechanism for student work within Social Welfare is well stratified, encompassing an initial check during interim assessment (conducted in the presence of the student using free online tools) and a final check via the centralised digital detection system, with a 20% alert threshold applied to graduation theses. This dual approach effectively integrates preventive measures (instruction, methodological guidance) with detection tools. The absence of detected plagiarism cases in final theses within the Social Welfare field over the reporting period, as verified through the centralised system, serves as a strong performance indicator of the effectiveness of this layered integrity framework.

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

The "Social Welfare" study field demonstrates a very high level of compliance with the requirements of Criterion 1.1.1. The objectives of the study field are clearly defined, measurable (in terms of employability outcomes and alignment with strategic documents), and well justified by the current socio-economic context (staff shortages, population ageing, and the paradigm shift in social services). The study programmes are logically interconnected, ensuring vertical progression from the short-cycle to the master's level; in this way, the efficiency of resources and the flexibility of students' learning pathways are maximised, as evidenced by the recognition of ECTS credits between the short-cycle and bachelor's study programmes, and between the bachelor's and master's study programmes.

The study field satisfactorily meets Criterion 1.1.2. The SWOT analysis is comprehensive, realistic, and managerially relevant, as it has been directly used to justify and initiate concrete actions, such as geographic expansion, integration and the creation of new "specialisations" at the master's level. The study field demonstrates a solid, development-oriented management structure, meeting the requirements of Criterion 1.1.3. The inclusion of employers in the Study Programmes Committee is a very good practice for ensuring the quality and relevance of the study programmes. The decision-making process appears to be efficient and evidence-based (using feedback), allowing for a rapid

adaptation of the study programmes.

The study field demonstrates that a coherent system and procedures for admission, recognition, and assessment have been established, which are, to a large extent, logical, efficient, and compliant with the requirements of Criterion 1.1.4. Although the recognition system is in place and the parameters governing it are appropriately defined, we consider it necessary to monitor its implementation over the next three years (i.e. for students currently enrolled), as the programmes are undergoing a process of curricular redefinition and full compatibility between the existing and the planned curriculum has not yet been achieved. Furthermore, discussions with students indicated that they are not fully aware of the potential challenges arising from these changes (i.e. the transition from Social Work and Rehabilitation to Social Work).

In relation to Criterion 1.1.5, the "Social Welfare" study field demonstrates the existence of a well-developed, coherent, and professionally relevant system for assessing students' achievements. The procedures are public and easily accessible, thereby meeting students' needs to clearly understand the academic expectations.

Criterion 1.1.6 is fulfilled to a high level of compliance. RTU benefits from a high-quality academic integrity framework, reinforced through active institutional engagement in international (ENAI) and national networks. The verification process is stratified and effective, combining student training with the rigorous use of a digital detection system. The absence of plagiarism cases in final theses within the field during the reporting period attests to the effectiveness of these preventive and control measures.

Strengths:

1. The study programmes within the study field respond to strategic documents and the current socio-economic context (staff shortages, population ageing, and the paradigm shift in social services).
2. The study programmes are logically interconnected.
3. The efficiency of resources and the flexibility of students' learning pathways are expected to be maximised.
4. The Social Welfare study field presents a comprehensive SWOT analysis that aligns with current socio-economic and educational trends and provides a solid foundation for informed decision-making.
5. The management model of the study field presents an inclusive approach, with a clear and detailed division of responsibilities among roles and units, and a transparent, participatory decision-making system that is accessible to all stakeholders involved.
6. The system for the recognition of prior learning, particularly in relation to the transition from the short-cycle to the bachelor's level and the requirement of relevant professional experience for the master's study programme, reflects a well-considered managerial adaptation to the specific nature of the field.

Weaknesses:

1. Transitions to new study programmes are not fully or carefully considered.

## **1.2. Efficiency of the Internal Quality Assurance System**

### **Analysis**

#### **1.2.1.**

The evaluation of this criterion focuses on whether the university has established a clear and publicly available quality policy supported by an effective internal quality assurance system. The RTU Strategy Management System is a framework that translates the university's overall strategic

goals into concrete actions and tasks for each structural unit and employee, ensuring alignment between institutional objectives and individual responsibilities. In the context of the social welfare study field, this means that the quality assurance and management of the social welfare programme at RTU are governed by the same institutional principles, policies, and standards that apply across the entire university. The RTU Quality Policy (see: [https://www.rtu.lv/writable/public\\_files/RTU\\_quality\\_policy\\_of\\_rtu.pdf](https://www.rtu.lv/writable/public_files/RTU_quality_policy_of_rtu.pdf) and annexe No 3) defines the university's general principles and commitments to maintaining and improving quality in teaching, research, and administration. The RTU Excellence Approach outlines how RTU continuously develops and evaluates its performance to achieve excellence. Since the Social Welfare study field is one of RTU's study fields, its internal quality management system—including study programme evaluation, student feedback, staff performance, and improvement measures—is fully integrated into RTU's overall quality management framework. In practical terms, this ensures that the Social Welfare study field follows RTU-wide standards for quality assurance, continuous improvement, and alignment with institutional strategic goals (SAR, pp. 34-38).

Since December 2018, RTU has been a member of the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM), joining a global quality collaboration network (SAR, p. 34). is founded upon the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) and the core principles of the EFQM quality model (SAR, pp. 34-35).

In practice, this means that RTU uses the EFQM (European Foundation for Quality Management) excellence model as a framework, and in accordance with the developed "Guidelines for the Implementation of RTU Study Programmes in Regional Structural Units" (RTU LA and RTU RA), to manage and improve all aspects of the university's work — including teaching, research, administration, and student outcomes.

Applied to the social welfare study field, this approach means:

- \* Performance and quality are systematically monitored— not only at the institutional level but also within each study field. This was confirmed during the expert groups' on-site visit by representatives of the study field, study programmes and students themselves.

- \* Student results (such as learning outcomes, satisfaction, employability, and engagement) are treated as an essential measure of quality, on the same level as the university's overall performance indicators. This was confirmed (during expert groups' on-site visit meetings) as taking place and ensured in the study field. There is established collaboration with employers in both RTU RA and RTU LA; however, there is a need to expand internship opportunities and to ensure more balanced and consistent collaboration strategies across both institutions. The expert group also recommends strengthening the engagement of alumni and field professionals in the development and implementation of the Social Welfare study field, advancing scientific work in the social work field specifically.

- \* The study field's quality is not managed separately, but as an integrated part of RTU's broader excellence system, ensuring consistency, accountability, and long-term sustainability. Continuous improvement is essential as existing integration and adjustments are still in process, both for RTU LA and RTU RA in the study field of Social Welfare. It is important to support the daily operations of the administrative and teaching staff, assess the feedback from students and external stakeholders for adjustments to the curricula, teaching methods, and support services.

While the integration of the social welfare study field into RTU's comprehensive quality management and excellence framework provides a solid structural foundation, it is crucial that RTU's management structures actively support and strengthen collaboration with the social work employers, related industry, and social service providers in public, private and non-government organisation (hereafter NGO) sectors. In practice, this means that there is a need for fostering a systematic cooperation between academic and administrative staff, students, and external

partners—including regional municipalities, social service institutions, and NGOs. Such collaboration is essential not only for ensuring the relevance and practical applicability of the study programmes but also for enhanced student learning experiences, employability, and professional preparedness. Furthermore, by engaging employers and practitioners in curriculum development, internships, and joint projects, RTU can create a dynamic exchange of knowledge and innovation that benefits both the university and the broader social welfare field. Strengthening these partnerships would also support regional development goals and reinforce RTU's role as a key contributor to social sustainability, social justice and community well-being.

### 1.2.2.

This criterion concerns the existence and effectiveness of procedures for the development, approval, and periodic review of study programmes within the study field. The procedures and feedback mechanisms for the development, review, and monitoring of study programmes in the Social Welfare study field have been defined, and they are logical and efficient. The study field quality system is clearly aligned with Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (hereafter ESG standards) and the RTU Quality Policy, covering all essential dimensions: study programme design, approval and modification, student-centred learning and assessment, staff quality, learning resources, information management, and external quality assurance. These procedures are logical and consistent, integrated into RTU's cyclical quality assurance and enhancement model, which ensures continuity, evaluation, and improvement. Efficiency and Systematic Monitoring are ensured by the RTU Study Department, which systematically (each semester) conducts student surveys regarding the quality of study content and teaching (SAR, p.36), thus ensuring timely and regular data collection. However, no information is provided regarding a survey assessing students' satisfaction with the administrative and technical support they received. Feedback mechanisms are efficient, since survey results are analysed at multiple levels (academic staff, study programme directors, and study field commission) and used for evidence-based decision-making—e.g., adjusting class schedules to meet students' employment needs.

Survey results are shared transparently with all relevant stakeholders: individual academic staff (for their own courses), heads of structural units, study programme directors (on request) and, if needed with Student Parliament representatives. This ensures open communication and accountability, making the feedback system accessible and participatory. The Graduate Monitoring Tool extends the feedback loop by providing data on employment, further studies, and income three years after graduation. Although there is a time lag, this tool strengthens long-term quality evaluation and allows comparison with national trends—adding a valuable evidence base for strategic improvements (SAR, pp. 38-39).

While the system meets ESG and institutional requirements, experts note that it could be further strengthened by enhancing direct feedback mechanisms from employers and professional partners (not only through graduate data) to ensure better alignment with labour market needs. There should be more transparent and structured channels for alumni engagement, allowing their insights to feed into the study programme review and development. Experts also see a clear need to further encourage interdisciplinary collaboration between academic, administrative, and external stakeholders — including municipalities, NGOs, professional organisations, and industry partners—to expand the exchange of knowledge and integrate practical experience into the feedback and quality development process. Such collaboration should extend beyond traditional social welfare and social work disciplines to include fields such as digital technologies, data management, artificial intelligence, health sciences, education, and public administration. This would help prepare students for emerging professional contexts and equip them with the skills needed to address complex social challenges in a technologically evolving environment. In particular, RTU could play a pioneering role by fostering initiatives and research in areas like digital social work, e-governance of social services,

and the ethical use of technology in social support systems. Strengthening these interdisciplinary links would not only enhance the relevance and innovation capacity of the Social Welfare study field but also support RTU's broader strategic goal of integrating technological excellence with social responsibility.

### 1.2.3.

The evaluation of this criterion examines whether the university has an effective system for submitting and addressing student complaints and suggestions. Based on the detailed information provided by the RTU's Self Assessment Report and on-site visit discussions, the mechanisms for submitting student complaints, suggestions, and feedback at RTU (including RTU RA and RTU LA) can indeed be assessed as structured, participatory, and generally effective, though some areas could still benefit from enhancement — particularly in communication, timeliness of responses, and follow-up. Since 2019, RTU has implemented a formal and transparent system — "Procedure for Submission and Examination of RTU Students' Proposals and Complaints" — available publicly on the RTU website (see: [https://www.rtu.lv/writable/public\\_files/RTU\\_proposals\\_complaints.pdf](https://www.rtu.lv/writable/public_files/RTU_proposals_complaints.pdf)). Multiple formal and collegial structures exist where students can raise issues or propose improvements — including RTU RA and RTU LA Council meetings, weekly management meetings, Centre meetings, and study field commissions (SAR, p. 40). These platforms ensure that student voices are institutionally represented and that their concerns can reach decision-making bodies, such as the Study Committee and RTU Senate. The inclusion of students in these meetings and commissions shows a systemic commitment to participatory governance and transparency in the study field and study programme development. Feedback and complaints appear to feed directly into study programme development processes, as issues discussed at council or commission meetings are connected to the study programme content, delivery, and alignment with labour market needs. Statistical tracking since 2022 (with over 100 received applications) shows that the mechanism is actively used and that students trust the process enough to engage with it.

The use of annual self-assessment reports, supported by internal and external expert reviews, ensures that student perspectives contribute to continuous improvement and accountability. This structure demonstrates a logical and functioning feedback loop between students and university management. The analysis of submissions (18% complaints, 75% problem reports, 7% proposals) and follow-up discussions on specific cases (e.g., format changes, scheduling, teacher communication) demonstrates that the system leads to real institutional discussions and adjustments (SAR, pp. 40-42).

Procedure for Submission and Examination of RTU Students' Proposals and Complaints states that students' applications may be submitted electronically at the RTU learning platform ORTUS (<https://ortus.rtu.lv>) or RTU home page (<https://www.rtu.lv/>), filling in the electronic form. During on-site visit meetings, experts learned that issues identified at the individual level are handled through targeted discussions between relevant managers and teaching staff, demonstrating a direct link between feedback and corrective action. According to the internal RTU procedures document, the responses to student proposals and complaints are provided within ten business days from the date of receipt of the Application. The term for examining the Application may be prolonged if objectively necessary, but it should not exceed one month from the receipt of the Application. While the formal mechanisms are in place and functional, their effectiveness in practice depends on two critical aspects that could be strengthened: visibility and awareness. In experts' opinion, in addition to academic feedback, it is essential to introduce a system based on annual surveys assessing students' satisfaction with the administrative and technical support received, as well as corresponding performance indicators. This system would allow for the identification of bottlenecks (e.g., communication issues or access to IT resources) before they impact the overall quality of the study programmes.

While decisions and discussions occur in multiple forums, systematic feedback to students (on what

actions have been taken in response to their input) appears to be sent individually. The fact that students who provide contact details receive an individual response within a defined timeframe directly meets the ESG requirement for responsiveness and procedural clarity. For anonymous submissions or issues affecting larger student groups, RTU's practice of publishing decisions and implementing improvements on the RTU website and in the ORTUS system, and communicating through faculty student councils, effectively provides collective feedback and transparency. Developing a structured feedback mechanism, such as published summaries of actions taken or periodic student updates, i.e., through emails, intranet posts, or orientation sessions, would reinforce student trust in the system and demonstrate that their input leads to tangible outcomes.

#### 1.2.4.

This criterion requires analysing whether the university has established a reliable and efficient mechanism for collecting and analysing statistical data related to the study programmes of the study field. Based on the detailed description, the statistical data collection and feedback mechanisms at RTU can be assessed as efficient, systematic, and effective in supporting continuous improvement of study programmes by employing a well-established fact-based approach through its Quality Policy. RTU ensures that decisions are grounded in objective data and performance indicators. Annual quality reviews with 28 key performance indicators (SAR, p. 42) for core processes such as study process organisation, enrollment, graduation, academic performance, and student progression are collected centrally and analysed by study level, faculty, and study field, allowing comparison with university-wide averages and trends over time. The Power BI visualisation tool (currently in development) will further enhance efficiency by enabling directors and faculty administrators to track multiple indicators simultaneously, compare study programme performance across years, and identify areas for improvement.

The student feedback is collected at multiple stages: entry surveys for expectations and admissions experience; mid-semester and end-of-semester evaluations of teaching and study programme quality; alumni surveys post-graduation at Bachelor's, Master's, and doctoral study levels. Additionally, planned centralised employer surveys and surveys post-internship are collected. Feedback is systematically aggregated and shared with relevant stakeholders: academic staff, heads of structural units, study field committees, and faculty councils. The results are actively used to improve study programmes and support decision-making in case of student dropouts or declining enrolments, adjustment of curricula, timetables, and support mechanisms and general provision of information and decisions. Data collection is linked to institutional planning, financing allocation, and strategic decision-making, showing that statistics are not collected in isolation but are embedded in operational and strategic processes. Quantitative indicators (e.g., graduate continuation rates, mobility, student-staff ratios, alumni employment) and qualitative feedback (from surveys) are integrated into study programme evaluation and development, ensuring that improvements are evidence-based. Annual reports are submitted to the Central Statistical Bureau and the Ministry of Education and Science (SAR, p. 43), demonstrating compliance with national regulations and ensuring external transparency.

However, experts see that for the Social Welfare study field, the existing statistical data collection and feedback mechanisms at RTU could still be enhanced in several targeted ways to better address the specific needs of the discipline, its students, and the professional context of social work. Enhanced employer and professional feedback in this structured, centralised survey system available for employers in social work, NGOs, municipal social services, and other relevant organisations would strengthen their engagement. For example, collecting data on graduate competencies and employability would allow the study programme to use feedback to adjust curricula, internships, and practical training, ensuring alignment with labour market needs. Longitudinal tracking of alumni in social welfare careers, combined with focus groups or panels, would provide more insights into career progression, challenges, and skills gaps that inform

curriculum updates and professional development. The employability data appear to be based on ad-hoc information. The nature of the positions held (hierarchical level, type of institution, contract stability, and salary alignment with the level of qualification) is not specified. These details are essential to assess the actual match between, for instance, the Master's competencies and labour market requirements. In a robust quality assurance system, such data should be collected systematically, periodically, and documented (e.g., through a Graduate Tracer Study).

Although employer feedback and explicit labour-market alignment are presently limited, this shortcoming does not materially affect the requirement assessment for several reasons. First, RTU already maintains a robust, documented collaboration network with service providers across Latvia; these formal agreements deliver tangible organisational and methodological support that directly underpins programme delivery. Through those partnerships academic staff are able to place students in real practice environments, integrate applied research into teaching, and co-design practice-oriented learning activities — all of which address the core assessment criteria related to practical relevance, student learning outcomes and quality assurance.

Second, the purpose of the current requirement assessment is to confirm that essential structures, processes and supports are in place to guarantee programme quality and graduate readiness. The existing agreements satisfy those requirements because they provide stable access to practice settings, supervisory capacity, and pathways for applied research implementation. In other words, the collaboration network already mitigates the principal risks that limited employer feedback would create (such as gaps in practicum opportunities or lack of methodological support), so the programme's compliance with the requirements is preserved.

It would be useful to incorporate performance indicators for digital social work, innovative service delivery, and technological tools, while monitoring student engagement in interdisciplinary projects and the use of digital platforms, e-learning, and e-supervision in field placements. There is a need to refine student feedback by tailoring surveys to assess key social welfare skills and implementing mid- and post-placement surveys to evaluate internship supervision, learning outcomes, and professional preparedness. By tailoring statistical indicators, feedback surveys, and digital tools specifically to the social welfare discipline, RTU can ensure that the study field produces graduates with relevant professional competencies and remains aligned with labour market and societal needs.

#### 1.2.5.

The evaluation of this criterion focuses on the accuracy, accessibility, and consistency of information published on the RTU's website about the study programmes in the study field. Based on the information provided, the publication of study field and study programme information on RTU websites appears to be well-organised, secure, and aligned with official registers, with clear assignment of responsibilities for accuracy and compliance.

Information on the Social Welfare study field and its study programmes is publicly accessible through multiple official channels:

- \* RTU main website in Latvian (see: <https://www.rtu.lv/lv/studijas>) and English (see: <https://www.rtu.lv/en/studies>).
- \* Interactive study field and study course pages in Latvian and English (see: <https://studreg.rtu.lv/reg/pub/spr/list> and <https://studreg.rtu.lv/reg/pub/skr/list>).
- \* Foreign student-specific portals for English-language programmes and mobility opportunities (see: <https://www.rtu.lv/en> and <https://apply.rtu.lv>).

RTU LA and RTU RA websites with study programme-specific details in Latvian:

- \* RTU LA Social Work Management study programme (see: <https://www.rtu.lv/lv/studijas/visas-studiju-programmas/atvert/SGV?department=0L000&type=A>)
- \* RTU LA Social Worker study programme (see:

<https://www.rtu.lv/lv/studijas/visas-studiju-programmas/atvert/SCD?department=0L000&type=P>

\* RTU RA Social rehabilitator study programme (see: <https://www.rtu.lv/lv/studijas/visas-studiju-programmas/atvert/SKR?department=0R000&type=P>)

Specific study programme pages for Social Rehabilitator, Social Worker, and Social Work Management are clearly indicated and publicly available. Each portal and platform has a designated responsible person for compliance with official registers (SAR, pp. 45-46):

\* Head of the Admission Department – Latvian main RTU website section

Director of the International Cooperation Department– English RTU website section and foreign student portals

\* Deputy Director of the Study Department – interactive study programme pages and Higher Education Quality Agency E-platform (see: <https://eplatforma.aika.lv/>)

\* Project Manager, IT Department – State Education Information System (a.k.a. VIIS)

\* Heads of Study Department / Study Process – RTU Liepāja (see: <https://www.rtu.lv/lv/liepaja>) and RTU Rēzekne (see: <https://www.rtu.lv/lv/rezekne>) sites

\* Secretary of the Admission Committee / Head of the Study Process – study programme-specific admission information.

To further ensure the accuracy and reliability of website information, experts suggest RTU implement a scheduled review process to cross-check all content with official registers (VIIS, E-platform) at least once per semester. Language consistency should be maintained by updating English-language pages simultaneously with Latvian pages to prevent discrepancies for international students. An online feedback mechanism should be provided so that students and staff can report any potential errors or inconsistencies in the study programme or admission information. RTU appointed a central quality coordinator responsible for overseeing website content across all campuses and portals could closely assist in content creation, update of information on the social welfare study field. These measures would enhance accountability, transparency, and the overall reliability of publicly available information.

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

Overall, the integration of the Social Welfare study field into RTU’s institutional quality management and excellence framework demonstrates a well-structured, transparent, and efficient system that aligns with ESG standards and RTU’s Quality Policy, having an efficient Internal Quality Assurance System. The framework ensures systematic monitoring, evidence-based decision-making, and continuous improvement across all key areas of study programme development, delivery, and evaluation. Regular student feedback, graduate monitoring, and structured complaint-handling mechanisms reflect a mature quality culture that values participation, transparency, and accountability.

At the same time, the evaluation highlights several opportunities for further enhancement. Most importantly, RTU should strengthen direct collaboration with social work employers, NGOs, municipalities, and professional organisations to ensure that the Social Welfare study field remains responsive to the labour market needs and societal challenges. Expanding structured employer feedback, alumni engagement, and interdisciplinary cooperation would reinforce the practical relevance and innovation potential of the study programmes. Integrating insights from digital technologies, health sciences, data management, and public administration would also prepare students for evolving professional contexts and promote social innovation.

From a procedural perspective, the student proposal and complaint system functions effectively and demonstrates institutional responsiveness, yet greater visibility and two-way communication on follow-up actions would further increase student trust and engagement. Similarly, refining statistical

and feedback tools to address the specific competencies and professional realities of social welfare graduates—such as digital social work, field supervision quality, and employability indicators—would enhance targeted quality improvements.

Finally, RTU's information management and publication practices for the Social Welfare study field are systematic, reliable, and compliant with national and institutional requirements. Nonetheless, establishing regular cross-checks between official registers and web content, ensuring language consistency, and providing feedback options for reporting inaccuracies would further strengthen transparency and accessibility for both local and international audiences.

#### Strengths:

1. The Social Welfare study field implemented by RTU at RTU LA and RTU RA demonstrates a strong and well-integrated quality assurance and management system that aligns with university-wide strategic goals, policies, and EFQM excellence principles.
2. Social Welfare study field programmes are governed by clear procedures and feedback mechanisms, ensuring student-centred learning, systematic monitoring, and continuous improvement through evidence-based decision-making.
3. The structured and participatory processes for collecting student, alumni, and employer feedback, combined with statistical data analysis and tools like Microsoft Power BI, allow the study field to track performance, address issues proactively, and adjust curricula and learning arrangements to meet professional and labour market needs. Existing agreements in the established collaboration (Cooperation agreements (annexe: 2\_List of Cooperation agreements\_specified) highlight partnerships with social services, hospitals, and NGOs across Latvia.
4. Information about the study field and its study programmes is comprehensively published in all relevant languages, with clearly assigned responsibilities to ensure compliance with official registers and transparency for all stakeholders.
5. Overall, the Social Welfare study field benefits from a robust, responsive, and evidence-driven framework that supports high-quality education, strategic alignment, and continuous enhancement of teaching, learning, and graduate outcomes.

#### Weaknesses:

1. Limited employer feedback and labour market alignment. The established collaboration network (agreements) demonstrates strong partnerships with service providers in Latvia. These agreements provide valuable organisational and methodological support and enable academic staff to integrate applied research within real practice environments. However, it could be further strengthened by expanding its focus on advancing scientific work in the social work field specifically. In particular, collaboration could more actively support joint research projects, academic conferences, and co-authored publications, thereby enhancing the visibility and scholarly impact of RTU's contribution to social work research and innovation.
2. More structured channels for alumni engagement would support continuous curriculum improvement and scientific development in the Social Welfare study field.
3. Need for discipline-specific performance indicators and tailored surveys. The study field would benefit from expanded interdisciplinary collaboration, including digital technologies, health, education, public administration, and emerging areas such as digital social work, to prepare students for complex professional contexts.
4. Need to improve feedback mechanisms and visibility. The formal procedures exist for handling student proposals and complaints, but there are identified weaknesses in visibility and awareness of these processes, and recommends structured feedback summaries and collective communication to reinforce student trust.

### **Assessment of the requirement [1]**

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The Social Welfare field of study demonstrates that it not only has an internal quality management system but also actively and effectively uses it to drive substantial improvements and strategic development. Evidence of study programme structural reforms (ECTS, curriculum adjustments based on feedback from graduates, students, and employers), the design of the management structure (intended to ensure coherence, balance, and support the strategic expansion of the study field), and the 2025–2031 Development Plan (aligned with the SWOT analysis) all confirm that this criterion is fully met.

Although internal procedures and mechanisms for assuring the qualifications of academic staff and work quality have some shortcomings, this does not pose a significant risk to the requirement assessment. However, despite the limited direct employer feedback and less explicit labour-market alignment, this does not pose a significant risk to the requirement assessment. RTU has an established network of formal partnerships that ensures access to mandatory practice placements, provides essential methodological support, and enables the integration of applied research into the curriculum. These mechanisms ensure programme relevance, quality, and the achievement of intended learning outcomes. The existing agreements demonstrate that the necessary institutional structures and support systems are in place, ensuring programme quality and graduate readiness. As such, the collaboration network effectively mitigates the primary risks typically associated with limited employer input. While expanding joint research initiatives would enhance RTUs academic profile, this is not a prerequisite for meeting the baseline programme requirements.

Experts strongly believe that this minor shortcoming does not impact the overall assessment of the requirement one - internal quality assurance system.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The Social Welfare field of study operates within an institutional framework that has clearly and formally established both the policies and procedures necessary for quality assurance, supported by institutional documents such as the Code of Ethics and the Study Regulations. Procedures are defined and formalised in key areas, including student assessment procedures in accordance with the Study Regulations and based on learning outcomes (LOs); recognition of prior learning procedures in line with RTU regulations on the recognition of prior studies and professional experience; decision-making procedures through the feedback cycle and approval of changes by the Field Council/Senate; and integrity procedures, including the use of anti-plagiarism tools and dedicated training programmes.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The Social Welfare field of study demonstrates that it has developed a comprehensive and functional mechanism covering all stages of the study programmes' lifecycle. New specialisation areas are introduced in response to market demands (see master's level study programme). The

approval of changes, such as ECTS and curriculum adjustments, is formalised through decisions at all management levels, including the Field Council (Study Field Committee), the Faculty Council, and the University Senate (via the Quality Committee). Performance oversight is ensured through continuous monitoring of programme content and implementation by the Study Field Committee, as well as through the analysis of feedback from graduates, students, and employers. Programme parameters are reviewed in accordance with the recommendations of external evaluation committees (see SAR – criteria 2.1.3). Programme development is guided by the 2025–2031 Development Plan (aligned with the SWOT analysis) and by employer feedback.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The assessment system is governed by the RTU Study Regulations (available on the Studies Regulations page of the RTU website see:

<https://www.rtu.lv/lv/rtusp/sp-studijas/stud-process/studiju-rezultatu-vertesana>) and is based on the learning outcomes defined at the study programme level, which are included in the specific documentation of each study programme. The assessment methods are specified in the study course or module descriptions (that are accessible to students), and students are informed about the methods and the assessment system during the first class of each study course. A variety of assessment methods are employed, including examinations, practice reports, and projects, ensuring the evaluation of the full spectrum of competencies. The relevance of these assessment methods is reviewed periodically by the Study Field Committee, with input from employers. Information on assessment, admission, and recognition procedures is publicly available on the RTU website.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Partially compliant

RTU has formal internal procedures and operational mechanisms that address both the qualifications and the quality of academic staff activities, ranging from recruitment and teaching development to the evaluation of research performance (through KPIs and periodic reassessment). For example, RTU applies a standardised, university-level recruitment system for academic staff through open competitions, ensuring transparency and legal compliance (SAR, pp. 68–69). Professors and associate professors undergo periodic reassessment every six years by the Professors' Council, based on scientific and pedagogical qualification criteria (SAR, pp. 72, 83). The Centre for Academic Excellence provides events, seminars, and resources for the development of pedagogical competencies, including information and communication technology (hereafter - ICT) and blended learning training (SAR, pp. 71–72). However, the field's staff could be better aligned in terms of qualifications, which are currently concentrated in pedagogy and psychology, to more closely match the Social Welfare domain by increasing the number of staff with specific qualifications in this discipline. Nonetheless, the experts consider that this weakness is not significant enough to warrant a lower assessment of Requirement No. 1.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

Within the "Social Welfare" study field, RTU applies a summative assessment system to evaluate student performance (SAR, pp. 14, 31). Graduate employment rate is a key indicator for the field, with analysis showing excellent rates of 85–100% (SAR, p. 15, 120). Student feedback is considered in the decision-making cycle (SAR, pp. 11–12). Data are also collected on research performance, including KPIs for WoS/SCOPUS publications (SAR, p. 86), as well as on participation in mobility programmes (SAR, p. 24).

The academic staff CVs (Annexe II.2.3 "Mācībspēku CV") and research output on scientific publications (annexes: II.2.4.1., II.2.4.4.) indicate active participation in national and international research and development projects.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The decision-making process (SAR, pp. 27–28) takes place in a continuous cycle, in which feedback collected from graduates, students, and employers is analysed by the Study Field Committee to formulate proposals for improvement. This feedback, together with compliance with standards, has led to major structural reforms, such as the transition to ECTS and curriculum adjustments. The 2025–2031 Development Plan is based on a rigorous SWOT analysis (SAR, pp. 21–24) and establishes clear KPIs, for example, increasing the number of academic staff with doctoral degrees, enhancing staff mobility, and raising the number of WoS/SCOPUS publications, ensuring that development is measurable. The management structure is designed to maintain programme coherence and balance in the context of reorganisation and expansion (RTU LA and RTU RA), ensuring effective governance. The excellent graduate employment rate (85–100% for Bachelor's and Master's programmes) and the use of the Recognition of Prior Learning system (e.g., full recognition of 120 ECTS) demonstrate that the quality assurance system is oriented towards high performance and the efficient use of resources.

### 1.3. Resources and Provision of the Study Field

#### Analysis

##### 1.3.1.

According to the information presented in the RTU's Self Assessment Report (SAR, pp. 46–56), RTU operates a centralised budgeting model that ensures financial flows are managed at the university level, while also enabling redistribution of resources to individual faculties and study fields as required. The university's financing is based on a combination of state budget allocations, tuition fees, and project-based income. State budget resources cover the financing of state-funded study places and salaries for academic staff, while tuition fees contribute to the financial stability of the study programmes with additional flexibility. External income—most significantly from European Union projects, national research programmes, and municipal cooperation—serves as both a complementary and a stabilising element. Redistribution of financial resources is implemented through a planning process in which structural units, such as faculties and academies, submit their

budgetary requests. These are subsequently reviewed by the central administration to ensure consistency with RTU's strategic development goals. This system provides the possibility to mobilise additional support for study fields that require targeted strengthening, which is particularly important for smaller but socially essential areas such as Social Welfare.

Beyond institutional budgetary flows, cooperation agreements play an important role in ensuring the availability of practice-oriented resources, which function as an indirect but significant form of financial and material support. List of cooperation agreements (annexe: 2\_List of Cooperation agreements\_specified) lists a broad range of contracts with municipal social services and non-governmental organisations, including the Liepāja Social Service, the Kuldīga Municipality Social Service, and the Seaside Hospital, among others. These agreements guarantee students opportunities for internships, provide organisational and methodological support, and allow academic staff to embed applied research within real practice environments. Such partnerships reduce the financial burden on the university, while at the same time enhancing the relevance and sustainability of both study and research activities in the field.

In terms of applied research funding, RTU has clearly defined mechanisms that combine institutional, national, and international sources. Research in Social Welfare is financed through the Latvian Council of Science programmes, participation in EU projects such as Horizon Europe and ERASMUS+, as well as through local government and NGO contracts specifically aimed at addressing social policy and rehabilitation needs. Research output and scientific publications (annexes: II.2.4.1., II.2.4.4.) provide clear evidence of active involvement of staff in applied research, including interdisciplinary projects that link social sciences with pedagogy, psychology, and digital technologies. The volume and variety of publications demonstrate that the funding system is not merely formal but indeed enables staff to conduct research that is both academically significant and socially relevant.

From an evaluative perspective, RTU has successfully established a system that ensures both redistribution of financial resources and support for applied research in the field of Social Welfare. The centralised budgeting model, combined with project-based and municipal partnerships, creates a financial structure that is flexible and aligned with strategic objectives. Applied research funding is diverse, drawing on state, international, and local sources, and the outputs in the form of publications and projects indicate the effectiveness of this system. Nonetheless, certain limitations must be acknowledged. The reliance on external project funding introduces an element of instability, as research activity levels can fluctuate depending on the success of project applications. Furthermore, while the RTU's Self Assessment Report (SAR, pp. 46-56) outlines the general principles of budget redistribution, it does not provide detailed quantitative evidence of the exact proportion of institutional resources allocated to the Social Welfare study field in comparison to other areas, which makes it difficult to assess the balance of internal prioritisation fully.

In conclusion, experts consider this criterion to be met. RTU has developed and implemented an effective system for both financial support redistribution and applied research funding in the Social Welfare field. The system is reinforced by extensive cooperation agreements with social partners and by the engagement of staff in externally funded applied research projects. The main challenge remains ensuring the long-term sustainability of this system, which could be achieved by complementing project-based research income with a stable institutional baseline budget dedicated specifically to applied research in Social Welfare. Such a step would mitigate risks related to external funding fluctuations and further strengthen the study field's resilience and capacity for innovation.

### 1.3.2.

The RTU's Self Assessment Report (SAR, pp. 57-60) provides a detailed description of RTU's infrastructural base, emphasising that the university is undergoing significant development through its central campus in Ķīpsala and the integration of regional institutions such as RTU LA and RTU RA.

For the study field specifically, infrastructural resources are concentrated at these regional academies, where study programmes are implemented. The facilities include lecture rooms, seminar spaces, specialised laboratories, and access to municipal and NGO institutions through cooperation agreements (see annexe: 2). They confirm that students of Social Welfare benefit from a wide network of partner organisations, which provide practical settings for study, training, and applied research. In this sense, infrastructure is not limited to RTU's owned buildings, but extends to a wider ecosystem of social care and rehabilitation institutions in Latvia.

Material and technical provisions include the availability of computers, software, and distance learning platforms. RTU has developed a strong digital infrastructure, particularly as a result of its broad experience in e-learning technologies. The Faculty of Engineering Economics and Management, and the Institute of Digital Humanities contribute expertise and digital resources that can be shared across study fields, including Social Welfare. According to the RTU's Self Assessment Report (SAR, pp. 57-60), all students and teaching staff have access to the university's information systems, electronic course platforms, and communication tools, which proved essential during the Covid-19 period and remain integrated in the hybrid learning model.

An important part of the criterion is whether the university has a unified and systematic procedure for updating and acquiring resources. RTU's Self Assessment Report (SAR, pp. 57-60) indicates that procurement and improvement of material and informational provisions are governed by centralised regulations and are aligned with the university's development strategy. The process involves needs assessment at the faculty or academy level, submission of requests, and approval through the central administration, ensuring consistency and transparency. The restructuring of RTU's faculties in 2024, which streamlined management and grouped units into four larger faculties alongside regional academies, further strengthens this centralised approach to resource management. This structural reform is particularly significant for smaller study fields such as Social Welfare, as it ensures they are not isolated in terms of resource provision but benefit from economies of scale and institutional support mechanisms.

From an evaluative perspective, the infrastructure and material-technical support available to Social Welfare students and teaching staff can be considered adequate and effective. The combination of physical facilities in Liepāja and Rēzekne, digital and informational resources from RTU, and external practice sites secured through cooperation agreements ensures that the study process is well supported. Furthermore, the existence of a unified procurement system provides confidence that resources will continue to be upgraded in line with both technological advances and study programme needs.

Nevertheless, certain challenges are visible. Firstly, because Social Welfare is located in regional academies rather than the central Rīga campus, ensuring parity of resources between the capital and the regions requires ongoing attention. While cooperation agreements supplement infrastructural needs, there is a risk of overreliance on external partners for practice opportunities and methodological resources. Secondly, while the Self Assessment Report (SAR, pp. 57-60) confirms access to digital platforms and databases, there is limited detailed evidence on the adequacy of specialised equipment directly related to Social Welfare, such as facilities for rehabilitation training or applied social research laboratories.

In conclusion, the criterion is met. RTU has identified the infrastructural needs of the study field and ensures their provision through a combination of institutional facilities, digital resources, and external practice sites. The system for upgrading and purchasing material and informational resources is centralised, transparent, and aligned with strategic development goals. The infrastructure is adequate to support both students and staff, though long-term development would benefit from further investment in specialised Social Welfare equipment and sustained efforts to guarantee equal quality of resources across regional campuses.

The Self Assessment Report (SAR, pp. 60-65) indicates that RTU has established a unified and centralised procedure for the improvement and purchase of methodological and informational provisions across the institution. Needs assessment is carried out at the faculty or structural unit level, including the regional structural units where Social Welfare study programmes are delivered. Requests are then consolidated and reviewed by the central administration to ensure alignment with the university's strategic development plan and financial priorities. This system provides a structured framework for updating and expanding methodological provisions, ensuring that study programmes remain aligned with both academic standards and labour market expectations.

Library services represent a central component of methodological and informational provision. RTU operates a central library in Rīga, which is one of the largest academic libraries in Latvia, as well as local academic libraries at RTU LA and RTU RA. These facilities ensure that students and staff in the regions are not excluded from academic resources. The libraries provide not only traditional print collections but also extensive electronic resources. According to the Self Assessment Report (SAR, pp. 60-65), RTU subscribes to a wide range of international databases and e-journals, which cover the main areas of relevance to the study field of Social Welfare, including social sciences, psychology, pedagogy, health, and rehabilitation sciences. The availability of these digital resources is particularly important for ensuring equality of access, as students and staff can use them remotely, regardless of their physical study location.

Evidence from annexes confirms that academic staff in Social Welfare actively use these resources in their research and teaching. For example, the list of staff publications (annexe: II.2.4.4) shows contributions to international journals on themes such as social rehabilitation, family support, and educational psychology, which presuppose access to high-quality international literature. The CVs of staff members (annexe: II.2.3. "Mācībuspēku CV") further illustrate engagement in international projects and conferences, where up-to-date theoretical and methodological resources are essential. This demonstrates that the library and database provisions are not only formally available but are actively used to support both research and teaching in the study field.

In addition to library resources, methodological support for students is strengthened through internship placements and cooperation with external organisations. Cooperation agreements (annexe: 2\_List of Cooperation agreements\_specified) highlight partnerships with social services, hospitals, and NGOs across Latvia. These agreements provide students with access to methodological guidance in real-world contexts, complementing the more traditional library-based resources. Thus, the methodological provisions for Social Welfare are both academic and practice-oriented, reflecting the dual nature of the field.

From an evaluative standpoint, the system developed by RTU can be considered both adequate and effective. The centralised approach ensures consistency and transparency in the procurement of resources, while the regional libraries and digital platforms guarantee accessibility for all students. The integration of cooperation agreements into the methodological framework adds further value by ensuring that students are trained in practice environments that reflect the realities of the profession. The only limitation that emerges is that the Self Assessment Report provides relatively little detail on the specific budget allocation for library acquisitions directly linked to Social Welfare. While it is clear that resources are sufficient, there is no precise quantitative evidence that acquisitions are regularly evaluated against the evolving needs of the study field, such as emerging research in social rehabilitation technologies or specialised case management tools.

In conclusion, the criterion is met. RTU has established a structured and unified system for improving and purchasing methodological and informational provisions, and it maintains adequate library and database resources for the Social Welfare field. Both students and academic staff benefit from access to extensive digital databases and local libraries, as well as methodological resources embedded in cooperation with social partners. To further strengthen this system, RTU could introduce a more formalised mechanism for periodic evaluation of library acquisitions against the specific and evolving needs of Social Welfare, ensuring that resources continue to match the

development of both research and professional practice in the field.

#### 1.3.4.

The Self Assessment Report (SAR, pp. 66-68) stresses that digitalisation is one of RTU's strategic priorities, and it provides students with access to centralised digital platforms, including Moodle for course management, ORTUS for academic administration, and MS Teams/Zoom for synchronous learning. These systems ensure that students across RTU LA and RTU RA, where Social Welfare study programmes are implemented, can participate in hybrid or online learning on an equal footing with students in Rīga. The experience of the Covid-19 pandemic accelerated the integration of digital solutions, which now form a permanent part of the university's teaching infrastructure.

Additional information submitted to experts (annexe: "Information submitted to experts upon request") highlights that both RTU LA and RTU RA have invested in ICT equipment specifically to support the Social Welfare study programmes. For example, in RTU LA, five rooms (229, 241, 438, 243, 123) are equipped with videoconference facilities, including cameras and microphones, while room 438 is additionally designed for recording simulated situations for analysis. Six 360-degree rotating cameras are also available and can be placed in auditoriums as needed. In RTU RA, six teaching rooms are equipped for videoconferencing, four with 360-degree cameras and two with web cameras and interactive displays. These facilities are used for live-streaming and hybrid teaching, as well as for student skills training in professional contexts. Equally important is staff preparedness to use these technologies. RTU reports that training sessions of 1.5 hours have been offered to RTU LA academic staff to familiarise them with videoconferencing equipment, and staff also have access to central Moodle e-courses with resources on using these tools effectively. This demonstrates that infrastructure development has been complemented with staff training, which is an essential element of effective ICT use.

From an evaluative perspective, RTU's ICT infrastructure for Social Welfare studies is relatively advanced and has been deliberately adapted to the hybrid learning needs of this field. The integration of videoconference equipment across regional campuses makes it possible to deliver courses flexibly and to ensure that students who combine studies with professional or family commitments can continue their education in a partial online mode. This responds directly to the needs of Social Welfare students, many of whom are part-time learners already working in the sector.

Nevertheless, some critical points of improvement must be highlighted. Firstly, while the infrastructure described (360-degree cameras, interactive displays, videoconference rooms) is impressive, its scale remains limited: in both Liepāja and Rēzekne, the number of suitably equipped rooms is small compared to the total number of courses delivered. This creates a risk of bottlenecks when multiple courses or study groups need simultaneous access. Secondly, while staff training sessions have been introduced, they appear relatively short and voluntary in nature; deeper pedagogical training on how to integrate digital tools into teaching design—rather than only learning their technical operation—would strengthen the effectiveness of ICT use.

Thirdly, the additional documentation (annexe: "Information submitted to experts upon request") notes some ambiguity among students regarding the distinction between full-time and part-time study forms when much of the study process is mediated through online tools. This suggests that although ICT solutions enable flexible learning, they may also blur boundaries between study modes, leading to confusion about workload and expectations. Finally, while ICT supports theoretical learning effectively, it cannot fully replace the practice-based components essential for Social Welfare training; this places a continuing demand on the institution to balance digital delivery with sufficient in-person practice opportunities.

In conclusion, the ICT solutions provided by RTU for the Social Welfare study field are appropriate and generally effective. The availability of videoconference-equipped rooms, mobile 360-degree cameras, interactive displays, and centralised learning platforms ensures that both students and

staff have access to the tools required for hybrid and distance learning. However, the infrastructure is stretched across multiple campuses, and the number of fully equipped rooms is limited, which may constrain flexibility in practice. Staff training, while available, requires expansion into deeper pedagogical development. Thus, while the criterion is met, improvement is necessary to ensure greater scalability, sustainability, and clarity in the use of ICT solutions within the study field.

#### 1.3.5.

According to the Self Assessment Report (SAR, pp. 68-70), RTU applies a standardised university-wide system for academic recruitment, which is aligned with the Law on Higher Education Institutions of Latvia and the internal regulations of RTU. Academic staff are employed through open competitions for elected positions (professor, associate professor, docent, lecturer), with clearly published requirements concerning education, scientific qualifications, and professional experience. The competition procedure is public, announced on the RTU website and in the Official Gazette (Latvijas Vēstnesis, see: <https://www.lv.lv/lv>), ensuring transparency and equal opportunity. Stakeholders, including students and faculty councils, are represented in the election commissions, thereby ensuring that the process is not only open but also participatory.

Additional information provided (annexe: "Information submitted to experts upon request") for the study field indicates that 59 academic staff members are involved in the study programme delivery, of whom 38 are elected staff. Staff CVs (annexe: II.2.3. "Mācībspēku CV") show that the teaching staff hold doctoral degrees in pedagogy, psychology, or social sciences, and with others bringing professional expertise from social work and rehabilitation practice. This demonstrates that the recruitment system is effective in ensuring the presence of academically and professionally qualified personnel. Importantly, the involvement of external practitioners enriches the study programmes with applied knowledge, which is essential in a practice-oriented field such as Social Welfare.

The procedures for attracting academic staff are complemented by institutional efforts to strengthen human resource development. For example, RTU participates in mobility programmes such as ERASMUS+, allowing international staff exchanges, and cooperates with municipalities and NGOs, which sometimes leads to the recruitment of experienced professionals into teaching positions. In addition, RTU's structural reform in 2024-2025, which integrated Liepāja Academy and Rēzekne Academy into the university, has broadened the pool of academic staff available for the Social Welfare study field, ensuring that regional expertise is preserved within the larger institutional framework. (SAR, pp. 68-70).

From a critical perspective, however, some weaknesses must be acknowledged. Firstly, while the procedures for recruitment are clearly defined, the documentation does not provide a detailed breakdown of how often competitions are held or how many new staff members have been attracted specifically to the Social Welfare study programmes in recent years. Secondly, while the recruitment system is open and transparent at the institutional level, attracting and retaining qualified staff in regional campuses remains a structural challenge. The Social Welfare study field relies heavily on local professionals in Liepāja and Rēzekne, many of whom are engaged in social services or NGOs in addition to part-time teaching. This strengthens practice relevance but also creates vulnerability, as staff turnover in regional labour markets may affect study programme continuity. Furthermore, the relatively low number of international staff involved in Social Welfare teaching suggests that while the procedures are open, their effectiveness in bringing in foreign expertise is limited.

In conclusion, RTU has established clear and transparent procedures for attracting qualified teaching staff, and these are applied in the study field in compliance with national legislation and institutional regulations. The involvement of elected academic staff ensures adherence to academic standards, while the participation of practitioners from social services and NGOs strengthens the applied orientation of the study programmes. Nevertheless, the system would benefit from greater internationalisation at regional campuses. The criterion is therefore met, but improvements in long-term recruitment planning for regional locations are recommended.

### 1.3.6.

The Self Assessment Report (SAR, pp. 70-73) and supporting annexes indicate that RTU has a structured framework for staff development at the institutional level. The university implements regular performance evaluations of academic staff, which include assessment of teaching, research, and administrative contributions. These evaluations provide the basis for identifying professional development needs. Additionally, participation in continuing education, pedagogy-related courses, and methodological seminars is both encouraged and, in some cases, required, particularly for newly elected staff or those taking on new teaching responsibilities.

In the context of Social Welfare, staff development opportunities are closely linked with the integration of LA and RA into RTU. Both institutions have historically emphasised pedagogical innovation and the training of professionals in social services. The additional information submitted to experts (annexe: "Information submitted to experts upon request") highlights that training sessions on ICT use, videoconferencing, and blended learning pedagogy have been organised for staff at RTU LA and RTU RA, ensuring that they are equipped to implement hybrid study formats. Moreover, academic staff regularly participate in scientific conferences, workshops, and professional exchange programmes, as evidenced by their CVs and publication lists. (annexe: II.2.3.7 and annexe: "Mācibuspēku CV").

RTU also supports international mobility through ERASMUS+ and bilateral agreements, which are particularly valuable for broadening didactic perspectives and introducing innovative teaching approaches. The annexe on mobility (see annexe: II.2.5.3) shows that staff have engaged in short-term teaching visits abroad, contributing to their exposure to international best practices. However, the numbers remain relatively modest, and staff development through mobility is not yet widespread in the Social Welfare study field.

From an evaluative standpoint, the measures taken to support staff development are appropriate and, to a certain degree, effective. Training in ICT and hybrid learning has had a demonstrable impact on the ability of staff to adapt to digitalised teaching formats, a crucial competency in the post-COVID context. Participation in research projects and conferences enhances both subject-specific knowledge and methodological competence, as evidenced by publications in international journals (annexe: II.2.4.4). Furthermore, cooperation agreements with local social service institutions create opportunities for staff to remain professionally engaged in applied contexts, which feeds back into teaching quality.

Nonetheless, several weaknesses emerge. Firstly, while staff development needs are formally assessed through evaluations, the system described in the Self Assessment Report (SAR, pp. 70-73) places greater emphasis on compliance and participation (e.g., documenting attendance at seminars) rather than on a systematic analysis of whether the measures undertaken actually improve teaching quality in measurable terms. There is little evidence of mechanisms for evaluating the effectiveness of staff training in relation to student learning outcomes or teaching innovation. Secondly, the study field in particular faces the challenge of balancing academic research with professional practice; while many staff members are highly engaged practitioners, fewer are actively developing their didactic competencies in modern pedagogy, such as inclusive education methods, competence-based learning, or assessment design. Thirdly, regional campuses face structural limitations in terms of available training opportunities: while ICT-related workshops have been delivered, broader professional development activities (e.g., training in research supervision, advanced pedagogical certification) are concentrated in Rīga, creating unequal access.

In conclusion, RTU has put in place a purposeful system for determining and addressing staff development needs, and Social Welfare staff benefit from a range of opportunities, particularly in ICT competence, mobility, and professional engagement. These measures support the maintenance of teaching quality and ensure adaptability to changing circumstances. However, the evaluation of outcomes remains insufficiently systematic, and further investment is needed in advanced pedagogical training and equal access for regional staff. The criterion is therefore met, but

improvements in monitoring the effectiveness of staff development, as well as in broadening the scope of didactic training, are recommended to strengthen the sustainability and quality of the Social Welfare study field.

### 1.3.7.

According to the Self Assessment Report (SAR, pp. 73-74), RTU follows a university-wide workload regulation system that sets out the proportions of teaching, research, and administrative duties expected of academic staff. The general standard allocates a full-time equivalent of 1,680 hours per year, distributed across contact teaching, preparation of materials, supervision of students, scientific research, and participation in administrative tasks. This system is designed to ensure that staff workload is transparent and predictable, while also providing flexibility for adjustments depending on the staff member's role (e.g., professors vs. lecturers).

In practice, academic staff in the study field combine teaching with a range of other responsibilities, including supervision of internships and final theses, participation in applied research projects, and engagement with external partners such as municipalities and NGOs. The additional information provided to experts (annexe: "Information submitted to experts upon request") shows that staff at RTU LA and RTU RA have been actively engaged in projects funded by the European Social Fund (ESF) and other national programmes, which contribute to their research workload. Staff CVs (annexe: II.2.3. "Mācibuspēku CV") further demonstrate involvement in project management, participation in conferences, and contributions to publications. This indicates that the research component of workload is not merely formal, but substantively integrated into staff activity.

However, the evaluation reveals some challenges regarding balance. The study field is strongly practice-oriented, and academic staff often carry significant responsibilities for supervising student placements and liaising with partner institutions. This can increase teaching-related workload beyond standard lecture hours, particularly in regional campuses where staff numbers are limited.

Furthermore, the Self Assessment Report (SAR, pp. 73-74) provides limited quantitative data on the exact distribution of workload between teaching, research, and administration in Social Welfare, which makes it difficult to assess whether the balance is systematically maintained across all staff.

Another point of concern is the uneven distribution of research activity. While some staff members are very active in publications and international conferences, others—particularly practitioners who teach part-time—are less engaged in research. This creates disparities within the teaching team and suggests that for a portion of the staff, teaching and administrative duties may dominate at the expense of research. Moreover, the structural integration of RTU LA and RTU RA into RTU has increased administrative requirements for some staff, who must navigate both university-level governance and regional organisational structures. This can contribute to an overload of administrative duties, particularly for study programme directors and coordinators.

On the positive side, RTU has introduced measures to address workload issues. Staff who engage intensively in research projects can have their teaching load adjusted, and vice versa. The system of annual evaluations allows for some flexibility in rebalancing duties depending on institutional priorities and individual capacities. Nevertheless, the documentation does not present strong evidence of systematic monitoring of whether this flexibility is consistently applied across the Social Welfare study programmes.

In conclusion, RTU has established a formal framework for balancing academic, research, and administrative workload, and there is evidence that staff in Social Welfare are active across all three areas. However, the practice-oriented nature of the study field, coupled with staff shortages in regional campuses, creates risks of overload, particularly in teaching and student supervision. Research engagement is unevenly distributed, and administrative duties have increased following structural reforms. The criterion is thus met, but improvement is required in terms of systematically monitoring workload distribution at the study programme level, ensuring equity among staff, and providing additional support to regional campuses to mitigate risks of imbalance.

### 1.3.8.

The SAR (SAR, pp. 75-77) outlines a wide range of support mechanisms available across RTU and its regional academies, including academic counselling, psychological support, career services, library access, and IT services. At the institutional level, RTU operates a central Student Service Department, which guides academic regulations, scholarships, mobility opportunities, and counselling. In addition, dedicated coordinators at LA and RA provide localised support tailored to the needs of students in the Social Welfare programmes. This ensures that students outside Rīga are not excluded from institutional support.

Specific support for part-time students is particularly important in the study field, where many learners are already employed in social services. The Self Assessment Report (SAR, pp. 75-77) and additional documentation (annexe: "Information submitted to experts upon request") emphasise the use of hybrid and online learning solutions (e.g., Moodle, Teams, Zoom), which allow working students to combine studies with professional responsibilities. Flexible scheduling of lectures and practice placements further accommodates the needs of part-time learners, demonstrating that the institution has recognised and responded to this student group's requirements.

RTU also provides support for students with special needs. The university ensures physical accessibility in teaching facilities, provides adapted equipment (e.g., special keyboards, software), and allows for individual study adjustments where necessary. The additional information submitted to experts (annexe: "Information submitted to experts upon request") highlights investments in videoconferencing equipment and interactive technologies, which not only support blended learning but also create opportunities for more inclusive teaching practices (e.g., allowing remote participation for students with mobility challenges).

Psychological and career counselling services are available to all students through RTU's central structures. For Social Welfare students, such support is particularly relevant, given the emotionally demanding nature of their field. However, the Self Assessment Report (SAR, pp. 75-77) provides relatively little data on how widely these services are used by Social Welfare students, or whether specific measures have been tailored to this study field (e.g., counselling for students undertaking placements in challenging social environments).

From an evaluative standpoint, the student support system is clearly established, multi-layered, and functional. It provides academic, psychological, career, mobility, and accessibility support, and it is responsive to the specific profiles of Social Welfare students. The hybrid learning infrastructure is a significant strength, allowing part-time and distance learners to remain engaged in studies. International students and those with special needs also benefit from targeted support.

Nonetheless, several areas for improvement should be noted. Firstly, while the Self Assessment Report (SAR, pp. 75-77) outlines available services, there is little systematic evidence of how the effectiveness of these support measures is evaluated (e.g., through student satisfaction surveys, usage statistics, or outcome analysis). Secondly, the support system is spread across central and regional structures, which raises the question of consistency: students in RTU LA and RTU RA may experience differences in availability or quality of services compared to those in Rīga. Finally, while the system addresses the needs of traditional categories of students (international, part-time, special needs), there is less evidence of tailored measures for distance learners, who may face unique challenges in maintaining motivation and building peer networks.

In conclusion, RTU has identified the key support needs of students in the study field and has developed a functioning support system that includes academic, psychological, career, international, and accessibility services. The infrastructure is generally appropriate and inclusive, and hybrid learning solutions further enhance flexibility. However, the effectiveness of the system would be strengthened by more systematic monitoring of outcomes, greater consistency across regional campuses, and more targeted strategies for distance learners. The criterion is thus met, but there is scope for refinement and enhancement.

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

The analysis of criteria 1.3.1–1.3.8 demonstrates that RTU has established a comprehensive and generally effective system for providing the financial, infrastructural, methodological, and human resources necessary for the implementation of the study field.

Financial support mechanisms are in place and aligned with both the needs of the study programmes and the development of applied research, although greater transparency in reporting and more precise evidence of resource redistribution would strengthen the system (see criterion 1.3.1). Infrastructure and material resources are available to both students and staff, with specialised facilities in regional academies, yet some limitations exist in the scale of ICT-equipped rooms and the adequacy of specialised hardware (see criteria 1.3.2 and 1.3.4). The methodological and informational provisions, including library and database resources, are sufficient and accessible, although systematic evaluation of their alignment with evolving needs of the study field is limited (see criterion 1.3.3).

RTU has clearly defined procedures for attracting qualified teaching staff, ensuring openness and transparency, but inconsistencies in staff reporting and challenges of recruitment in regional campuses highlight areas for improvement (see criterion 1.3.5). Professional and didactic development opportunities are available and utilised, particularly in ICT competence, yet their effectiveness is not systematically evaluated, and advanced pedagogical training remains uneven (see criterion 1.3.6). While a formal workload balancing framework exists, in practice, staff in Social Welfare—especially in regional locations—face risks of overload due to high teaching and supervision duties, uneven research engagement, and increasing administrative responsibilities (see criterion 1.3.7).

Finally, student support systems are broad and multi-layered, covering academic, psychological, mobility, accessibility, and career services. Hybrid learning solutions are particularly beneficial for part-time and working students, though monitoring of support effectiveness and consistency across campuses could be improved (see criterion 1.3.8).

Taken together, the evidence shows that the requirements of part 1.3 "Resources and Provision of the Study Field" are met. RTU provides adequate and appropriate resources for the implementation of Social Welfare study programmes, and the systems in place are functional and responsive. Nonetheless, several aspects—particularly consistency in staff reporting, systematic evaluation of resource and training effectiveness, equitable access to infrastructure across regions, and monitoring of student support outcomes—require further development to ensure long-term sustainability and continuous improvement.

### Strengths:

1. Regional integration with strong information and communication technology (ICT) support – RTU has invested in videoconference-equipped auditoriums and 360-degree cameras at RTU LA and RTU RA, ensuring that students in regional campuses have equitable access to hybrid and blended learning opportunities, which may be uncommon in many Latvian higher education institutions.
2. Dual academic–practice orientation of teaching staff – the Social Welfare study field benefits from a teaching body that combines doctoral-level academics with active social service practitioners, ensuring both scientific grounding and applied, practice-based training.
3. Extensive library and database access with remote availability – students and staff across all campuses have equal access to RTU's wide range of international databases and e-resources, eliminating geographical disadvantages and supporting both research and professional training.
4. Comprehensive and multi-layered student support system – RTU provides a broad spectrum of support measures (academic, psychological, accessibility, career, mobility) that are tailored to different groups of students, particularly benefiting part-time and working students through flexible hybrid learning solutions.

Weaknesses:

1. Limited scale of information and communication technology (ICT) equipped infrastructure in regional campuses – while videoconference rooms and 360-degree cameras exist at RTU LA and RTU RA, the number of fully equipped rooms may be or become too small relative to the scope of the programmes, risking bottlenecks when multiple courses require hybrid teaching simultaneously.
2. Risk of overload in regional campuses – staff at Liepāja and Rēzekne often combine teaching, supervision, research, and administrative tasks in smaller teams, increasing the risk of burnout and reducing capacity for research engagement.
3. Limited evidence of systematic monitoring of student support effectiveness – while many services (psychological, academic, career, accessibility) are offered, there is no clear evaluation of how effective they are in meeting Social Welfare students' needs.
4. Substantial variation in infrastructure and resource availability between RTU LA and RTU RA hinders consistent implementation of study processes and creates unequal learning conditions across campuses.

## **1.4. Scientific Research and Artistic Creation**

### **Analysis**

#### **1.4.1.**

Scientific activity in the Social Welfare study field at RTU Liepāja Academy and RTU Rēzekne Academy is implemented through three strategic directions — social sciences, humanities and arts, and engineering and technology (SAR, p. 78). These directions align with RTU's overarching Strategy 2023–2027, which emphasises excellence in science, high-quality studies, sustainable development, and valorisation (SAR, pp. 8–9). Within this framework, research in the Social Welfare field focuses on improving the social and economic situation of society, promoting inclusion, and enhancing quality of life (SAR, pp. 78–79). These aims mirror both Latvia's National Development Plan 2021–2027 and EU social-policy priorities.

One of RTU's fundamental institutional goals is to strengthen international collaboration and the impact of research through participation in national and international projects. The study field corresponds to RTU's strategic specialisation in social sciences and is therefore relevant to the university's development goals. The Self Assessment Report (SAR, p. 84) indicates that academic staff are involved in applied research projects linked to the social sciences; however, many projects within the State Research Programme (VPP - Valsts Pētījuma Programma) and the Fundamental and Applied Research Programme focus more broadly on related disciplines such as demography, migration, and education. Importantly, several of these projects still integrate social-welfare aspects, particularly those addressing social inclusiveness.

In terms of relevance to industry and society, data from the Ministry of Welfare confirm a continued demand for qualified professionals in the social-welfare sector, especially in Latvia's regions. This corresponds with RTU RA's and RTU LA's emphasis on regional development and social inclusion, and social cohesion. Nonetheless, experts note an external challenge related to the profession's prestige and comparatively low remuneration, which may affect student interest in the field.

Applied projects — such as Social Rehabilitation of Children With Autism Spectrum Disorders Using Intelligent Sensory Toys (SAR, p. 81) — further illustrate RTU LA's commitment to practice-oriented innovation and social impact.

Experts conclude that criterion 1.4.1 is fully met. The research directions clearly correspond to RTU's strategic development goals and national priorities, while also addressing regional needs and pressing challenges of the social-welfare sector. The integration of applied and collaborative research demonstrates coherence between institutional strategy, field relevance, and societal impact.

#### 1.4.2.

The Self Assessment Report demonstrates that applied and scientific research outcomes are systematically integrated into study programmes of all levels (SAR, pp. 80–82). Academic staff incorporate findings from ongoing projects into study course content, while students engage through qualification theses, master's papers, and research assignments. RTU Liepāja Academy's journal "Education. Innovation. Diversity" and its academic conferences serve as key platforms for presenting and publishing student research results (pp. 82–83). The process is further strengthened by the institutional requirement that teaching staff regularly update syllabi with current research results, ensuring an evidence-based and contemporary study process.

At the same time, the Self Assessment Report (chapter 2.1. "Management of the Study Field") notes that research activity in the study field focuses primarily on social work theory, social problem-solving, quality of life, competitiveness, and sustainable generational development. These directions contribute to enhancing students' methodological competence and understanding of social work theories, particularly through thesis writing.

However, information from both the SAR and institutional websites (see: RTU LA - <https://www.rtu.lv/lv/liepaja/zinatne-liepaja/projekti-8>; see: RTU RA - <https://www.rta.lv/projekti>) suggests that while the link between research and the study process is well-established, it could be further strengthened. Specifically, some interdisciplinary projects—especially those centred on education and pedagogy—would benefit from deeper integration of social welfare aspects.

Additionally, the Self Assessment Report (SAR, pp. 17–18) identifies gerontology as one of the field's research directions, yet this focus is not clearly reflected in ongoing projects, where themes related to demography and migration are more prevalent. Likewise, several academic publications, such as "The Interconnection Between University Graduates' Values and Current Processes in Society on Choosing the Teaching Profession", show an indirect rather than explicit link to the Social Welfare study field.

The processes and mechanisms in RTU are in place to increase research activities and international collaborations. However, these mechanisms are to be introduced more thoroughly in the study field, too. This is probably linked to the recent consolidations, and it might take time to be introduced fully in RTU RA and RTU LA. For example, the Self Assessment Report (SAR, p. 82) emphasises support mechanisms for doctoral students. This is not relevant for the study field since there are no doctoral study programmes.

In conclusion, experts see criterion 1.4.2 as mostly met. The connection between research and the study process is logical and supported by institutional mechanisms, yet a stronger and more consistent focus on social welfare-specific research themes would further enhance integration.

#### 1.4.3.

RTU LA and RTU RA maintain active participation in international research networks, such as the European Social Work Research Association (ESWRA) and the International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW) (SAR, p. 84). Cooperation is realised through Erasmus+ mobility, joint conferences (e.g., Society. Integration. Education), and co-authored publications with Lithuanian and other Baltic partners (SAR, pp. 85–86). Collaborating with Lithuanian and other international research institutions or higher education institutions brings value to the RTU, since they are similar in the industry needs and social (as well as economic) context.

It is valuable to collaborate in research with other countries, including Baltic countries, sharing resources, building capacity and widening the impact of the research done. This can serve as a stepping stone to widen the collaborations with other countries, especially the ones mentioned in the Self Assessment Report – Baltic and Nordic countries and others.

Taking part in the Erasmus+ programme and having tangible outcomes (i.e. "Distance Learning for Students and Kids With Autism Spectrum Disorder" that resulted in a handbook) brings value to the study field and the social welfare industry. The strategy to develop involvement in Europe's research

framework programme is imperative for the growth of the field in the overall RTU framework. It is noted in the SWOT analysis that there is a lack of activity to increase participation in, for example, Horizon Europe projects. Depending on a specific programme, it is worth noting that the level of competitiveness is quite high in Horizon Europe projects, however, there are other international grant programmes in which Latvia can send project proposals (e.g. NordForsk, Interreg Baltic Sea Region, also Council of Science refines good quality projects if they have been declined in Horizon Europe project programme but are over quality threshold).

In summary, the international cooperation in research in the corresponding study field has some room for improvement; however, this has already been noted in the Self Assessment Report (SAR, p. 24) where a new strategy for developing the study field (2025-2031) in the year 2025 has been adopted, with an emphasis on international staff and student collaboration is highlighted.

#### 1.4.4.

The study field benefits from RTU's broader institutional approach to motivating academic staff to strengthen their research capacity, by having an internal grant system, benefits for being active in the research area and of course, the procedure of being elected (and re-elected every 6 years; election is based on evaluation regarding research activities). However, it is not specified how many members of the study field's academic staff have made use of these internal grant opportunities (SAR, p. 80). Given that the consolidation of RTU RA and RTU LA has been quite recent, and the research proposal procedures and the whole research project implementation in science are time-consuming, the benefits of these mechanisms may not yet have been realised. This suggests that there is still potential for further growth in motivating staff to enhance their research performance. It is also worth noting that the Council of Science currently operates with appointed experts, though this system is set to expire at the end of 2026 (see Law on Scientific Activity, Transitional Provisions No. 41 - <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/107337#p-1297727>).

RTU RA has involved their academic staff in a dedicated research institution — the Regional Development Research Institute (hereafter - REGI) — which focuses on research of regional development. It is well worth noting that the strategic view of the REGI complies with international approaches, such as including an open science framework and focusing on the capacity building of their academic staff regarding innovation enhancement.

The Self Assessment Report (SAR, p. 83) mentions a postdoctoral grant scheme that plays an important role in attracting both local and international research staff. However, the connection of this scheme to the study field could be clarified, as it is not specified in which fields the postdoctoral researchers have been recruited.

In addition, the journal "Education. Innovation. Diversity" has been established and is actively publishing. Three master's students from the study field have already published papers based on their theses — a commendable practice aligned with the requirements of the Law on Scientific Activity (Paragraph 19), which mandates that higher education institutions ensure scientific activity and publish scholarly journals or collections of scientific papers. This serves as a good basis for building an even stronger research capacity for the academic staff in the future.

It is worth mentioning that the information on REGI's website needs updating to include the information presented in the Self Assessment Report (SAR, pp. 75-76) regarding the inclusion of 65% of the staff in research activities and the projects in which they are involved, including regional and international initiatives (currently, only two staff members are listed online).

Regarding the research capacity, it is well worth noting that in the RTU 2024 report (see: <https://www.rtu.lv/lv/universitate/skaitli-un-fakti/rtu-2024-gada-parskats>), the number of publications in the field "Sociology and social work" is "3". However, it is not clear how well the study field integration into the RTU institution has developed since March 2024 (reported year), especially considering that the RTU is more STEM focused (although RTU has four (out of six) strategic specialisations, one of them - social sciences) and RTU LA and RTU RA has been consolidated with

RTU since 2024 and 2025. This might be an indicator that shows that social work (and sociology, since it is a part of this field of science) is to be integrated even more into the overall RTU framework.

Finally, providing financial support for publishing research outcomes is a commendable practice of the university, particularly when funding is linked to the quality level of journals (Q1 and Q2 publications).

#### 1.4.5.

When a research organisation implements a Fundamental and Applied Research Project (hereafter - FLPP) project or State Research Programme (VPP) project, there is a requirement to involve students in the said projects. However, since these projects mentioned in the SAR seem to be with a broader focus than Social Welfare, the student involvement specifically in this study field is not clearly stated. The exception is a project mentioned in SAR, page 77, where a claim is made that outcomes have been adapted for study courses in this study field. Regarding other activities mentioned in RTU's Self Assessment Report, considering research activities, shows a rather low student involvement (SAR, p. 77), despite having collaboration with Lithuanian colleagues in writing publications (for a journal "Social Welfare Interdisciplinary Approach"); however, it is mentioned that in this particular case, only academic staff is involved in the collaboration.

Overall, the involvement of students in research activities is one of the main strategic points emphasised in a recently adopted study field's strategic development plan. The SAR does point this out as one of its priorities; however, it does not mention specific mechanisms for achieving this set goal (beyond publishing in RTU's journal, which serves as a good starting point where students learn how to write scientific papers).

Since the research projects mentioned in the Self Assessment Report (SAR, pp. 79-80) have been concluded mostly in the year 2024 (except the consolidation grant scheme projects), it seems like the RTU RA and RTU LA has a project gap which could be used for preparing new research project proposals, planning student involvement from the planning processes of the projects.

Bachelor's and master's study programme students are encouraged to collaborate with teaching staff in empirical studies addressing regional social-work challenges (SAR, p. 91). Erasmus+ mobility and joint workshops with foreign universities further strengthen these experiences (SAR, pp. 84-85). Although no doctoral study programmes exist within the Social Welfare study field, research skills are systematically developed, ensuring continuity towards higher-level studies in related disciplines. Experts see these as valuable experiences for students, enriching their knowledge and experience in international collaborative projects.

#### 1.4.6.

Innovation in RTU manifests both in research content and in learning methods. Projects integrating technology into social-rehabilitation practice (e.g., the intelligent sensory-toys initiative) showcase interdisciplinary collaboration between social sciences and engineering (SAR, pp. 81-82). The introduction of digital learning environments and open-access publication through the "Education. Innovation. Diversity" journal reflects RTU's commitment to open science (SAR, p. 83).

An additional innovative practice is the collaboration with the Ministry of Welfare, which provides students with opportunities to participate in ministry-organised summer school activities (SAR, p. 89).

These events, often involving international academic staff and discussions on cross-country social-work issues, expand students' global perspectives and enhance intercultural competence. Collectively, these innovations improve the study process, promote creativity, inclusivity, and the development of digital competencies among students and staff.

In conclusion, experts believe that criterion 1.4.6 is met to a high degree. Innovative approaches in both content and pedagogy significantly enhance learning quality, institutional visibility, and

international engagement.

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

The analyses across criteria 1.4.1-1.4.6 show that the Social Welfare study field at RTU Liepāja Academy and RTU Rēzekne Academy has a coherent and maturing research ecosystem that aligns well with institutional and national priorities. The study field's research directions reflect RTU's strategic aims of excellence, interdisciplinarity, and societal relevance, while maintaining a clear applied orientation toward improving quality of life and social inclusion.

Research outcomes are integrated into the study process through course content, theses, and publication opportunities, ensuring that teaching remains evidence-based and current. International cooperation is active—especially within the Baltic region—yet still developing toward wider participation in large-scale European frameworks. Mechanisms for staff involvement in research are formally established and conceptually strong but not yet fully utilised or documented at the field level, partly due to recent institutional consolidation.

Student participation follows a similar pattern: encouraged and present in isolated projects but lacking systematic structures and measurable outcomes. At the same time, the study field demonstrates a pronounced culture of innovation in both research and pedagogy, expressed through technology-based rehabilitation initiatives, open-access publishing, and digital learning environments.

Overall, the field presents a solid foundation characterised by strategic coherence, social impact, and pedagogical creativity, while its main growth potential lies in strengthening international competitiveness, expanding empirical participation of staff and students, and evidencing the tangible results of its well-designed mechanisms.

#### **Strengths:**

1. Consolidation of the RTU LA and RTU RA with RTU enhances the strategic approach of the research aspects into the study field's development (consolidating resources and putting the study field into a larger framework within one of the RTU strategic specialisations).
2. Potential of the REGI for developing strong regional research where both RTU RA and RTU LA can involve the academic staff AND students in collaborative projects or applied science, or just projects in collaboration with municipalities or other government institutions to strengthen the industry's needs.
3. A successful participation in fundamental and applied science projects (FLPP), where involving students in the project's overall academic staff FTE is mandatory. However, the results of this project are leaning towards the education field, less than the direction of social welfare.
4. It is valuable to collaborate with other countries, including Baltic countries. This can serve as a stepping stone to widen the collaborations with other countries, especially the ones mentioned in the SAR – Baltic and Nordic countries and others.

#### **Weaknesses:**

1. Social work (and sociology, since it is a part of this field of science) is to be integrated even more into the overall RTU framework.
2. There is an opportunity to involve more students in research projects within a bigger RTU structure, especially considering the possibilities for interdisciplinary research.
3. Stronger and more consistent focus on social welfare-specific research themes would further enhance integration.

### **Assessment of the requirement [2]**

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Partially compliant

RTU has established processes and mechanisms to promote research activities and international collaboration. However, these mechanisms should be implemented more extensively within the study field as well. This is likely related to the recent institutional consolidations, and full integration across RTU RA and RTU LA may take time.

Strengthening the connection between academic staff research and the thematic areas of the study field (beyond education) is essential for its further development. One possible direction could be linking the fields of education and pedagogy with social work, although this should not be the sole focus. Consequently, a stronger and more consistent emphasis on social welfare-specific research themes would further enhance integration.

Although mechanisms for student involvement in applied research exist, there remains room for improvement regarding the intensity and scope of their participation in research projects.

## 1.5. Cooperation and Internationalisation

### Analysis

#### 1.5.1.

Based on the Self Assessment Report and annexe 2 (annexe: Annex 2\_List of Cooperation agreements\_specified), the cooperation within Latvia in the Social Welfare study field is comprehensive, systematic, and directly contributes to achieving the aims and learning outcomes of the study programmes. Cooperation partners are selected primarily based on the content and professional orientation of the study field, with criteria including institutional relevance to social welfare activities, target groups, organisational stability, initiative for collaboration, presence of alumni, and prior successful cooperation (SAR, p. 92).

This ensures that all partnerships are meaningful and linked to the practical application of theoretical knowledge. Collaboration with employers forms the backbone of this cooperation model, manifesting through student internships, participation in State Examination Committees, guest lectures, research topic recommendations, and joint academic events. Employers such as the directors of municipal social services in Liepāja, Saldus, and Ventspils are members of the Study Field Council (SAR, p. 93) and play an active role in developing and improving study programmes. Their feedback on graduate performance and student internships serves as a mechanism for continuous improvement and alignment with labour market needs.

Cooperation extends beyond municipal services to include NGOs (e.g., Patvērums ģimenei, Marta Resource Centre, House of Hope), rehabilitation centres, and educational institutions. These partnerships provide students with real-world learning opportunities such as study visits, applied research, and professional events, fostering the integration of studies with community needs. Several research and development projects further strengthen these ties, for instance, the FLPP project Transformation of Educational Values for the Economic Development of Social and Cultural Communities (2021–2024) and the RTU grant Social Rehabilitation of Children with Autism Spectrum Disorders Using Smart Sensory Toys and Psychological Profiling, both involving local municipal institutions and schools (SAR, p. 94).

At the national level, the study field maintains strong institutional cooperation with the Ministry of Welfare through participation in the Social Work Professionals Cooperation Council, development of occupational standards for social workers, and shared academic initiatives such as conferences and summer schools (SAR, pp. 94-95). These partnerships reinforce professional competence, encourage innovation, and integrate Latvian social work education into the broader policy framework.

Academic collaboration with other higher education institutions—including Rīga Stradiņš University

and University of Latvia—ensures alignment of study programme content, coherence of professional standards, and joint participation in scientific conferences such as Society. Integration. Education and Topical Issues in Social Work. These activities consolidate the academic and research capacity of the Social Welfare field and contribute to its long-term sustainability.

Overall, cooperation within Latvia is structured through both formal mechanisms (agreements, Study Field Council) and informal feedback systems (employer consultations, alumni engagement), ensuring continuity and responsiveness. The cooperation demonstrably supports the achievement of professional competencies, employability, and applied research objectives.

Experts consider that this criterion is fully met. Local cooperation is extensive, relevant, and effectively supports the aims and outcomes of the Social Welfare study field through structured, outcome-oriented partnerships at institutional, municipal, and national levels.

### 1.5.2.

The cooperation of RTU within the study field of Social Welfare with foreign institutions is extensive, well-structured, and strategically oriented toward achieving both institutional and study programme-level objectives. International collaboration is integrated into the overall framework of RTU's internationalisation strategy, aiming to enhance global competitiveness, strengthen research capacity, and improve the quality and relevance of study programmes. Cooperation partners — including universities, research institutes, NGOs, and employers — are selected through a structured process that evaluates their relevance to social welfare, institutional reputation, participation in international networks, for example - European Association of Schools of Social Work (EASSW), and their potential to contribute to student and staff mobility, joint research, and curriculum development (SAR, pp. 96-97).

In experts' opinion, becoming a member of IASSW and ESWRA brings added value to the study field by providing access to publications, different methodologies and European studies. However, this is only the first step, and further actions are needed to fully gain benefits from these memberships. This requires a strategic plan for the intended outcomes to be reached.

The analysis demonstrates that cooperation is diverse in form and substantive in impact. Engagement through Erasmus+ mobility, joint conferences, seminars, and collaborative research ensures both student and staff exposure to international best practices and contemporary social work methodologies. The delivery of study modules in English, as well as participation in international projects, contributes to the development of intercultural competence and critical thinking — directly aligning with the study field's intended learning outcomes. The integration of employers and professionals from abroad through guest lectures, expert discussions, and placements further ensures that students acquire practical skills relevant to the international labour market, thereby reinforcing employability and professional adaptability. However, experts did not gain information on the frequency of the organised guest lectures. Since lectures in the Social Welfare study field are organised both on-site and online, experts recommend attracting foreign lecturers for short guest lectures online, as this would be a convenient lecture format for both involved parties.

Concrete examples given in the Self Assessment Report (SAR, p. 98), such as partnerships with the Westfälisches Forum für Kultur und Bildung e.V. and KoKoLeLe e.V., illustrate that cooperation is not symbolic but realised through tangible projects (e.g., LAGE, GeCo, TRAM/TRAIN, Waqui), in which both academic staff and students participate. These initiatives enhance applied learning, promote interdisciplinary collaboration, and strengthen the European dimension of the Social Welfare field. Institutional mechanisms such as the RTU Department of International Cooperation and memoranda of understanding with partner institutions ensure systematic partner engagement, quality monitoring, and long-term sustainability.

As well as collaboration with institutions from Baltic countries is of great value to the study field's development. Annexe 2 indicates collaboration with Lithuania's higher education institutions, and

experts think that it can be an example for broadening similar collaborations with other institutions in the Baltics or beyond.

Overall, the cooperation with foreign institutions significantly supports the aims of the Social Welfare study field by promoting research-informed teaching, intercultural exchange, and practical professional development. The selection and maintenance of partnerships are based on well-defined criteria consistent with the specific needs and orientation of the study field.

### 1.5.3.

RTU has established a structured and functioning system for attracting international students and academic staff and for facilitating mobility within the Social Welfare study field. This system is coordinated by the RTU International Cooperation Department, which manages recruitment strategies, Erasmus+ and partner agreements, and international communication channels.

The institutional approach is comprehensive, targeting both internal and external audiences and employing diverse communication tools — paid advertising, digital marketing, education fairs, and cooperation with recruitment agencies and partner universities. This demonstrates a well-defined, multi-channel outreach strategy aligned with RTU's internationalisation objectives.

According to the Self Assessment Report (SAR, p. 99), international student recruitment is maintained through participation in global education fairs, virtual consultations, and targeted online campaigns. The use of RTU information centres abroad and consistent applicant follow-ups reflect sustained engagement and long-term relationship building. However, admission data (20 enrolments in 2014/2015, 16 in 2017/2018, and only 3 in 2021/2022) indicate a downward trend, suggesting that while the recruitment system is functional, its effectiveness is limited by external factors such as international competition, visa challenges, and migration issues. Within the Social Welfare study field, short-term mobility is not always formally registered due to the Latvian language of instruction, yet some courses in English have attracted international students in 2023 and 2024.

The attraction of international teaching staff occurs primarily through Erasmus+ mobility, joint research projects, and long-term partnerships. RTU Liepāja Academy and RTU Rēzekne Academy have hosted guest lecturers from abroad (two in 2023 and one in 2024), enriching the curriculum with international perspectives and strengthening intercultural competence — essential elements in social work education. Participation in professional associations such as IASSW and ESWRA further embeds the study field in international academic networks, facilitating knowledge exchange and research cooperation (SAR, p. 99).

Mobility within the study field operates in both directions. Erasmus+ enables students to participate in study and internship placements abroad, while incoming exchange students contribute to intercultural experiences for local cohorts. Staff mobility, both outgoing and incoming, is supported through Erasmus+ and international project participation, allowing academic staff to engage in conferences, seminars, and teaching exchanges (SAR, p. 100).

Despite these structured opportunities, the overall volume of mobility remains moderate, constrained by financial limitations, language barriers, and staff workload. RTU has recognised these challenges and is actively addressing them by expanding partnership networks, introducing flexible mobility formats, and improving support mechanisms.

Activities for broadening international collaboration (SAR, pp. 92–93) often rely on pre-existing networks, indicating a need to diversify approaches and develop new pathways for student and staff participation in global initiatives. A formalised marketing procedure supports international recruitment, including digital campaigns and participation in education exhibitions. While diversification of the academic staff would further strengthen the study field, long-term recruitment of foreign lecturers may remain limited due to Latvian language requirements.

Overall, RTU demonstrates a coherent and effective system for attracting international students and teaching staff and for promoting academic mobility within the Social Welfare study field. The mechanisms are institutionalised and clearly linked to the quality of education, contributing to the

enrichment of academic content, intercultural understanding, and professional competence. Further development of new partnerships and funding mechanisms would enhance sustainability and reach.

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

The analyses across all three criteria (1.5.1-1.5.3) indicate that cooperation—both national and international—is a well-developed and integral part of the Social Welfare study field at RTU. The institution demonstrates a clear strategic approach to partnership building, academic mobility, and internationalisation. Cooperation at the national level is extensive, involving municipalities, NGOs, employers, and ministries, while international collaboration is structured and aligned with broader institutional strategies. Systems for attracting international students and staff exist and are operational, though some indicators suggest room for further optimisation, especially regarding recruitment outcomes and mobility volume.

Cooperation mechanisms are functional, relevant, and contribute meaningfully to achieving the aims and learning outcomes of the study field. However, the mobility levels are moderate; becoming a member state of international associations has to be followed up with a deeper integration of actions that are beneficial for the strategic plans of the RTU LA and RTU RA SF Social Welfare. The strategic actions to be taken (mentioned by RTU in SAR p.76) are important steps towards enhancing international cooperation, especially developing cooperation with Northern and other Baltic HEIs.

#### **Strengths:**

1. A well-developed network of collaboration institutions for student internships: Active involvement of employers and NGOs through internships, guest lectures, and applied research enhances employability and practical competence.
2. Institutionalised internationalisation: Participation in Erasmus+, membership in IASSW, ESWRA, and other networks contributes to academic visibility and intercultural competence.
3. Integration with professional and policy frameworks: Collaboration with the Ministry of Welfare, municipal social services, and professional associations reinforces practical relevance and alignment with labour market needs.

#### **Weaknesses:**

1. Limited quantitative effectiveness in international recruitment: Despite structured systems, the number of incoming international students has declined in recent years.
2. Moderate mobility levels: Both student and staff mobility volumes remain modest due to financial, linguistic, and workload constraints.
3. Dependence on pre-existing networks: International cooperation tends to rely on established contacts rather than active diversification of new partnerships.
4. Insufficient utilisation of association memberships: Membership in international organisations could be leveraged more strategically for tangible academic and professional outcomes.
5. Language-related barriers: Latvian as the primary language of instruction limits potential for broader international participation in the Social Welfare field.

### **Assessment of the requirement [3]**

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

#### **Assessment of compliance:** Partially compliant

The cooperation within the Social Welfare study field with institutions, both local and international, is generally well-developed and formally structured. At the national level, partnerships with municipalities, NGOs, employers, and ministries are broad, relevant, and

actively contribute to achieving the aims of the study field. Employers participate in curriculum development, internships, and professional councils, ensuring strong alignment with labour market needs. These collaborations directly support learning outcomes and demonstrate systemic engagement.

However, international cooperation—though extensive in framework and formally supported through Erasmus+, IASSW, and ESWRA memberships—has yet to yield consistently tangible outcomes.

Although well-chosen and institutionally integrated, these partnerships have limited strategic impact due to several factors:

- \* International student enrolment shows a declining trend, indicating reduced effectiveness of attraction measures despite established procedures.
- \* Mobility volumes for students and staff remain modest, constrained by language, funding, and workload.
- \* Memberships in international associations, while valuable for visibility, are not yet systematically leveraged for curriculum innovation, research cooperation, or sustained academic benefits.
- \* The frequency of international guest lectures and joint teaching activities is low, limiting the integration of global perspectives into the study process.

Although the institutional mechanisms for cooperation and mobility are clearly defined and operational, their practical outcomes remain uneven across the study field. The system ensures collaboration on a structural level, yet not all intended benefits—such as enhanced internationalisation of studies, increased intercultural competence, and a steady inflow of international students—are fully realised in practice.

Therefore, cooperation within the study field effectively supports its aims at the national level but remains only partially successful internationally. Continued strategic effort is needed to expand active international partnerships, strengthen mobility participation, and translate formal cooperation into sustained academic and professional impact.

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

### **Analysis**

#### **1.6.1.**

The evaluation of this criterion focuses on how the university has addressed recommendations from the previous external evaluation experts' panel.

Overall previous accreditation experts proposed 19 recommendations for the study field Social Welfare that was implemented in then Liepāja University (now RTU Liepāja Academy); 15 recommendation for the study field Social Welfare, implemented in Rēzekne Academy of Technologies (now RTU Rēzekne Academy); 10 recommendations for the short-cycle professional higher education study programme "Social Rehabilitator" (implemented in now RTU Rēzekne Academy); 7 recommendations to the first cycle professional bachelor's study programme "Social Worker" and 10 recommendations for the second cycle professional master's study programme "Social Work Management" - previously implemented only in Liepāja University (now RTU Liepāja Academy).

The study field "Social Welfare" was accredited for a two-year term in the previous accreditation cycle, both at RTU LA and RTU RA. According to the Self Assessment Report (SAR, p. 100), the main structural developments following the previous accreditation were the institutional integration of the

former Liepāja University and Rēzekne Academy of Technologies into RTU's academic and administrative structure. Experts consider this reform as an improvement: under one 'mother-university,' the quality of curricula usually rises.

At the institutional level, RTU has implemented measures to strengthen the capacity of academic and administrative staff. Within this process, graduates of the professional master's study programme "Social Work Management" have been recruited into academic positions (two as lecturers in the study courses "Social Pedagogy" and "Professional Competence and Communication in Social Work", and one as a researcher). Additionally, to enhance the scientific and international dimension of the study programme, two academic staff members from Vytautas Magnus University (Lithuania), both holding doctoral degrees in social work, have been recruited. This strengthens the academic and research potential of the study field, fostering international cooperation and the transfer of knowledge.

During the on-site visit, experts noticed the goodwill and eagerness: suggestions made by the previous evaluation experts' panel are taken seriously. For example, teachers mentioned additional possibilities for research: under RTU, it is easier to join (research) projects. The academic groups for research (in the context of national scientific projects) have already been created. Also, the plans regarding the study programme content in RTU LA and RTU RA are made together.

Experts learned and saw during the on-site visit that the consolidation of the Rezekne Academy of Technologies and Liepāja University as academies of the RTU has enriched the library resources for both academies. The joint library with the RTU is a significant development: now students can benefit from extra databases (instead of 4, which was the case before, 16 are available already).

In annexe 3 (see annexe: 3\_Recomendations\_Social\_Welfare\_specify), there is a summary of suggestions from the previous accreditation with the information on fulfilment. One of the recommendations, for example, was: Encourage joint publications based on students' theses. During the on-site visit, experts saw published conference proceedings with the presentations of students (about social work and social pedagogy).

Experts also asked about the optimisation, which was a suggestion from the previous accreditation. One example of saving costs is, for example, that the licence of education (on the level of institution) is cheaper now, as it can be paid together. During the on-site visit, the experts also learned that the consolidation process has not impacted the staff (administrative, et al).

#### \* First-cycle Professional Bachelor's Study Programme "Social Work"

The accreditation experts suggested strengthening students' professional preparedness during internships. Now the internship system is revised - internship objectives, tasks, and intended learning outcomes are clarified, and supervision with support mechanisms is stronger. Students work in diverse and practice-relevant contexts of social work, working with a wide range of target groups, including socially excluded, marginalised, and high-risk populations. Also, the study plan was redesigned - a shift away from the modular system was implemented, as it was considered a less effective form of organising the study process. This change has ensured greater flexibility and transparency of the study process, as well as improved monitoring of student achievement and feedback mechanisms. This innovation strengthens students' capacity to conduct professionally relevant research and aligns with contemporary European trends in social work education.

#### \* Second-cycle Professional Master's Study Programme "Social Work Management"

A significant change has occurred in the study programme content: the specialisation "Social Worker for Work with Diversity" has been discontinued, while two new specialisations have been introduced - "Social Worker for Work with Older Adults" and "Social Worker for Work with Clients of the Penitentiary and Probation Systems during the Resocialisation Stage". These specialisations reflect contemporary societal needs and ensure the study programme's responsiveness to labour market demand. The master's study programme "Social Work Management" will also be implemented at

RTU Rēzekne Academy (RTU RA), which broadens the accessibility of the study programme across regions, strengthens the capacity of regional higher education, and enriches the diversity of the study environment. It also fosters closer cooperation with local municipalities and non-governmental partners, expands student placement opportunities and enhances the alignment of the study process with the specific social needs of the respective regions.

In the previous accreditation, a suggestion was to make better use of strategic planning and SWOT analysis (SAR, p. 26). As a response to this, a comprehensive SWOT analysis was carried out in 2024, and the results were submitted to the Study Field Development Plan 2025–2031. There were mentioned some external threats were mentioned demographic trends, the limited number of applicants, low professional prestige, regional disparities, and challenges in reconciling work and studies, as well as opportunities (expanding cooperation with municipalities, scholarship schemes, promoting student mobility, and broadening digital study provision). Experts were told that these aspects are connected to the strategic objectives set out in plans for the future. For example, new modules fit well with the local developments' speciality: in Liepāja, the establishment of a new prison has created a demand for qualified staff; in Rēzekne, a key issue is the increasing number of elderly residents requiring care. Updated plans for modules are a good idea, which will probably bring new students.

Also, the fact that about 50% of teaching can be done online helps to engage students, as this way the study, work and everyday life connect better. It is good to know that the SWOT analysis can be practically useful.

However, some problems remain: the number of students could be higher. As one solution for that, the study programmes are going to be run in both institutions: in Liepāja and in Rēzekne Academies. Experts were told that the prestige of the social work field is rather low in Latvia, mostly because of the small salary, and there is also a lack of information (for example, what the word 'rehabilitator' means). Experts were told during the on-site visit that people sometimes think it is a caregiver.

In theory, there is a possibility of municipal scholarships, but in reality, this is not working yet. If it opens practically, the popularity of the study field probably rises, and more new students may enter the Academies.

A problem (during and after the reform) is connected with IT: teachers in Rēzekne mentioned to experts that they had to learn a totally new IT-system, ORTUS, which has been a big challenge. The staff is still learning how to use it perfectly.

However, the reform has been too fresh for the summary, as Rēzekne joined the RTU only in April of 2025. This fact was stressed to the experts many times during the on-site visit.

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

The analysis of the implementation of the recommendations received during the previous assessment procedures shows that the recommendations provided by the previous expert team and the Study Quality Commission (a.k.a. SKK) are implemented. The contribution of the university to the analysis of recommendations and their application to the specifics of the study field and the corresponding study programmes is evident. As the reform (to join RTU) is too fresh yet, it is hard to decide which changes spring from the previous accreditation, and which are the result of the reform. Experts conclude that the result is better than during the previous accreditation, which can be considered as positive evidence.

Strengths:

1. The consolidation of Liepāja University and Rēzekne Academy of Technologies into RTU has expanded opportunities for academic development, particularly by increasing the availability of scientific publications and books in the libraries of regional campuses.
2. Results of SWOT analysis are integrated into the study programme planning process.

3. Research activity rises in cooperation with RTU – both for the teachers and students.
4. Graduates of the professional master’s study programme "Social Work Management" have been recruited into academic positions.
5. The master’s study programme "Social Work Management" will also be implemented at RTU Rēzekne Academy.
6. Two academic staff members from Vytautas Magnus University (Lithuania), both holding doctoral degrees in social work, have been recruited to read lectures in RTU LA and RTU RA.

**Weaknesses:**

1. A declining student enrolment trend has been observed, which may affect the sustainability and diversity of the study field.
2. The social work profession continues to face low societal prestige, largely due to comparatively modest remuneration, which may discourage potential applicants.
3. The scholarship system has not yet been fully implemented or operationalised, limiting financial support opportunities for students.

**Assessment of the requirement [4]**

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The contribution of the university to the analysis of recommendations and their application to the specifics of the study field and the corresponding study programmes is evident. During the on-site visit, experts noticed the goodwill and eagerness: suggestions made by the previous evaluation experts' panel are taken seriously. The reform (to be consolidated under the RTU) has been a success. The expert group considers that under one ‘mother-university’, the quality of curricula usually rises.

**1.7. Recommendations for the Study Field**

**Short-term recommendations**

- |  |
|--|
| 1. Promote the social work profession. Enhance public awareness of the social work field by organising outreach activities in general education schools and within local communities to attract prospective students and strengthen the profession’s visibility.   |
| 2. Develop public speaking competencies. Integrate structured opportunities for students to practise public speaking and presentation skills within the study process, reflecting workplace communication needs.   |
| 3. Enhance the alignment of the Social Welfare study field with current labour market needs by updating study course content and introducing targeted practical training methodologies to better prepare graduates for work with diverse client groups. Involve employers in curriculum development and include specialised modules addressing emerging social challenges. |
| 4. Systematically collect employer feedback. Strengthen systematic mechanisms for collecting employer feedback on graduate competencies and professional preparedness to ensure continuous study field improvement.  |

5. Foster international and national research cooperation by implementing and actively promoting joint international and national research projects, academic conferences, and co-authored publications involving international researchers, social work professionals, and representatives of partner institutions.
6. Enhance cooperation and mobility activities. Strengthen academic and student mobility by developing a strategic approach focused on measurable benefits for the study field, students, and staff. Emphasise language preparation, adequate funding, and balanced workload management.
7. Increase student involvement in research. Expand student participation in research through collaboration with municipalities and state programmes. Encourage the use of RTU's academic journal as a platform for developing and showcasing students' research and writing skills.
8. Monitor the implementation of the recognition system. Track and evaluate the functioning of the recognition system over the next three years for students progressing from the "Social Rehabilitation" and "Social Work and Rehabilitation" study programmes to the "Social Worker" study programme at RTU LA and RTU RA.
9. Introduce a student satisfaction monitoring system to complement academic feedback with annual surveys assessing students' satisfaction with administrative and technical support. Use the results to identify and address systemic issues such as communication gaps or IT access limitations.
10. Need for more frequent foreign guest lectures. Expand the frequency of short-term online guest lectures delivered by foreign experts to strengthen students' exposure to global perspectives and practices in social work.

### Long-term recommendations

1. Develop a scholarship system, in cooperation with local municipalities, to provide financial support for students.
2. Enhance English language competence, especially in RTU Rēzekne Academy among students and academic staff, as this will facilitate internationalisation and strengthen cross-border academic cooperation.
3. Expand the number of ICT-equipped classrooms in regional academies. Establish a rotation plan to ensure equitable access and provide dedicated technical staff to support smooth operation.
4. Conduct periodic workload audits in regional campuses to ensure a fair balance between teaching, research, and administration. Where overload imbalances are identified, allocate additional staff positions or redistribute responsibilities to relieve pressure on individual academics.
5. Introduce regular monitoring mechanisms (e.g., student surveys, service usage data, retention statistics) to assess the effectiveness of support services. Tailor additional measures specifically for distance and part-time students, such as online mentoring or peer-support groups.
6. Conduct a comprehensive Graduate Tracer Study every two years to systematically monitor graduates' career trajectories, professional achievements, and further study progression. Data may be collected through self-reported surveys or other appropriate research methods.

7. Leverage RTU's technological expertise to foster interdisciplinary collaboration in emerging areas such as digitalisation, artificial intelligence, and data-driven social services. This strategic development could position RTU as a national leader in Technological and Digital Social Assistance, creating a distinct competitive advantage.

8. More actively engage with the International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW) and other regional (The Nordic-Baltic Doctoral Network in Social Work), international professional and scientific organisations, by participating in conferences, seminars, academic networks, and exchange initiatives.

9. Strengthen programme-level financial transparency and strategic allocation of resources by introducing clear and accessible financial reporting at the study programme level, demonstrating how income is allocated to quality enhancement. Ensure that at least 10% of the annual study programme budget is systematically directed towards curriculum renewal, staff professional development, and the acquisition of specialised research software.

10. Establish a sustainable long-term institutional funding strategy for the study field and its study programmes, by developing and implementing a stable funding model in which essential infrastructure, teaching resources, and student support systems are reliably covered by the RTU central budget. Long-term investment planning should ensure that externally funded or project-based resources serve as supplementary contributions, rather than primary sources, for meeting the core needs of the study field and its programmes.

11. Develop a comprehensive long-term investment strategy for the Bachelor's study programme to ensure stable institutional funding for essential infrastructure, teaching materials, and resources, positioning externally funded projects as supplementary rather than primary sources of support.

## II - "Social Rehabilitator" ASSESSMENT

### II - "Social Rehabilitator" ASSESSMENT

#### 2.1. Indicators Describing the Study Programme

##### Analysis

##### 2.1.1.

The short-cycle professional higher education study programme "Social Rehabilitator" demonstrates a high degree of compliance with the study field of Social Welfare. Its title, code (41762), objectives, learning outcomes, and qualification obtained after graduation - "Social Rehabilitator", align with the national and European qualification frameworks, specifically Level 5 of the Latvian Qualifications Framework (LQF), and meet the requirements of the professional standard for the Social Rehabilitator. The programme content is consistent with the overarching aims and tasks of the study field, ensuring the development of knowledge, skills, and competences appropriate for this professional level.

The social rehabilitation study programme focuses on providing support to individuals (e.g., persons with disabilities, addictions, or those released from penitentiaries) to ensure their optimal reintegration into society. In experts' opinion, this applied focus ensures an intrinsic alignment and a logical relationship between the specialisation and the broader study field.

##### 2.1.2.

This criterion focuses on the internal coherence of the study programme — examining whether its

title, code, degree or qualification awarded, aims, learning outcomes, and admission requirements are logically interconnected. It also considers whether the study programme's duration, credit volume, implementation options, and language of instruction are justified and appropriate for achieving the intended outcomes.

The language of instruction for the short-cycle professional higher education study programme "Social Rehabilitator" is Latvian. The title of the study programme, code (41762), and level (LQF 5) are interrelated. The study programme is designed to prepare students for a specific professional qualification (Social Rehabilitator). The study programme's duration and structure—two years (120 ECTS) for full-time studies and two years and five months for part-time studies—are in accordance with the Law on Higher Education Institutions and the Social Rehabilitator's Professional Standard. This framework ensures flexibility, accessibility, and support for lifelong learning, accommodating both full-time students and working professionals, which aligns with labour market needs and societal demands.

The study programme objectives are aligned with those of the Social Welfare study field (Table 3.1.2.1, SAR pp.188-190). From a training perspective, the study programme focuses on developing applied competencies specific to short-term interventions and immediate support. It includes a significant component of professional practice/internship, ensuring that the learning outcomes are action-oriented and meet labour market requirements for this sector.

From the perspective of the "Social Welfare" field, the study programme serves as an entry point or foundational level, preparing auxiliary personnel who work directly with beneficiaries. Graduates of this study programme receive full recognition of the 120 ECTS (SAR, p. 191) to continue their studies in the bachelor's study programme (Social Worker - 42762). The learning outcomes of the Social Rehabilitator study programme align with those of the first-cycle bachelor's study programme. This vertical integration demonstrates the programme's structural conformity within the field of study, providing a pathway for progressive professional development.

Admission to the short-cycle professional study programme "Social Rehabilitator" is based on three centralised examinations: Latvian, mathematics, and a foreign language. The chosen subjects are appropriate: mathematics tests logical and analytical reasoning, while Latvian and the foreign language evaluate communication and comprehension skills, which are critical in the field of social care/rehabilitation, where effective communication with beneficiaries, families, and other specialists is a key professional competency. Tie-breaking criteria are specified (SAR, p. 191). The use of state (national) centralised exams ensures a rigorous, objective, and transparent admission process.

### 2.1.3.

Since the previous study field evaluation process, the study programme has implemented major structural changes, confirming the existence of a robust feedback response system. The key corrections include the following:

- \* Change of programme classification: Based on the 2022 amendments to the Law on Institutions of Higher Education and the Law on Vocational Education, the programme was reclassified from a first-level professional higher education programme to a short-cycle professional higher education programme. (EQF Level 5).

- \* Transition to ECTS: On the basis of the Law on Institutions of Higher Education, the management decided to fully replace the former national credit system with the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS). This correction is considered necessary to ensure transparency and international comparability of the workload, representing an essential measure for alignment with European standards.

- \* Adjustment of total workload: The total study load was recalibrated from 80 national credits (CP) to 120 ECTS, with a formal equivalence established at 1 ECTS = 26–28 student study hours. This adjustment was both a legal requirement and a strategic necessity to secure compliance with the updated European qualification framework.

\* Curriculum update: The curriculum and course titles were revised, particularly within the professional modules (e.g., introduction of a new course "Health Literacy and First Aid"; adjustment of "Communication in Working with Clients"). This correction responds to the continuous need to reflect the latest developments in research and professional practice in social rehabilitation.

All major revisions are grounded in higher-level normative acts (e.g., Law on Higher Education Institutions, Cabinet Regulation No. 305), ensuring full legal validity. Moreover, each change has been formally endorsed by the RTU Council and the Study Quality Commission, providing procedural rigour and institutional transparency throughout the modification process.

These reforms demonstrate a coherent strategic vision supported by programme leadership. The overarching objectives are to enhance student mobility, ensure international compatibility, and strengthen vertical progression pathways through credit alignment with the Bachelor's programme "Social Worker".

#### 2.1.4.

This criterion assesses the socio-economic justification of the study programme. According to expert groups' discussions held with employers, the existence of the study programme is justified by the labour market's need for auxiliary personnel in social care and rehabilitation.

Enrollment trends show two main streams: 57% of students are admitted immediately after completing secondary education, while 43% are admitted at later stages based on previously acquired higher education. Analysis of statistical data (annexe 2\_Statistics\_students\_Soc\_reh.docx) indicates a stable but limited student population in the "Social Rehabilitator (41762)" study programme between 2016/2017 and 2024/2025. The total number of students fluctuated slightly, peaking at 19 in 2020/2021 and 2021/2022, but returning to an average of approximately 13 students over the last three years (2022/2023 - 2024/2025). This stability suggests a precise alignment with the number of state-funded positions and demonstrates an almost total dependence on budget financing, with an insignificant number of self-financing students. The limited appeal of fee-based studies represents a structural economic weakness, likely influenced by the relatively low salaries in the social sector.

Although the overall dropout rate is relatively low over the long term, a detailed analysis reveals a recent vulnerability, with a significant increase in voluntary withdrawals in the 2024/2025 academic year (6 out of 7 cases).

The high average age of students (40 years) indicates that the study programme functions effectively as an entry point (or retraining pathway) for adult learners. Through this programme, the mission of lifelong learning (LLL) is supported, which is essential for adapting the workforce to socio-economic changes and addressing staff shortages in the sector.

Although the report does not provide a post-graduation employment rate, data on employment during studies are available. The fact that 77% of students are already employed in a social care-related profession demonstrates immediate professional relevance. The study programme not only produces employable graduates but also serves the existing workforce by providing formal qualifications and enhancing the competencies of current staff, a critical factor in ensuring the quality of social services.

#### 2.1.5. Not applicable.

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

The analysis of criteria 2.1.1-2.1.5 demonstrates that the study programme "Social Rehabilitator (41762)" is fully compliant with the requirements of the "Social Welfare" field of study. This compliance is ensured through the logical alignment of the professional qualification at the short-

cycle level and its seamless vertical integration, which facilitates academic mobility toward higher levels (Bachelor's) within the same field.

The admission requirements for the "Social Rehabilitator (41762)" study programme are appropriate, logical, and efficient within the Latvian national context. The reliance on centralised examinations ensures objectivity and rigour in the selection process.

The study programme demonstrates a strong socio-economic justification and effectiveness in attracting and serving the lifelong learning segment. Student dynamics, dominated by adults seeking retraining or formal recognition of prior experience (43% admitted at later stages, average age 40), validate the implementation model. The high proportion of students—77%—already employed in the field serves as a robust indicator of the programme's immediate relevance to the labour market.

It is not clear at this point how useful the plan is for enrolling students in the short-term two-year cycle. The number of students is currently so low that it does not appear to provide significant benefits. Although the programme primarily targets mature students, enrollment and professional retraining decisions depend on opportunity rather than solely on institutional planning.

Strengths:

1. The study programme directly addresses a specific labour market need, training specialists at a level of immediately applicable qualification.
2. The full credit transfer (120 ECTS) to the "Social Worker" bachelor's study programme represents a best-practice model for student mobility within the field.
3. Immediate professional relevance is demonstrated by the fact that 77% of students are already employed in social care-related professions.
4. The study programme supports the mission of lifelong learning (LLL) by functioning effectively as an entry point (or retraining pathway) for adult learners.

Weaknesses:

1. Emerging retention risk due to increased voluntary withdrawal: The significant increase in the voluntary dropout rate (see the number of cases in 2024/2025) poses a risk to programme efficiency.
2. Financial vulnerability and over-reliance on state funding: The programme exhibits a near-total dependence on state-funded places. This high fiscal rigidity creates a structural vulnerability that threatens the programme's economic sustainability.
3. Constrained recruitment pool linked to sectoral economic attractiveness. The relatively low volume of student enrollment is likely a direct consequence of the limited economic appeal of the resulting profession.

## **2.2. The Content of Studies and Implementation Thereof**

### **Analysis**

#### **2.2.1.**

The study programme has a clearly defined goal and learning outcomes that specify what students are expected to achieve upon completing each study course and the study programme as a whole (SAR, p. 196). The learning outcomes of individual courses are aligned with the programme's objectives and tasks, as well as with the knowledge, skills, and competences required by the Social Rehabilitator Profession Standard. They reflect the evolving needs of the modern labour market and constitute the central focus of the programme.

According to the SAR (SAR, p. 197) and annexe 3, the study programme, and learning outcomes harmonise with the state education standard and professional standard. During the on site visit experts met study programme graduates and employer representatives, who were pleased with this

study programme. Graduates valued the skills they have learned in the study programme and employers confirmed that the knowledge and skills students acquire is sufficient for the labour market needs.

Both practice and theory are important in the study programme. For example, a qualification paper is a study with a theoretical, methodological or applied orientation, as a result of which its author provides independently developed insights, conclusions, proposals for the solution of a problem, and proves his or her readiness to work in the field of social rehabilitation. Students choose the topics of study for research papers in relation to the problems of social rehabilitation and current events in the field of social welfare. To strengthen knowledge of foreign languages and ensure the quality of qualification papers, students use literature in a foreign language in their research works. Experts had possibility to read qualification papers - many sources were in foreign languages.

According to the SAR (p. 196), course descriptions are reviewed by the study field committee to ensure compliance with the requirements of EQF Level 6 and to facilitate the potential enrolment of students into the third year of the "Social Work" programme. During this review process, the committee examines whether:

- \* The student's independent work is appropriately represented in the course design;
- \* The latest field-specific literature, including English-language sources, is incorporated;
- \* The selected assessment methods adequately evaluate the competences acquired by students.

According to the Annex 6 (study programme plan), the content of the study programme is developed on the basis of the requirements of the state professional higher education standard as well as the recommendations of employers. During the site visit, experts were informed that the study programme's content has also been refined based on employers' recommendations. For instance, the study course "Communication in Working with Clients" was introduced following feedback from internship supervisors. Experts view this as a positive practice, demonstrating that the programme is regularly updated in response to societal and professional developments (SAR, p. 197).

According to the Annex 5 (mapping of study courses to the achievement of study programme learning outcomes); and Annex 4 (evaluation of the study programme's compliance with the professional standard, experts decision is that the content of the study programme is topical, the content of the study courses/modules is interconnected and complementary, corresponds to the objectives of the programme and ensures the achievement of learning outcomes, as well as meets the needs of the industry, labour market and scientific trends.

2.2.2. Not applicable.

2.2.3.

The evaluation of this criterion concerns the appropriateness and effectiveness of the teaching and learning methods applied in the study programme. Based on the information obtained during the on-site visit, the student-centred approach is reflected in the recognition of students' prior experience, interests, and individual needs. It is also evident in the establishment of positive pedagogical relationships, active involvement of students in the study process and its evaluation, provision of feedback, and the continuous improvement of the study programme. At the same time, students are encouraged to take responsibility and act independently in achieving the intended learning outcomes.

According to the Self-Assessment Report (SAR, p. 198), the principles guiding the implementation of the study programme are aligned with the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (see: ESG, 2015, [https://www.enqa.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/ESG\\_2015.pdf](https://www.enqa.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/ESG_2015.pdf)), which define the core elements of

a student-centred learning process. To address individual learning needs, information technologies are actively used in the study process: study materials, tests, and electronic manuals are available in the e-learning environment, providing opportunities to individualise studies according to each student's needs and interests. The learning materials are hosted on the MOODLE platform.

Teaching and learning methods include lectures, seminars, and practical sessions involving group work, discussions, role-play, individual and pair work, situation modelling, and the analysis of social cases, as well as independent student work (SAR, p. 199). During the on-site visit, experts observed the functionality of the MOODLE platform and noted that the courses are well-developed and user-friendly, demonstrating good practice in student-oriented teaching.

As some students have professional work experience in the field of social work, therefore, both in the study process as a whole and in individual study courses, the constructivist approach is successfully practised, inviting students to share their experience, exchange opinions, discuss, and present their achievements. According to SER (p. 199), the dominant study methods are: lectures, seminars, practical work (group work, discussion, role-playing, individual and pair work, situation modelling, analysis of social cases) and students' independent work. Also cooperation and social interaction significantly complement the study process, and are an important part of the study process. In this programme, the individual approach to students is valued: in SER, p. 200, there are 7 different aspects which support the individual approach.

As the study programme is jointly implemented at Riga Technical University Liepāja Academy and Riga Technical University Rēzekne Academy, a unified programme content and consistent achievement of learning outcomes are ensured across both locations. This is supported by four key elements: a harmonised programme structure, collaboration among academic staff, a variety of internship placements, and adequate material and technical resources (SAR, p. 200). The programme also maintains links with the Bachelor's study programme, fostering cooperation, experience exchange, cost optimisation, and reduced fragmentation. Joint course implementation is practised in subjects such as Social Psychology, Social Law, Theories of Social Work and Rehabilitation Work, Support in Crisis Situations, and Social Work with Case (SAR, p. 199). Experts commend this collaborative approach as an example of effective academic synergy.

Experts conclude that the study implementation methods contribute to the achievement of the aims and learning outcomes of the study courses & study programme; also the student-centred learning and teaching principles are considered and stressed.

#### 2.2.4.

During a professional internship, students acquire the necessary actual material for developing and defending the qualification paper (SAR, p. 204). The tasks are related to the aims of the study programme. Experts evaluated the organisation, quality, and relevance of internships included in the short-cycle study programme. The professional internship, amounting to 24 ECTS credits, is organised in accordance with Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No. 481 "Procedures for the Organisation of Internships in Vocational Education Programmes."

For full-time studies, the internship is structured as follows:

- \* Internship I (Observation practice): 1st semester, 1st year - 3 ECTS credits;
- \* Internship II: 2nd semester, 1st year - 9 ECTS credits;
- \* Internship III: 4th semester, 2nd year - 12 ECTS credits (SAR, p. 202).

The tasks and content of each internship are described in the SAR (pp. 202-203). Experts consider the aims and content appropriate, as they align with the professional standard of social workers. Students may conclude individual tripartite internship agreements between RTU RA or RTU LA, the employer, and themselves if they independently select an internship placement that corresponds to the programme's didactic strategy. If a student does not find an internship independently, a

placement is offered within one of the cooperating institutions that have signed a partnership agreement.

However, during the on-site visit, some students noted difficulties in finding suitable placements. Several also mentioned that they preferred not to complete internships in their current workplaces, as they wished to gain new experiences. The programme director explained that internships at the student's workplace are permitted if the tasks correspond to the specific stage of practice.

Before beginning the internship, students attend an introductory seminar where they are informed about the tasks and the methods to be applied. Upon completion, students must submit an internship report and diary, reflecting the tasks performed, their self-assessment, and the assessment provided by the institutional supervisor. Finally, an internship defence is organised, during which each student presents an overview of their experience and is evaluated accordingly (SAR, p. 204). Experts conclusion is that the tasks of the internship are related to the learning outcomes achievable; and the internship complies with the requirements of regulatory enactments also.

#### 2.2.5. Not applicable.

#### 2.2.6.

The expert group finds that the topics of students' qualification papers are clearly relevant to the field of social rehabilitation and correspond well to the aims and content of the study programme. According to the Self-Assessment Report (SAR, p. 198), the qualification paper is an academic study with a theoretical, methodological, or applied orientation, allowing students to demonstrate professional readiness through independent analysis, conclusions, and problem-solving proposals.

The expert group notes that students typically select research topics related to contemporary issues in social rehabilitation and social welfare, often building upon professional experience gained during internships or employment in the sector. This ensures a close link between academic research and professional practice.

Table 3.2.6.1 (The specifics of social rehabilitation work considered in qualification papers in work with different target groups, SAR, p. 205) illustrates that the topics cover a wide range of relevant social groups—such as seniors, families, youth, and children—demonstrating thematic diversity and professional applicability. The experts positively assess the active use of foreign literature in qualification papers, which contributes to strengthening the academic and professional quality of the work.

Some examples of themes/headlines of qualification papers:

- \* Satisfaction of seniors with social rehabilitation services in long-term care institutions.
- \* Social rehabilitation services provided by municipalities for families with children: improvement of budgeting skills.
- \* Social rehabilitation work methods for developing youth responsibility skills at a children and youth day centre.
- \* Social rehabilitation services designed to ensure the quality of life for persons with visual impairment.

Experts prize the variety of themes and consider the topics of students' final theses to be relevant to the field of Social Welfare and correspond to the study programme.

At the same time, during the on-site visit, the expert group observed that English language proficiency in oral communication requires further improvement, as interpreter assistance was necessary. While written research demonstrates adequate understanding of foreign sources, the ability to present and discuss findings in English remains limited.

The assessment criteria for qualification papers are comprehensive and aligned with academic

standards, covering content relevance, originality, goal achievement, evidence-based reasoning, structural logic, language, presentation quality, and defence performance (SAR, p. 206). The expert group considers these criteria appropriate for evaluating student competencies at this level. The average evaluation of qualification papers ranges between 6 and 8 points, which indicates satisfactory to good academic performance. However, some students still face challenges in maintaining a consistent academic writing style.

During the on-site meetings, graduates emphasised the need for more systematic development of public speaking skills during their studies, as these are essential for professional practice in social rehabilitation. The expert group agrees that integrating such training more explicitly into the study process would further strengthen students' preparedness for the labour market.

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

The analysis of criteria 2.2.1–2.2.6 demonstrates that the student-centred approach to the implementation of the study programme is manifested in respecting the previous experience of students, their interests and needs and building positive pedagogical relationships, involving students in the study process, its evaluation, ensuring feedback and improvement of the study programme, at the same time encouraging to be independent and responsible in achieving the outcomes of the study process.

The learning outcomes of the study courses have been developed according to the objectives and tasks of the study programme and the requirements regarding knowledge, skills and competences necessary for the performance of the basic tasks of professional activity indicated in the Social Rehabilitator Profession Standard, and which are based on the changing environment of the modern labour market. A professional internship, which consists of 3 levels, supports the integration into the labour market: in the amount of 24 ECTS credits in the study programme of the practice is organised based on the Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No. 481, Procedures for the Organisation of Internships in Vocational Education Programmes. Also, a qualification paper helps to connect the academic education with the profession: it is a study with a theoretical, methodological or applied orientation, as a result of which its author provides independently developed insights, conclusions, proposals for the solution of a problem, and proves his or her readiness to work in the field of social rehabilitation. Students choose the topics of study for research papers in relation to the problems of social rehabilitation and current events in the field of social welfare.

The content of the study programme is topical, the content of the study courses/modules is interconnected and complementary, corresponds to the objectives of the programme and ensures the achievement of learning outcomes, as well as meets the needs of the industry, labour market and scientific trends. The study implementation methods contribute to the achievement of the aims and learning outcomes of the study courses & study programme; also the student-centred learning and teaching principles are considered and stressed. The tasks of the internship are related to the learning outcomes achievable; and the internship complies with the requirements of regulatory enactments. The topics of students' final theses are relevant to the field and correspond to the study programme.

Strengths:

1. A student-centred approach is effectively implemented through the process of selecting qualification paper topics, allowing students to independently choose themes that align with their professional interests.
2. The internship system is well structured and comprehensive, consisting of three sequential yet interconnected internship stages that ensure gradual professional development.
3. The study programme demonstrates strong relevance to the local labour market, addressing the

needs of social welfare institutions and regional employers.

Weaknesses:

1. According to the Latvian study grading system, the average evaluation of qualification papers in the RTU short-cycle study programme ranges between 6 and 8 points (on a 10-point scale). This reflects that some students experience difficulties with academic writing, particularly regarding language accuracy and the use of an appropriate scientific style.
2. To strengthen international cooperation, the English language proficiency of both students and teaching staff requires further improvement, as representatives from RTU RA and RTU LA partially relied on interpreter assistance during the on-site visit with the expert panel

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

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

## **2.3. Resources and Provision of the Study Programme**

### **Analysis**

#### 2.3.1.

The RTU's Self Assessment Report (SAR, pp. 207-209) specifies that the Short-cycle study programme is designed with a strong professional orientation, focusing on preparing students for immediate employment in social care and welfare institutions. Unlike the bachelor's and master's programmes, the Short-cycle is not primarily research-driven, but relies heavily on practical training, methodological resources, and cooperation agreements with external institutions.

The study programme is implemented with an extensive list of collaboration agreements (annexe: 2) with municipalities, NGOs, and healthcare institutions. These partnerships form a cornerstone of the programme's provision, allowing students to acquire practical skills through placements and applied tasks that directly link theory to practice.

In terms of informative provision, students have access to the RTU library system, including the RTU LA and RTU RA libraries, both of which provide collections in Latvian and English relevant to social work and welfare. More importantly for this programme, digital databases and electronic resources ensure that even short-cycle students—who may study part-time while working—can access necessary study materials remotely. This supports the flexible learning model that the short-cycle study programme embodies. However, because of the vocational orientation of the programme, the reliance on practice-based resources (case studies, cooperation partners, methodological guidelines) is more significant than reliance on scientific journals. At the same time, scientific activity remains a fundamental component of higher education, and academic staff are legally required to demonstrate active engagement in research or professional development. This ensures that teaching, even in a practice-oriented programme, is grounded in up-to-date knowledge and benefits from the integration of evidence-informed approaches.

The material and technical provision of the Short-cycle study programme has been strengthened by recent investments in ICT infrastructure at regional academies. Rooms equipped with videoconference technologies and mobile 360-degree cameras allow the delivery of hybrid learning opportunities. (annexe: "Information submitted to experts upon request") This is particularly important for the short-cycle student body, many of whom are employed in social services while

studying. Moreover, practical training environments—such as simulated case analysis rooms in RTU LA—allow the development of professional competences under controlled conditions. These technical resources align closely with the programme’s intended learning outcomes, which emphasise professional readiness.

The financial provision for the short-cycle study programme is based on a combination of state funding and tuition fees. RTU ensures that the funding allocated covers both teaching and practice-based components of the programme. The Self Assessment report (SAR, pp. 207-209) notes that the minimum student numbers required for financial sustainability are maintained, ensuring the programme’s viability. Importantly, the programme’s strong regional relevance—meeting labour market demands for qualified social care workers—contributes to its sustainability and attractiveness.

From an evaluative standpoint, the resources provided to the short-cycle study programme are appropriate to its aims and are effective in supporting student learning. The cooperation with external partners provides a strong foundation for practice-based training, while ICT infrastructure and library access ensure that flexible learning is possible for students balancing professional commitments. The financial model appears stable, with adequate student numbers ensuring profitability and continuity.

Nonetheless, critical points of improvement can be noted. Firstly, while library and database access is available, short-cycle students may lack the skills or motivation to engage with scientific literature, which can limit their ability to develop reflective and research-informed practice. Targeted training in information literacy could address this gap. Secondly, the scale of ICT infrastructure in regional academies, though improving, remains limited; bottlenecks could occur when multiple groups require access to videoconference-equipped rooms or simulation facilities. Finally, while funding is sufficient, the Self Assessment Report (SAR, pp. 207-209) provides little evidence of targeted reinvestment of resources specifically into the study programme (e.g., development of specialised teaching materials, continuous renewal of practice agreements).

In conclusion, the criterion is met. The Short-cycle study programme in Social Welfare is supported by adequate study, informative, material, technical, and financial resources that correspond to its vocational character and ensure the achievement of learning outcomes. The strong practice-based orientation, supported by extensive cooperation with social service providers, is a distinctive asset. Improvements could be achieved through enhanced student training in information literacy, expansion of ICT-equipped facilities, and clearer evidence of programme-specific reinvestment of financial resources.

2.3.2. Not applicable.

2.3.3.

The Self Assessment Report (SAR, pp. 209-212) confirms that the Short-cycle study programme is financed through a combination of state budget allocations and tuition fees, consistent with the general funding model applied at RTU and its regional academies. State funding is allocated for study places in line with national policy priorities in social welfare, reflecting the strong labour market demand for qualified professionals in this field. Tuition fees supplement this funding and provide an additional source of programme income, particularly for part-time students who choose to finance their studies independently. This dual funding model provides stability and reduces reliance on a single financial stream.

Evidence from annexes (annexe: 2) and additional information (annexe: "Information submitted to experts upon request") indicates that the programme consistently achieves the minimum student numbers required for financial viability. In practice, the demand for short-cycle studies in Social Welfare remains high due to the pressing need for social care workers in municipalities, care homes, and rehabilitation institutions. The regional positioning of the programme at LA and RA further

supports student recruitment, as it allows access for learners who might otherwise lack opportunities to study in Rīga. This contributes to meeting regional labour market needs and strengthens the social impact of the study programme.

In terms of use of funding, the available resources cover teaching staff salaries, maintenance of infrastructure, ICT equipment, and library access. The Self Assessment Report (SAR, pp. 209-212) also notes that external funding—through European projects and cooperation agreements—has indirectly benefited the programme, enabling investments in videoconference technologies and simulation-based learning environments.

These targeted investments directly support the development of the short-cycle study programme, particularly in strengthening its practice-oriented approach. However, while funding ensures the implementation of the programme, the Self Assessment Report (SAR, pp. 209-212) provides limited quantitative data on the specific allocation of funds to programme development, such as curriculum renewal, teaching material creation, or systematic staff training. This lack of a detailed breakdown weakens transparency and makes it harder to evaluate the efficiency of resource use.

From an evaluative perspective, the Short-cycle study programme demonstrates financial stability and sustainability. The dual funding model, consistent student demand, and state prioritisation of the social welfare sector ensure the programme's continued operation. The profitability threshold is met, and the programme's strong regional relevance guarantees that enrolment is likely to remain stable in the medium term. At the same time, the capacity for development is facilitated by access to project-based investments and cooperation with local institutions.

Nevertheless, several weaknesses should be highlighted. Firstly, while profitability is achieved, the financial model appears to operate at a relatively narrow margin, with little indication of reserves or reinvestment strategies that would safeguard against future fluctuations in enrolment. Secondly, the reliance on external project funding for infrastructure improvements creates uncertainty about long-term sustainability, as such projects are time-limited. Finally, although funding sources are diversified, the Self Assessment Report (SAR, pp. 209-212) does not present clear evidence of structured programme-level financial planning aimed specifically at continuous quality improvement of the Short-cycle study programme curriculum.

In conclusion, the criterion is met. The Short-cycle study programme in Social Welfare benefits from sufficient funding, diversified sources, which together ensure its profitability and sustainability. However, to strengthen the long-term development of the programme, RTU should provide clearer evidence of programme-specific reinvestment, reduce reliance on project-based funding for infrastructure renewal, and develop a transparent financial strategy that explicitly supports ongoing curriculum and quality development.

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

The analysis of criteria 2.3.1, 2.3.3 demonstrates that the Short-cycle study programme in Social Welfare is supported by adequate and appropriate resources, ensuring the achievement of its intended learning outcomes and the delivery of a high-quality, practice-oriented study process.

The study provision, informative resources, and technical infrastructure correspond well to the vocational character of the programme, with strong reliance on cooperation agreements with social service institutions, practical training environments, and ICT-enabled hybrid learning (see criterion 2.3.1).

The financial provision is stable, based on a combination of state funding and tuition fees, and the programme consistently meets the minimum student numbers required for profitability, ensuring sustainability and development capacity (see criterion 2.3.3).

In conclusion, the requirements of part 2.3 are met for the Short-cycle study programme. While improvements could be made in the areas of programme-specific reinvestment, expansion of ICT-equipped facilities, and more transparent financial planning, the overall system of resources and

funding is sufficient, functional, and aligned with the programme's aims.

Strengths:

1. Strong practice orientation supported by cooperation agreements – the programme has extensive partnerships with municipalities, NGOs, and healthcare institutions, ensuring that students gain real-world professional experience directly linked to learning outcomes.
2. Diversified funding model – the combination of state budget allocations and tuition fees ensures financial sustainability, while continuous demand for social care professionals guarantees that minimum student numbers for profitability are consistently met.

Weaknesses:

1. Limited ICT-equipped facilities in regional academies – while videoconference rooms and simulation spaces exist, their number is small relative to programme needs, which may cause bottlenecks when several groups require access simultaneously.
2. Insufficient transparency in programme-level financial planning – while funding is stable at the institutional level, there is little clarity on how resources are allocated and reinvested specifically into the short-cycle study programme (e.g., for new teaching materials, curriculum renewal, or targeted staff development).
3. Dependence on external project-based funding for infrastructure renewal – much of the recent ICT and material upgrading has relied on EU project funding, raising concerns about sustainability once project cycles end.

## Assessment of the requirement [6]

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The study programme demonstrates full compliance with the conditions required for its implementation and for achieving the intended learning outcomes. The study provision is well adapted to the vocational profile of social welfare education, effectively integrating theory and practice through established partnerships with social, healthcare, and municipal institutions. The informative provision ensures equitable access to up-to-date learning and research resources via RTU's digital infrastructure, supporting both academic and professional competence development. Material and technical resources, including ICT-equipped rooms and simulation tools, adequately support hybrid learning and practical skill formation, despite some capacity limitations in regional campuses. The financial provision is stable and diversified, ensuring continuous delivery and development of the programme. Overall, the combination of these provisions provides a coherent, sustainable, and fit-for-purpose foundation for achieving the programme's learning outcomes.

## 2.4. Teaching Staff

### Analysis

#### 2.4.1.

RTU's requirements for selecting academic staff comply with national regulations concerning qualifications, which include the relevant academic degree and sufficient professional experience aligned with the study programme. The study programme will be implemented at both RTU LA and RTU RA using a hybrid model: some study courses will be delivered both on-site and online, while

seminars and practical activities will be conducted on-site, with staff assigned separately to each location. At this stage, the proportion of direct contact hours to be delivered online versus face-to-face remains unclear to the expert panel.

According to Annexe II.2.3.7 and additional information submitted by RTU following the on-site visit of the expert panel, a total of 42 academic staff members from RTU LA and 17 from RTU RA will participate in the implementation of the study field Social Welfare. 28 of whom will be involved in the implementation of the short-cycle professional higher education study programme, Social Rehabilitator.

Despite the fact that RTU LA holds most of the teaching staff members, RTU assures experts that teaching staff members will be evenly divided between RTU LA and RTU RA. By analysing RTU's Self Assessment Report and teaching staff CVs, experts learned that only 2 of 28 staff members involved in the implementation of the study programme hold a higher education degree specifically in the Social Work field. In experts' opinion, this amount should be higher, thus experts recommend attracting more lecturers with degrees in social work, also from the study programme graduates.

Under the Vocational Education Law, at least 65% of teaching staff in higher vocational education institutions must hold qualifications at EQF level 7 or higher. In this study programme, 66% of academic staff hold a PhD, while the remaining 34% hold a Master's degree, with qualifications in social work and pedagogy. Links between staff expertise and the programme's aims and learning outcomes are maintained through professional ties with the social welfare sector, where a portion of the staff are also employed (see SAR, pp. 203-204). This connection supports the integration of study courses with sector needs.

Many academic staff members also teach in other study programmes within the same study field, which promotes thematic coherence across study programmes (see annexe: II.2.3.7). The Self Assessment Report (SAR, p. 204) additionally notes the recruitment of a visiting lecturer. While the inclusion of visiting lecturers from abroad is desirable, there is potential for further development in both the diversity of countries represented and the frequency of such appointments, taking examples such as the Lithuanian ERASMUS+ programme as a benchmark.

#### 2.4.2.

The institution's provided information (SAR pp. 203-205) shows that the teaching staff changes are not major and develop in the direction of stability (elected academic staff). From the data, a conclusion can be drawn that any changes in the assessment period have not negatively affected the quality of the implementation of the study programme. Since the RTU RA highlights the importance of the expert status of the academic staff (two of the elected staff are experts), there should be a strategic resolve based on planned changes in Latvia (the Council of Science does not issue new expert status because of amendments to the Law on Scientific Activity that will be in force starting from the year 2027).

#### 2.4.3. Not applicable.

#### 2.4.4.

The evaluation of this criterion considers whether each member of the academic staff meets the publication or professional experience requirements established by the Law on Higher Education Institutions. Given that this study programme is a short-cycle vocational programme, in which the acquisition of skills and knowledge is closely linked to professional competencies, it is essential that RTU has recruited academic staff with substantial practical experience in the social welfare sector. Relevant professional experience includes work in municipal social services in Rēzekne and Saldus, as well as at centres such as "Marta" (see SAR, p. 204). The SAR also notes that there is potential to recruit additional staff with practical experience, which could also apply to visiting lecturers, thereby further enhancing cooperation with the industry.

From all teaching staff members involved in the implementation of the study field Social Welfare, 28 are involved in the implementation of the study programme “Social Rehabilitator”(see Annex II.2.3.7 and Annex II.2.4.4). Among these, only two staff members appear to have no relevant publications; one of these holds a degree in IT rather than Social Rehabilitation, making this instance less significant for the overall assessment. Overall, 21 staff members (78%) have published papers in scientific journals or conference proceedings over the past six years.

A portion of these publications is indexed in Scopus or Web of Science, indicating the production of peer-reviewed research. Notably, some publications are in fields outside Social Rehabilitation, including education and environmental engineering, which may reflect the interdisciplinary nature of the study courses. However, this also highlights a partial misalignment between the research activities of certain staff and the study field; at least six staff members primarily publish in education sciences.

Information regarding the publication activity of three academic staff members, who teach courses such as Social Rehabilitation in Work with Target Groups, Social Problems, and Starting a Business, appears to be missing. Despite these minor gaps, the criterion is considered met, as the majority of academic staff actively engage in research through publications in journals and participation in conferences.

#### 2.4.5.

Taking into account that the study programme is going to be implemented at two locations (previously separate, independent higher education institutions) that have only recently become structural units of a larger university, the need for a mechanism for cooperation is of even higher importance than in other cases.

The mechanism for the cooperation is thorough and implemented in two major levels, and it is being implemented for every study course. It is imperative that there is a team behind every study course implemented, where one member of the implementation team’s teaching staff has a coordinating role (it is not clearly stated who is appointing this duty, only the qualification criteria are outlined in the SAR, see pp.206-207). The cooperation takes place in three stages: while creating the study course plan/description, after receiving feedback on the implementation of the course, and deciding on changes in the study course. This covers strategic planning cooperation as well as regular cooperation (from the feedback) throughout the year. For more strategic planning, the leading staff of the study programme take part in regular meetings regarding inter-cooperational (between the two units – Liepāja and Rēzekne). However, for this particular case, there should be a mechanism (not just “communication”) in place for meetings with: study programme coordinators and study field coordinators.

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

The analysis of criteria 2.4.1–2.4.5 demonstrates that RTU’s academic staff meet national qualification requirements for the academic staff. The majority of the academic staff are elected, which provides stability in the implementation of the study programme. A considerable part of the academic staff has a degree in pedagogy, which potentially indicates a certain level of imbalance in the academic staff who have a background and their current research activities based in the educational/pedagogy fields of science.

Given that this is a separate SP that is not directly linked to pedagogy, there might potentially arise a need to balance the educational sciences with the social welfare field (related, but not interchangeable).

However, the focus in the study programme clearly is on the practical experience of the staff since most of them have a professional background in the industry; however, as RTU points out in SAR, there is room for growth to recruit even more practitioners from the “industry”. Considering that the

changes regarding consolidation are quite recent, it is evident that the RTU had to implement mechanisms for the staff's cooperation.

Strengths:

1. The study programme's "Social Rehabilitator" academic staff have practical knowledge from the social welfare industry (e.g. social service at different municipalities or experience in occupations connected with the study field).
2. The consolidation process of two educational institutions has created a need for thorough mechanisms on how the academic staff can cooperate and communicate.
3. Staff composition remains relatively stable with minor changes in the number of staff.

Weaknesses:

1. Only two of the 28 members of the staff involved in the implementation of the Social Rehabilitator study programme hold a higher education degree specifically in Social Work. Others have the necessary professional experience, however experts recommend RTU to involve in the study programme more speciality related teaching staff members.

## Assessment of the requirement [7]

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The professional study programme "Social Rehabilitator", implemented by RTU Liepāja Academy and RTU Rēzekne Academy, complies with national regulations governing the selection and qualification of academic staff. The procedures for recruitment and appointment align with the legal requirements concerning academic degrees, professional qualifications, and relevant experience appropriate to the study programme. The teaching staff possess the necessary competencies and credentials to deliver the study courses effectively, supported by relevant professional experience and the required educational background. Although visiting lecturers are engaged on rare occasions and meet the necessary standards, further efforts could be made to attract a greater number of visiting professionals from both academia and industry through mobility or collaborative research initiatives.

## 2.5. Assessment of the Compliance

### Requirements

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The study programme "Social Rehabilitator", implemented by Riga Technical University (RTU) at RTU LA and RTU RA, demonstrates full alignment with the requirements of the State Standard of Vocational Higher Education, as defined in the Cabinet Regulation No. 305, 13.06.2023, "Regulations Regarding the State Standard of Vocational Higher Education". The programme's scope, credit distribution, study course structure, and internship requirements meet statutory requirements, providing a balance of general knowledge (30 ECTS), sector-specific courses (54 ECTS) of which are electives (6 ECTS), professional practice (24 ECTS), and qualification work (12 ECTS).

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

Its title, objectives, learning outcomes, and degree level, practical training correspond to the national qualifications framework (Level 5, LQF) (the Cabinet Regulation No. 322, 13.06.2017) and the professional qualification level 5 of the professional standard "Social Rehabilitator" (Agreed on the Sub-Council for Tripartite Cooperation in Vocational Education and Employment, minutes No. 7 of the meeting held on (see:

<https://registri.visc.gov.lv/profizglitiba/dokumenti/standarti/2017/PS-189.pdf>). Accordingly, the completion of the study programme leads to a professional qualification "Social Rehabilitator". Practical components, internships, and the curriculum ensure that graduates acquire the competencies specified in the standard, including client assessment, planning and provision of rehabilitation services, client safety, first aid, and evaluation of services.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The study programme is implemented in the Latvian language and all its study course descriptions and lecture presentations are prepared in Latvian, which complies with Article 56, section 3, in accordance with the Law on Higher Education Institutions (in Latvian, Augstskolu likums, <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/37967>).

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The sample of the diploma complies with the procedure according to which state-recognised documents of higher education are issued, in accordance with the Cabinet of Ministers Regulations No. 202 of 16 April 2013, "Procedure for Issuing State-Recognised Documents Certifying Higher Education" (Ministru kabineta 2013. gada 16. aprīļa noteikumi Nr. 202 "Kārtība, kādā izsniedz valsts atzītus augstāko izglītību apliecinošus dokumentus", see: <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/256157>).

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The teaching staff members involved in the implementation of the study programme are proficient in the state official language (Latvian), fully complying with Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No. 157 of 8 March 2022, which sets the required level of official language knowledge and procedures for testing proficiency for professional and office duties (Regulations Regarding the Extent of the Knowledge of the Official Language and the Procedures for Examining the Proficiency in the Official Language, see: <https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/330669>).

The official language competence of each staff member is documented in their individual biographies (CVs), which accompany the Self Assessment report of the study field. This ensures that all teaching and professional activities within the programme are conducted in accordance with national language regulations. The compliance is formally confirmed by the RTU's Vice-Rector for Academic Affairs.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

Based on the content provided, the RTU study agreement complies with the mandatory provisions typically required for a higher education study agreement under Cabinet Regulations No. 70 (see: <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/152072-studiju-liguma-obligati-ietveramie-noteikumi>). Key points confirming compliance include identification of parties and programme details, rights and obligations of the institution, student obligations, fees and order settlements, Personal Data and Intellectual Property, including. Provisions cover student consent for processing personal data (in line with General Data Protection Regulation), publication and use of study works, and ownership of intellectual property created during studies, ensuring legal compliance, termination and refund procedures and duration and effective date. The agreement contains all standard mandatory elements, including the description of the study programme, rights and obligations of both parties, handling of intellectual property, personal data protection, and provisions for termination, refund, and continuity of studies. It therefore aligns with the legal requirements for study agreements under Latvian higher education regulations.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

RTU has submitted a document (see annexe: Sadarbibas ligumi.7z) certifying that the university will provide students with opportunities to continue their education in another study programme or another higher education institution/college (agreement with another accredited higher education institution or college) if the implementation of the study programme is terminated.

Riga Technical University's short-cycle professional higher education study programme "Social Rehabilitator" (code: 41762, qualification: Social Rehabilitator) has an agreement with Pauls Stradins Medical College of the University of Latvia's short-cycle professional higher education study programme "Social Rehabilitation" (code: 41762, qualification: Social Rehabilitator).

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

RTU has formally confirmed that students enrolled in the Social Welfare study field study programme — "Social Rehabilitation" (41762) will be provided with compensation in case the study programme is not accredited or its license is revoked (signed by Rector, on 6 June 2025, Doc. Nr. Nr. 01000-2.2.1-e/262).

This includes situations where a student does not wish to continue studies in another programme; in such cases, financial or other losses are covered according to the RTU study agreements, which specify the forms and procedures for compensation.

The confirmation ensures that students' rights and investments in their education are protected, regardless of programme termination.

The RTU policy applies to all types, forms, and languages of study for the social welfare programmes, and any future updates to study agreements will maintain the same principle of loss compensation.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

## **Assessment of the requirement [8]**

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

### **Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The study programme "Social Rehabilitator" implemented by RTU at RTU LA and RTU RA meets all formal, legal, and professional requirements for short-cycle higher education. Minor recommendations relate to expanding intersectoral integration, formalising cooperation agreements for study continuation, and clarifying foreign lecturers' teaching language. While the study programme structure meets all formal standards, a more systematic employer involvement in curriculum planning and practice evaluation would further strengthen the connection between education and labour market needs. The study programme awards the professional qualification of Social Rehabilitator (LQF Level 5) and ensures that graduates acquire all competencies required by the professional standard through applied courses and internships. Broader cooperation with digital, health, and education sectors could enhance graduate adaptability. All study courses and materials are delivered in Latvian language, meeting the requirements of Sections 561(2) and 562(2) of the Law on Higher Education Institutions. Erasmus+ visiting lecturers support internationalisation, but their teaching language should be specified to ensure full compliance and student comprehension. All study processes, materials, and staff meet national language regulations, and the diploma (in accordance with the procedure established by the Cabinet Regulation No. 202 of 16 April 2013, "Procedure for Issuing State-Recognised Documents Certifying Higher Education" (Ministru kabineta 2013. gada 16. aprīļa noteikumi Nr. 202 "Kārtība, kādā izsniedz valsts atzītus augstāko izglītību apliecinošus dokumentus") and study agreement fully adhere to legislative standards. RTU has procedures for recognising prior learning and enabling study continuation, and it guarantees student compensation should accreditation or licensing issues arise. The RTU study agreement includes all mandatory elements required under Latvian higher education legislation, such as the identification of parties, programme description, rights and obligations, tuition fees, personal data protection (GDPR), intellectual property, termination procedures, and refund conditions. Minor improvements are recommended in strengthening employer involvement, expanding intersectoral cooperation, clarifying the language of visiting lecturers, and formalising study-continuation partnerships.

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

The study programme "Social Rehabilitator" (41762) is compliant with national and European requirements (LQF, 120 ECTS), classified at Level 5 in the LQF. The institution has successfully implemented structural adjustments, including the reclassification to a short-cycle programme and the full adoption of the 120 ECTS system, reflecting institutional adaptability and alignment with the European Framework.

The learning outcomes of the study courses have been developed in accordance with the objectives and tasks of the programme, as well as the knowledge, skills, and competences required to perform the core professional tasks specified in the Social Rehabilitator Profession Standard. These outcomes are designed to meet the evolving demands of the contemporary labour market.

The content of the programme and its courses/modules is up to date and well aligned, ensuring that intended learning outcomes are achieved and that the programme aligns with labour market requirements, and current scientific trends.

The methods of implementation actively support the attainment of these outcomes, with student-centred teaching and learning principles consistently applied throughout the programme.

The internship component is directly linked to the learning outcomes, providing practical experience in compliance with regulatory requirements. The topics of students' final theses are relevant to the field of social rehabilitation and correspond directly to the programme's objectives, allowing students to apply theoretical and methodological knowledge in practice.

Furthermore, the programme benefits from a well-established network of cooperation partners and ICT-equipped study environments, ensuring that students gain practical experience in authentic professional settings. These resources are crucial given the vocational nature of the short-cycle programme and provide a stable foundation for achieving the intended learning outcomes, demonstrating that the programme is appropriately and sustainably resourced.

A major strength of the programme lies in its immediate relevance to the labour market and its support for lifelong learning (LLL). The implementation model is validated by the fact that 77% of students are already employed in social care professions, while the recruitment profile, with a median age of 40, confirms its effectiveness as a tool for professional retraining. Furthermore, the full recognition of 120 ECTS enables seamless vertical integration into the bachelor's programme "Social Worker," representing a notable good practice for student mobility within the field.

However, the long-term sustainability of the study programme is affected by structural vulnerabilities that require strategic intervention:

1. Financial and Recruitment Vulnerability - The programme relies almost entirely on state-funded study places and has a low proportion of self-funded students, creating fiscal rigidity and structural economic vulnerability. Additionally, an emerging retention risk has been observed, evidenced by a significant increase in voluntary withdrawals in the most recent academic year.

2. Disciplinary Teaching Competence Imbalance - While the academic staff possess extensive practical experience, only two of the 28 members involved in the programme hold a higher education qualification specifically in Social Work. This disciplinary imbalance may limit the depth of expertise and necessitates a clear recruitment strategy to ensure the sustainable quality of teaching.

3. Material Resources and Financial Planning - Although investments have been made in ICT infrastructure (videoconferencing rooms, simulation facilities) supporting hybrid learning, the limited scale of these resources in regional academies poses potential capacity bottlenecks, endangering the quality of practical delivery. Moreover, there is insufficient transparency in programme-level financial planning, coupled with a high dependence on externally funded projects for infrastructure renewal, raising concerns about resource allocation for ongoing curriculum development.

In conclusion, the programme meets quality standards through its professional relevance and quality assurance mechanisms (cooperation, structured internships, ECTS), but it requires strategic reinforcement of financial stability and a recalibration of core teaching expertise to mitigate identified structural vulnerabilities and ensure continuous programme development.

Strengths:

1. The study programme demonstrates a strong student-centred approach, ensuring that individual learning needs and professional development goals are considered throughout the study process.

2. The study programme holds clear relevance for the local labour market. The inclusion of extensive internships and applied study courses ensures that students acquire job-ready skills and professional experience in line with the professional standard.

3. The study programme is practically oriented and supported by extensive cooperation agreements with municipalities, NGOs, and healthcare institutions, which ensure that students gain direct, real-world professional experience closely aligned with the intended learning outcomes.

4. The study programme's structure, content, and qualification outcomes are fully aligned with the State Standard of Vocational Higher Education, ensuring that graduates obtain the professional qualification and possess the competencies required for effective professional practice in assessment, rehabilitation planning, service delivery, and evaluation.

5. Academic staff possess the necessary language proficiency and qualifications, ensuring that teaching and administrative processes adhere to national standards.

6. Formal mechanisms are in place for the recognition of prior learning and transfer of coursework

from other accredited institutions, supporting students' mobility and lifelong learning pathways.

7. RTU has provided formal guarantees to compensate students in the event of study programme termination or loss of accreditation, demonstrating institutional accountability and commitment to protecting student rights.

8. Participation of Erasmus+ visiting lecturers enhances the international dimension of the programme and introduces students to diverse professional and academic perspectives.

Weaknesses:

1. Greater attention is required to enhance students' proficiency in English, as one of the working languages of the European Union. Although participation of Erasmus+ visiting lecturers contributes to the internationalisation of the study programme and broadens students' professional perspectives, the development of English language competence remains insufficiently prioritised.

2. Despite the availability of ICT-equipped classrooms and simulation facilities, the overall scale of these resources remains limited, which may lead to capacity bottlenecks as student numbers or usage needs increase. While not yet a critical issue, addressing this constraint in a timely manner would be important to ensure the sustainability of flexible and practice-oriented learning opportunities.

3. There is an increasing risk to student retention, as evidenced by the rising number of voluntary withdrawals from the programme.

4. The study programme's financial structure is highly dependent on state-funded study places, creating potential vulnerability and limiting its ability to adapt to fluctuations in student enrolment or funding policies.

5. The number of academic staff holding a formal qualification in social work is very low, which may restrict the depth of discipline-specific expertise available within the programme.

6. The curriculum primarily focuses on social rehabilitation; however, there is potential to strengthen connections with other fields such as digital technologies, health sciences, education, public administration, or data management to prepare students for emerging professional contexts.

7. While internships exist, the variety of placement settings and opportunities to work with innovative service delivery models (e.g., digital social work, community-based interventions) appears limited.

## **Evaluation of the study programme "Social Rehabilitator"**

Evaluation of the study programme:

Good

## **2.6. Recommendations for the Study Programme "Social Rehabilitator"**

### **Short-term recommendations**

1. Support staff in digital transition by providing targeted support and training to academic and administrative staff to facilitate their adaptation to new technologies, particularly in relation to the implementation and effective use of the ORTUS System.

2. Increase external academic and professional engagement by expanding collaboration with visiting lecturers and strengthening connections with research institutions and industry representatives through joint projects, research initiatives, or mobility programmes that bring added value to the study programme.

## Long-term recommendations

1. Expand and optimise learning infrastructure: increase the number of information and communication technology (ICT) equipped classrooms and simulation facilities at RTU Liepāja Academy and RTU Rēzekne Academy, with particular focus on supporting the practice-oriented modules of the short-cycle programme. Implement a transparent booking and monitoring system to ensure equitable access and to identify future investment priorities.
2. Implement transparent financial reporting mechanisms by establishing programme-specific budget reporting that clearly demonstrates how financial resources are allocated to enhance teaching quality and student support. Designate a defined share of programme income for continuous development and quality improvement activities.
3. Establish a sustainable infrastructure investment framework by developing a long-term investment plan at the study programme level to secure consistent funding for essential infrastructure updates through institutional resources, while positioning project-based grants as supplementary support rather than primary funding.
4. Strengthen English language competence by integrating systematic initiatives aimed at improving English language proficiency among students and staff to promote effective participation in international academic and professional contexts.
5. Increase the proportion of academically qualified staff by gradually expanding the number of teaching staff holding qualifications in Social Work to ensure that the majority of academic personnel involved in the programme meet the professional and disciplinary requirements.

## II - "Social Worker" ASSESSMENT

### II - "Social Worker" ASSESSMENT

#### 2.1. Indicators Describing the Study Programme

##### Analysis

##### 2.1.1.

The first cycle (professional bachelor's) higher education study programme "Social Worker" demonstrates a high degree of compliance with the study field of Social Welfare. Its title, code (42762), objectives, learning outcomes, and qualification obtained after graduation - "Social Worker", align with the national and European qualification frameworks, specifically Level 6 of the Latvian Qualifications Framework, and meet the requirements of the professional standard for the Social Worker. The study programme content is consistent with the overarching aims and tasks of the study field, ensuring the development of knowledge, skills, and competences appropriate for this professional level (SAR, pp. 152-159).

##### 2.1.2.

There is a strong and logical interrelation among all elements addressed by this criterion. The programme awards a Professional Bachelor's Degree in Social Work and the qualification of Social Worker. The duration of four years (240 ECTS) for full-time studies is standard for a professional bachelor's study programme. Beginning with the next academic year, the programme is also proposed to be offered in a part-time extramural format (4 years and 5 months), which is socially (and economically) justified to support employees in the sector who seek retraining or professional formalisation. The full-time mode benefits recent high school graduates, while the part-time mode is essential for adult education. The objectives—developing theoretical knowledge, practical skills, and

research competencies—are directly linked to the right to practice the profession and to pursue master’s studies. Admission is based on completion of secondary education and centralised examinations in Latvian, Mathematics, and a Foreign Language. This entry requirement is justified, as it ensures that students possess the basic communication and logical reasoning skills necessary to achieve the Learning Outcomes, which include management, planning, and analytical competencies.

### 2.1.3.

The study programme presents clear evidence of corrective actions undertaken in response to previous evaluations and feedback. Among these are the following:

- \* Revision of the study programme objectives (see Table 3.1.1.3, SAR, pp. 149–151).
- \* Elimination of the modular system to ensure transparency and flexibility.
- \* Full transition to the ECTS credit system.
- \* Consolidation of the Social Worker programmes in Liepāja and Rēzekne into a single unified study programme (the Social Work and Rehabilitation study programme currently operating in Rēzekne will be closed).
- \* Revision of the practice structure and introduction of Research Practice in the third year (see Table 3.1.1.2, SAR, p. 151).
- \* Admission requirements have been revised in line with employer feedback (SAR, p. 153), and admission is conducted electronically based on centralised secondary school exam results.
- \* Modification of study course titles and content (e.g., introduction of Health Literacy and First Aid) in an attempt to better capture scientific trends and labour market requirements (see Table 3.1.1.3, SAR, p. 152).

Discussions with students in Rēzekne revealed that first-, second-, and third-year students in the Social Work and Social Rehabilitation (SWSR) programme are not aware of the potential termination of the programme and the possible transfer to the Social Worker (SW) programme at the Bachelor’s level. On the one hand, this issue needs to be clarified for them. On the other hand, at this stage, the university has not provided sufficient guarantees that first-, second, or third-year SWSR students will not face a heavier workload than their SW peers in order to obtain their qualification after the transfer is implemented. Furthermore, RTU has not provided clear information regarding the situation of fourth-year students should the current programme (SWSR in Rēzekne) terminate in March 2026 (as confirmed in discussions with students and SAR, p. 7).

Changes in study course titles and content do not appear to be entirely successful, as some study course titles suggest an excessive clustering of study areas, which may lead to a superficial treatment of the topics (e.g., Genetics, Psychopathology and Fundamentals of Psychiatry; Gender Psychology and Psychotherapeutic Elements in Social Work).

However, the measures presented by RTU demonstrate a strategic and proactive response to previous evaluations and feedback, an essential element in the cycle of continuous enhancement of academic quality. These actions are, broadly speaking, appropriate and in line with good practices in quality assurance.

### 2.1.4.

The socio-economic justification is solid. The programme contributes to the implementation of national and regional social inclusion policies. According to the information provided, Social Work is a high-demand sector (ranked fifth among thematic groups by employment level – SAR, p. 159) and faces a projected shortage. In line with discussions held with employer representatives, there is an acute need for social workers in both regions where the programme will be implemented.

The employment indicators are excellent. On average, 85–90% of graduates enter professional employment immediately after graduation (data refer to the years 2022–2024 – SAR, p. 160).

Graduates are employed across a wide range of institutions (municipal social services, NGOs, healthcare institutions), confirming the high relevance and transferability of their competencies. According to the same information (SAR, p.160), approximately half of the graduates are employed in Liepāja and the South Kurzeme Municipality, while the rest work in other regions of Latvia. A positive recruitment trend is observed, marked by the admission of over 40 students (including 42 transfer students) in 2024/2025. The programme demonstrates systemic openness through vertical recruitment, with students continuing their studies after completing other higher education programmes.

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

The analysis of criteria 2.1.1-2.1.5 demonstrates that the study programme "Social Worker (42762)" complies with the requirements of the field of study.

The study programme has a sound socio-economic justification and high labour market relevance, evidenced by the 85-90% graduate employment rate immediately after graduation.

Furthermore, the implementation of major structural adjustments, including the adoption of the ECTS system and curriculum reform based on previous evaluations, confirms the existence of a well-developed internal quality assurance system.

Strengths:

1. The high graduate employment rate (85-90%) is an excellent performance indicator, confirming the study programme's coherence with labour market requirements.
2. The management has implemented major structural corrections, demonstrating pragmatism, a deep understanding of the socio-economic context, and the ability to respond to feedback and align with European standards.

Weaknesses:

1. Over-optimisation in an effort to maximise curriculum efficiency, certain study course proposals ended up covering too many areas.
2. Inefficient communication with students currently enrolled in the SWSR programme, as discussions indicated that they were not aware of the implications of the programme's termination.
3. Ineffective risk planning is also evident, linked to students' lack of awareness about the programme's closure, which could potentially result in a significant dropout.

## **2.2. The Content of Studies and Implementation Thereof**

### **Analysis**

#### **2.2.1.**

Based on the information provided in RTU's Self-Assessment Report (SAR, pp. 162-164) and the findings from the on-site visit, the expert panel concludes that the content of the study programme corresponds to its stated objectives and meets the needs of the labour market. It also complies with national regulations, including the Regulations on the State Standard of Professional Higher Education. The structure of the programme—comprising study courses, professional practice, and the final thesis—aligns with the requirements set out in this normative act.

In line with the RTU Quality Policy, the study field's internal quality assurance system includes programme design, approval and modification, student-centred learning, teaching and assessment, student admission, study process management, recognition of learning outcomes, staff qualifications, collaboration models, learning resources and support, information management, public communication, and cyclical external quality assurance (SAR, pp. 34-38).

According to the RTU's Self Assessment Report (SAR, p. 163), the study programme's aim and

objectives are formulated in accordance with the professional standard for the occupation of Social Worker, ensuring the development of professional competences that include theoretical knowledge, practical skills, and normative, ethical, and critically analytical thinking required for social welfare practice across various sectors. The programme content has been developed in close collaboration with field experts and employers and is regularly reviewed during extended meetings of the Council of the Study Field Social Welfare. This collegial process demonstrates stakeholder engagement, consistent with principles promoted in European higher-education policy.

Feedback from graduates and employers confirmed that practitioners actively participate in the design of study content, contribute to conferences, and are involved as members of thesis defence commissions. Graduates are expected to perform independently the professional functions of a social worker, demonstrating analytical capacity, planning competence, and the ability to coordinate and evaluate professional services for different target groups.

Integration of research into teaching is ensured through the use of current research findings, as evidenced by four projects described in the Self Assessment Report (SAR, pp. 163–164)—three Erasmus+ projects and one FLIP project. The documents submitted by the RTU (SAR, p. 164) also note that study course descriptions within the Social Work programme have been systematically revised to align intended learning outcomes with the requirements of the professional standard, eliminate overlaps, and ensure internal consistency across the curriculum. Consequently, course descriptions now present a clearer structure and stronger connection to professional standards.

Graduates and employers additionally emphasised that the programme effectively prepares students for the full range of professional responsibilities. A minor improvement suggested by graduates concerns opportunities to develop public-speaking skills, which are important both for thesis defence and professional practice.

In summary, the study programme's content is topical, internally coherent, and complementary across courses. It aligns with the programme objectives, supports the achievement of learning outcomes, and meets the current needs of the labour market.

2.2.2. Not applicable.

2.2.3.

From the on-site visit and RTU's Self Assessment Report (SAR, p. 166), experts learned that the study programme is implemented with identical content both in RTU LA and RTU RA. Unity is ensured through centralised management, unified documentation and academic staff qualification criteria and methodological work (joint seminars, development of teaching materials, sharing of good practices), as well as a unified assessment and monitoring system (identical examination content, comparative analysis of student achievements, regular Self Assessment, and feedback analysis). Also, a unified Moodle e-learning environment and online lectures ensure content consistency. The only differences lie in the practical sessions and placements, which are adapted to the needs of the regional labour market and local communities.

According to the RTU's Self Assessment Report (SAR, p. 168), lecturers in this programme use teaching methods that promote student engagement, critical thinking and reflective practice. The study process is designed with attention to the diverse learning needs of students by incorporating a variety of pedagogical approaches that foster learning motivation, autonomy, and interest in addressing current social welfare issues through research, as is written in the Self Assessment Report (SAR, p. 168).

During the on-site visit, experts learned from student representatives that the student relationship with lecturers is personal, as the number of students is small. At the beginning of each study course, students are introduced to the requirements for credit acquisition and the list of tasks to be completed during the study course. Study course descriptions with assessment criteria are available

in the e-learning environment and in personal profiles within the ORTUS system. Each practical assignment carries a specific weight in the final grade. A variety of forms of monitoring and assessment are applied, including seminars, independent assignments, tests, portfolios, applied games, and defence of practice projects. At the end of each course, examinations or tests are organised.

According to the Self Assessment Report (SAR, p. 165), a wide range of teaching methods is applied across all study courses, including both traditional academic forms – lectures (introductory, review and problem-oriented lectures); and interactive, student-centred learning forms: (pair and group work, thematic discussions, role play, case analysis and simulations, applied games, practical sessions, and project-based assignments).

These methods correspond to the principles of contemporary higher education didactics, which are rooted in a constructivist approach, where the student actively constructs knowledge through interaction with the environment, peers, and lecturers.

#### 2.2.4.

According to the RTU's Self Assessment Report (SAR, p. 166), the internship (30 ECTS) is implemented across all four years of study, forming a logically structured process for the development of professional competences. Each stage is closely linked to the theoretical content acquired during the corresponding study period, thus reinforcing the integration of theory and practice throughout the study process.

On page 167 of the SAR, the aims of all 4 internship periods are described. Experts also discussed them during the on-site visit: tasks and content of practice are logical and well-developed. Practice coordinators assist students in finding suitable placements based on their prior experience and professional interests. Throughout each practice period, students participate in interim seminars where they receive professional support from the academic staff of RTU LA or RTU RA.

Annexe "Description of the organisation of the traineeship of the students" provides the Senate resolution on the Internship management procedure at RTU. It states that the internship coordinator at an organisational unit helps students find an internship place. If additional assistance is required, students can contact the Career Support and Services Unit, where a career consultant assists students in finding and addressing companies where to can undergo an internship. Once a year, the Career Support and Services Unit organises RTU Career Day, where students also have the opportunity to meet face-to-face or remotely with company representatives and discuss future opportunities. (SAR, p. 169). During the site visit, some graduates complained that it was not always easy to find a place for the practice.

A valuable component of student professional development is the provision of group supervision sessions—organised twice during each 12-ECTS placement (in the 2nd and 4th years). These sessions provide a structured space for reflection and professional support. (SAR, p. 168).

Internship progress is documented in a designated portfolio. Throughout the placement, students must adhere to the Code of Ethics for social work professionals, along with all applicable legal and regulatory frameworks governing the field.

#### 2.2.5. Not applicable.

#### 2.2.6.

According to the SAR, p. 170, the bachelor's thesis can only be defended if the student has successfully demonstrated knowledge and skills in both theoretical and specialised areas, fulfilled all programme requirements, and settled academic and financial obligations. The topics of the bachelor's theses are developed in alignment with the awarded qualification, meaning that students focus on various aspects of social welfare and social work, their development, and they are required to justify their proposals with empirical evidence. The bachelor's theses define the topicality of the

issue and analyse the research problem. The completion of the study programme concludes with a state final examination, which includes the development and defence of the bachelor's thesis and a qualification examination. Both are conducted during a session of the State Examination Commission (SEC).

Experts' on-site meeting with employer representatives confirmed the fact that employers participate in student qualification examinations, so they can be sure about the quality of the education.

The average grade of the final thesis has been from 7,2 to 9 (by a semester-based statistics). Most students choose to write their theses on issues directly related to the professional fields in which they are personally involved. This approach not only deepens their understanding of the chosen problem but also leads to the development of practical solutions for further improvement of the field. Given the actual links between students and the region, this practice ensures a continuous contribution of the programme to the development of the region. (SAR, p. 171).

An analysis of bachelor's thesis topics shows that they are chosen in line with the core principles of social work: in 20the 22/2023 academic year, a student developed a thesis titled "Opportunities for Improving Social Services in the Development of a Child Protection Programme", commissioned by the Liepāja City Council Social Service and Liepāja Orphan's Court. In the 2023/2024 academic year, students developed a thesis commissioned by the Liepāja City Council Social Service to study the topic "Effectiveness of Social Services in Preventing Family Dysfunction". In SAR, in Table 3.2.6.1, both micro and macro level themes are named. For experts, the choice of themes looks relevant.

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

The bachelor's level study programme "Social Worker" is implemented with identical content in both RTU LA and RTU RA. Unity is ensured through centralised management, unified documentation and academic staff qualification criteria and methodological work. The study course descriptions within the Social Worker study programme have been systematically revised, in cooperation with employers.

Social workers are highly needed in the area, which means that the programme is significant. The aim and objectives of the programme are formulated in accordance with the professional standard for the occupation of Social Worker, ensuring the development of professional competences that encompass theoretical knowledge, practical skills, as well as normative, ethical, and critically analytical thinking necessary for professional practice across various sectors of social welfare.

The practitioners are actively involved in the study design process; they also participate in joint conferences and are involved as members of the State Examination Commission. Experts were told during the on-site visit by graduates and employers that this programme enables them to fill all professional tasks needed after graduation.

#### **Strengths:**

1. The relationship between academic staff and students is characterised by mutual respect and close personal engagement, creating a supportive learning environment.
2. Employers demonstrate active involvement in the study process through participation in the State Examination Commission for final thesis defences and by contributing to the design and improvement of the study programme.
3. Integration of theory, research, and practice – the study programme successfully combines academic study with extensive professional practice placements through cooperation agreements with municipalities, NGOs, and healthcare providers, ensuring graduates are both research-informed and practice-ready.

#### **Weaknesses:**

1. Some graduates indicated challenges in finding appropriate placements that fully correspond to their professional specialisation during internship training.
2. The study programme currently provides limited opportunities for students to systematically develop and practise public-speaking and presentation skills within the curriculum.

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

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

## **2.3. Resources and Provision of the Study Programme**

### **Analysis**

#### 2.3.1.

The Bachelor's study programme "Social Worker" is designed as a professional programme that prepares students for careers in social work, social services management, and related professional roles. In contrast to the short-cycle, this programme integrates a stronger academic and scientific dimension, alongside practice-based learning, which requires a broader set of provisions to ensure high-quality implementation.

The study provision is appropriate for the study programme's goals and structure. The curriculum combines theoretical courses in social sciences, psychology, pedagogy, and law with practice-oriented modules and extended internships in social service institutions. Cooperation agreements with municipalities, NGOs, and healthcare providers ensure that students can gain hands-on experience in diverse practice environments. (annexe: 2) This dual orientation of theory and practice supports the achievement of programme learning outcomes, which emphasise both academic knowledge and professional competencies.

The scientific provision is more prominent at the bachelor's level than in the short-cycle, as the programme requires students to acquire research skills and engage with evidence-based practice. Academic staff involved in the programme include doctoral degree holders who contribute to scientific research in areas such as pedagogy, psychology, social work, and other related disciplines (annexe: II.2.3. "Mācībspēku CV"). A considerable number of staff members have publications (annexe: II.2.4.4), although the thematic scope of these outputs is diverse and includes fields such as education, pedagogy, and culture, alongside topics directly related to social welfare. This reflects the interdisciplinary nature of social welfare studies, while also indicating that the level of alignment between research output and the study field varies across staff. Overall, the presence of research-active staff provides an important foundation for integrating scientific knowledge into teaching, while the programme would benefit from a gradual strengthening of research specifically within the social welfare domain. Bachelor's students are thus introduced to research methods, critical analysis, and evidence-based practice, preparing them both for immediate employment and further academic study at the master's level.

In terms of informative provision, students have access to RTU's central library as well as the libraries of RTU LA and RTU RA. The SAR (SAR, pp. 173-174) confirms that international electronic databases (e.g., EBSCO, ProQuest, ScienceDirect) are available to all students remotely. These resources cover core areas of social sciences and welfare, ensuring that students can engage with both Latvian and international literature. Importantly, access to remote databases addresses potential inequalities between Rīga and regional campuses, enabling all bachelor's students to

participate equally in academic and research activities.

The material and technical provision for the programme is adequate, though with some noted limitations. Both RTU LA and RTU RA have rooms equipped with videoconference technologies and simulation facilities, which enable hybrid teaching and practice-based learning. (annexe: "Information submitted to experts upon request") These facilities support flexible learning arrangements and allow the simulation of professional situations, essential for training future social workers. However, the number of ICT-equipped rooms remains limited, raising the possibility of bottlenecks when several groups need access. While this infrastructure supports learning outcomes, its expansion would further strengthen programme delivery.

The financial provision for the bachelor's programme is stable. Funding is derived from both state-financed study places and tuition fees. The programme is attractive due to high labour market demand for social workers and social service managers, and student numbers are sufficient to ensure financial viability. Additionally, participation in national and European projects has allowed investment in ICT and teaching resources, indirectly supporting the programme's development. However, there is limited transparency in how programme-level financial allocations are directed specifically toward curriculum innovation, continuous material renewal, or targeted student support. From an evaluative perspective, the provisions for the Bachelor's programme are well aligned with the specific features of the study field and ensure that learning outcomes can be achieved. The integration of scientific research into teaching distinguishes the bachelor's level from the short-cycle, while strong practice components ensure professional readiness. The library and digital resources are adequate, and financial stability is ensured through diversified funding sources.

Nonetheless, some areas for improvement remain. Firstly, the limited number of specialised ICT-equipped facilities risks overuse and may constrain the quality of hybrid or simulation-based teaching. Secondly, while staff research activities are evident, there is variation in the extent to which research outputs are systematically embedded in the teaching process. Finally, transparency in financial allocation at the programme level could be improved, particularly in terms of demonstrating how resources are reinvested into programme-specific enhancements.

In conclusion, the criterion is met. The Bachelor's programme in Social Welfare benefits from sufficient study, scientific, informational, material, and financial provisions to ensure a high-quality study process. The provisions create strong prerequisites for achieving the intended learning outcomes, combining academic depth with professional orientation. The main improvements needed lie in expanding ICT-equipped facilities, embedding research more consistently into teaching, and enhancing transparency of programme-level financial reinvestment.

2.3.2. Not applicable.

2.3.3.

The SAR (SAR, pp. 174-175) and supplementary information confirm that the Bachelor's programme is supported through a combination of state-funded study places and tuition fees, consistent with RTU's institutional model. State financing reflects the Latvian government's prioritisation of social welfare as a strategic field, given the persistent national and regional demand for qualified social workers. Tuition fees provide additional flexibility and supplement state allocations, particularly for part-time students. This dual-source funding model creates a diversified base that reduces reliance on a single income stream and strengthens financial stability.

The study programme consistently attracts sufficient student numbers to ensure profitability. Demand is maintained by the relevance of the programme to the labour market, where municipalities, NGOs, and social service institutions express a continuing need for bachelor-level professionals. Both LA and RA, now integrated within RTU, draw students from their respective regions, expanding accessibility and sustaining enrollment. This regional reach is particularly important for ensuring that the minimum threshold of students is met not only centrally but also in

decentralised study locations.

The use of funding covers staff salaries, infrastructure maintenance, ICT equipment, and library resources, thereby enabling the full implementation of the study process. In recent years, project-based funding (particularly from European Social Fund initiatives) has further strengthened the resource base, allowing investment in hybrid learning facilities, videoconferencing technologies, and simulation rooms at LA and RA. (annexe: "Information submitted to experts upon request") These targeted improvements have directly benefited the Bachelor's programme, where simulation of social work cases and blended learning methods are integral to teaching practice.

From an evaluative perspective, the financial provision for the Bachelor's programme is both adequate and sustainable. The programme's consistent enrolment ensures profitability, while diversified income sources reduce vulnerability to fluctuations in any single funding stream. Moreover, project-based investments have facilitated ongoing programme development, particularly in ICT and practice-oriented infrastructure.

However, some areas of concern remain. Firstly, although funding is stable, the SAR (SAR, pp. 174-175) provides limited transparency on the programme-specific allocation of resources, making it difficult to assess how much funding is reinvested directly into continuous curriculum innovation, teaching material development, or targeted student support. Secondly, reliance on external project funding for infrastructure renewal raises questions about long-term sustainability: while EU-funded projects have provided valuable improvements, there is no clear evidence of a stable institutional strategy for replacing or upgrading equipment once project cycles end. Thirdly, while student numbers are adequate, regional demographics and declining secondary school graduates in Latvia could present a medium-term risk to enrolment, suggesting the need for proactive recruitment strategies and programme promotion.

In conclusion, the criterion is met. The Bachelor's programme in Social Welfare benefits from sufficient and diversified funding, stable student numbers that ensure profitability, and targeted investments that support development. The financial system enables full implementation of the study process and creates conditions for high-quality outcomes. To further strengthen this foundation, RTU should improve transparency in programme-level reinvestment, reduce dependence on project-based funding for essential infrastructure, and develop proactive strategies to safeguard enrolment in the face of demographic changes.

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

The analysis of criteria 2.3.1 and 2.3.3 demonstrates that the study programme in the study field of Social Welfare at RTU is supported by adequate and appropriate resources, ensuring both the implementation of a high-quality study process and the achievement of advanced learning outcomes.

The study, scientific, and informative provisions correspond to the professional orientation of the programme. The curriculum integrates advanced theoretical modules with applied practice, supported by extensive cooperation agreements with municipalities, NGOs, and healthcare providers. Academic staff contribute to active scientific research and publications, which enrich the study process, while access to RTU's central and regional libraries and international databases ensures that students can engage with high-level academic literature.

The financial provision is stable and diversified, based on both state-funded study places and tuition fees, and supported by project-based investments in ICT and infrastructure. Student numbers consistently meet or exceed the minimum required for profitability, ensuring sustainability and enabling development of the programme. Nonetheless, greater transparency in programme-level reinvestment and reduced reliance on external project funding would further strengthen long-term stability.

In conclusion, the requirements of part 2.3 "Resources and Provision of the Study Programme" are

met for both the study field of Social Welfare and the Bachelor's study programme in Social Welfare. The available provisions are sufficient, appropriate, and sustainable, ensuring high-quality implementation of the study process and creating strong prerequisites for achieving the intended learning outcomes. At the same time, continuous improvement is recommended, particularly in scaling infrastructure—especially ICT resources—strengthening programme-level financial planning and transparency, systematically embedding research outputs into teaching, and maintaining an up-to-date collection of international academic resources.

#### Strengths:

1. Integration of theory, research, and practice - the programme successfully combines academic study with extensive professional practice placements through cooperation agreements with municipalities, NGOs, and healthcare providers, ensuring graduates are both research-informed and practice-ready.
2. Comprehensive access to library and databases - students benefit from RTU's central and regional library network as well as international electronic resources, ensuring equal access to academic literature and supporting reflective, research-informed practice.
3. Stable and diversified funding model - the programme is financed through both state-funded study places and tuition fees, supplemented by project-based investments, ensuring profitability and sustainability.
4. Regional accessibility with strong labour market demand - implementation at RTU Liepāja Academy and RTU Rēzekne Academy provides opportunities for students outside Rīga, meeting local workforce needs and securing steady enrolment that sustains programme viability.

#### Weaknesses:

1. Limited ICT-equipped and simulation facilities - although investments have been made in videoconference rooms and simulation environments, the number of specialised facilities remains too small for the scale of the bachelor's programme, creating risks of overuse and bottlenecks.
2. Limited transparency in programme-level financial reinvestment - although the programme is financially sustainable, the SAR does not provide sufficient clarity on how funds are allocated specifically to continuous curriculum renewal, staff development, or student support.
3. Dependence on project-based funding for development - improvements in ICT and infrastructure have been heavily reliant on European project funding, creating vulnerability when such funding is not available.
4. Demographic risks to student enrolment - while current enrolment is sufficient, demographic trends in Latvia (declining number of secondary school graduates) pose medium-term risks to maintaining profitability.

### **Assessment of the requirement [6]**

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

#### **Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The Bachelor's study programme "Social Worker" fully meets the conditions for implementation and achievement of learning outcomes. The study provision effectively combines theoretical instruction with extensive practical training, ensuring the development of both academic knowledge and professional competencies. Scientific provision is well integrated, as teaching is informed by staff research and doctoral-level expertise relevant to the field. Informative

provision is comprehensive and equitable across campuses, supported by access to extensive digital databases and library resources that promote evidence-based learning. Material and technical resources—including hybrid learning technologies and simulation facilities—adequately support diverse study formats, despite some capacity limitations in regional centres. Financial provision is stable and diversified, ensuring programme continuity and improvement. Overall, the available provisions collectively form a coherent, sustainable foundation for achieving the programme’s intended learning outcomes and maintaining a high-quality study process.

## 2.4. Teaching Staff

### Analysis

#### 2.4.1.

The evaluation of this criterion focuses on whether the qualifications, experience, and competencies of the teaching staff meet the requirements established by regulatory enactments and the specific needs of the study programme. It examines whether the staff’s expertise enables the effective achievement of the study programme’s aims and learning outcomes across all study courses.

According to the Self Assessment Report (SAR, pp. 212–214) and Annexe II 2.3.7 (Curriculum Vitae of the staff), RTU’s requirements for selecting academic staff are in line with national regulations regarding qualifications and professional experience. For professional study programmes, the Law on Higher Education Institutions (paragraph 39, see: <https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/37967>) allows the involvement of academic staff without a PhD, provided they possess sufficient professional experience; such staff members typically serve as non-elected lecturers. Overall, the qualifications of the academic staff are sufficient and correspond to the study programme and study courses, while language proficiency requirements meet those set out in Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No. 157 of 8 March 2022. “Regulations Regarding the Extent of the Knowledge of the Official Language and the Procedures for Examining the Proficiency in the Official Language” (see: <https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/330669>).

The SAR also provides detailed information on the structure of academic staff across RTU Rēzekne Academy and RTU Liepāja Academy. The high proportion (over 90%) of tenured (elected) staff ensures stability in the teaching process, and the distribution by rank is relatively balanced — 32% Professors/Associate Professors, 34% Senior Lecturers, and 34% Lecturers.

The study programme will be offered at both RTU LA and RTU RA. A hybrid model is planned, with courses delivered both on-site and online, while seminars and practical activities are conducted on-site, with different staff assigned to each location. At this stage, it is unclear what proportion of direct contact hours will be conducted online versus face-to-face.

According to the additional information provided in Annexe II.2.3.7 (updated annexe) at the Social Worker programme level, 43 teaching staff members are involved, of whom 11 are from RTU RA and 32 from RTU LA. Only seven (7) of the 43 have a degree in Social Work.

A clear plan for how exactly the study courses are implemented by what staff and what the implementation models are going to be (and how that will differentiate between implementation places - RTU LA or RTU RA) is not clearly stated in the SAR (see chapter 3.4.), however, by the information provided in the Annex II.2.3.7 (updated annex) shows that altogether 66 study courses (incl. writing bachelors thesis) are taught at this study programme. Out of these, 18 are implemented only by one of the involved HEI structural units (either RTU LA or RTU RA). This shows that the study courses are either implemented together (dividing study load between the teaching staff) or the same course is being implemented separately in both places - Liepāja and Rēzekne, offering some flexibility for the implementation of the study programme. Most of the teaching load does fall under RTU LA teaching staff (60% of the involved teaching staff).

Given the professional orientation of the programme, the adequacy of staff qualifications should also be assessed in relation to professional expertise and labour-market relevance. The involvement of

five practitioner-lecturers with extensive social-work experience is therefore to be considered a strength; however, the exact proportion of their teaching load is not specified, which limits the assessment of their overall contribution. The aspect requiring further improvement is the relatively low number of specialists with formal education and qualifications specifically in social work (Bachelor's, Master's, or Doctoral level), as noted in the annexed documentation and during meetings with RTU representatives.

#### 2.4.2.

In the process of changes in the composition of the academic staff, RTU demonstrates an adequate and purposeful approach based on the needs of the study programme. As stated in the SAR (pp. 133-134), the inclusion of more teaching staff with PhD degrees indicates a strategic effort to strengthen academic and research capacity. This is further supported by a 13% increase in the number of PhD holders, which enhances the depth of theoretical expertise and provides a stronger foundation for teaching and supervising students' research projects.

A trend towards involving more staff members with Dr. paed. degrees can also be observed, reflecting the growing emphasis on pedagogical and social-educational dimensions of the programme. Experts note a notable increase in the proportion of staff at the Associate Professor (Docent) level, accompanied by a decrease in the share of Lecturers, suggesting a maturation and internal promotion within the academic team. Although the total number of staff (15) has remained constant, these changes point to professional development and a targeted strengthening of the programme's human-resource potential. Topics related to youth and families with children remain more prevalent in the study field's "Social Worker" programme, where they are more extensively addressed within the course content.

In Annexe II.2.3.7, it can be seen that at the BA level, at least five professors are involved in more than 11 courses. This is a number we consider unreasonable. In the event of retirement or other reasons for staff departure, RTU may face major difficulties in finding personnel to teach these courses. When this information is combined with that from the other two programmes, some professors (we counted at least six) appear to be teaching an excessive number of courses (more than 10, up to 20+). This poses a risk not only to staff composition but may also affect the quality of teaching and research due to overloading with diverse subjects and an excessive number of teaching hours.

#### 2.4.3. Not applicable.

#### 2.4.4.

Since a part of the teaching staff are not elected academic staff (see Annex II 3.2.7 excel column "Election Status at the Higher Education Institution (Yes/No)"), it means that the publishing in peer reviewed editions is not the primary proof of qualification, the aspect of practical experiences (since 11 of the teaching staff are not elected as academic staff with a good proportion of them without a PhD) is also present in the professional study programme.

Out of 32 elected academic staff, fewer than 30 (84%) have published papers in journals or have a paper in conference proceedings. One of the staff members doesn't have any published research outputs (only activity via projects; study course: Document Management in Social Work - 3 ECTS; Professional Language and Speech Culture - 4 ECTS). 4 out of all the academic staff in this study programme are not mentioned in the annex regarding publications and projects (Annex II 2.4.4. - specified/amended).

At least 10 of the academic staff members have publishing experience, mainly in the fields of education or pedagogy, e.g. staff from study courses: Information Technologies; Data Collection and Processing. Study Paper III; Professional Identity of the Social Worker; Social Work with Groups; Genetics, Psychopathology and Basics of Psychiatry, etc. This indicates that for the strategic further

development of this study programme, the academic staff have to be involved more intensely in the research field of social welfare.

Involvement of the academic staff in the research under the field of social welfare is especially crucial for the academic staff that have more than a few study courses in the SP (see Annex II 3.2.7. (updated annex) e.g. for study courses “Case Management in Social Work Practice”, “Crisis Intervention in Social Work Practice”, especially RTU RA academic staff that besides a course “Gender Psychology and Psychotherapeutic Elements in Social Work” has other 16 (!) study courses, and other study courses), because they must have a vast (professional and/or research-based) knowledge base to be able to cover all of the areas included in the study courses. Out of five (5) staff members who have 10+ study courses, four (4) have research publishing experience. The one staff member who does not (they have 11 study courses in the SP), has a strong professional experience, that is gained via work at social services (social service centre director) which obviously demonstrates a strong basis of professional experience. Out of these five teaching staff members, two have a more pronounced profile in education field and not social work or social welfare field, this in one case is even more concerning since they do not present a professional background in the social welfare field also.

The professional experience (See SAR pp/168-171; Annex II 2.3. Biographies of the teaching staff members) ranges from the academic staff taking part in projects, working at (or even being the manager of) the social services or social rehabilitation centre, or municipality’s night shelter, municipality working groups, municipal police department, and even being involved in the methodological development for social work with the youth. It is important that professional social workers are also involved in the teaching (good example in the SP given by the staff member of the study course “Document Management in Social Work – 3 ECTS” and “Social Work with Individuals and Families – 3 ECTS”).

Overall, it can be concluded that the publishing practices of the teaching staff are sufficient based on the provided information (Annexes: CV of the teaching staff; Annex II 2.4.4. amended), with some publishing papers also in Scopus or WoS or ERIH+ indexed journals. The publications seem to be in many different areas, however, quite prevalent are publications in the education field or language or culture.

#### 2.4.5.

According to the Self Assessment Report (SAR, p. 136 and p.173), study academic staff meetings take place on a regular basis (SF Council meetings). Also, the cooperation is implemented through mutual projects and co-authoring publications. Since the programme is going to be implemented also in RTU RA and RTU, this aspect of mutual cooperation is going to become even more present.

An analysis with involved teaching staff is being done throughout the year, where the staff members mutually analyse if the study programme has to be updated/modified in some way. If so, it is done via mutual effort, involving all the staff members who are involved in some capacity in the implementation of the study course. Although it is mentioned (SAR, p.173), that while modifications are being made, teaching staff from the specific course are involved in the process, however, it is not crystal clear how (and if) the cooperation in the process also is carried out in a way it doesn’t negatively affect the overall curriculum in the study programme and the interconnections within the SP (and not only the course so there are no overlaps etc.).

It is not clear if the “regular” meeting schedule for the staff means every month, every semester, year or other base for claiming its regularness or if the regularity of the meetings are based on ad-hoc needs that just happen to be on a regular basis.

A separate case mentioned in the SAR (SAR, pp. 172-173) indicates a mutual cooperation between the RTU RA and RTU LA towards improving the study programme by working out a new study course.

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

The academic staff involved in the study programme has the required educational background and professional experiences to add to a successful implementation of the study programme. Since the programme is a professional study programme, there is a focus on professional experience, however, this should not take the whole attention away from participation in research and creating research outcomes in the field of social welfare (and not education or pedagogy). There are mechanisms in place for academic staff's cooperation and networking for the development and implementation of the study programme and its courses, however, it is not clear what the framework for holding these meetings are (how often, who participates when, what usually is included in the agenda etc.). The academic staff composition is quite balanced and the will to include more staff with PhD level degrees shows a strategic move towards more science based studies.

### Strengths:

1. The academic staff is qualified and together covers a vast professional experience in the field of social welfare.

### Weaknesses:

1. A considerable part of the staff's participation in research and the creation of research outcomes is in the field of education and pedagogy.

2. The number of teaching staff holding a degree in Social Work is very limited.

3. A small number of academic staff teach a disproportionately large number of courses, posing risks to both teaching quality and staff sustainability.

## Assessment of the requirement [7]

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

### **Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The study programme "Social Worker" implemented by RTU meets the requirements for selecting academic staff, and the procedures are in line with the national requirements regarding the academic staff's qualifications (acquired degree and qualification or sufficient professional qualifications and experience that is in line with the study programme). The teaching staff have the qualifications for implementing study courses under the study programme, including professional experience and the minimum education requirements. Regarding visiting staff, there is a rare occasion for visiting staff where the requirements are met; however, there is room for improvement in attracting more visiting staff, both from the industry and academia (via mobility projects or research collaboration projects). A part of the teaching staff is not elected as academic staff (RTU LA, this is more prevalent), but are qualified as teaching staff.

## 2.5. Assessment of the Compliance

### Requirements

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

### **Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The Professional Bachelor's study programme "Social Worker" fully complies with the Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No. 305 "Regulations on the State Standard of Professional Higher Education".

The programme awards a Professional Bachelor's degree in Social Work and a Level 6 professional qualification of a Social Worker, enabling graduates to begin independent professional practice in accordance with Latvian legislation. Graduates are qualified to work in social services, social care institutions, educational and healthcare institutions, non-governmental and public organisations, as well as other settings within the social welfare system.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The Professional Bachelor's Study Programme fully complies with the Professional Standard for the Occupation "Social Worker" (see:

<https://registri.visc.gov.lv/profizglitiba/dokumenti/standarti/2017/PS-145.pdf>), as established in the Republic of Latvia. The aim and objectives of the programme are formulated in accordance with this standard, ensuring the development of professional competences that integrate theoretical knowledge, practical skills, as well as normative, ethical, and critically analytical thinking required for professional practice across diverse sectors of social welfare.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The study programme is implemented in the Latvian language and all its study course descriptions and lecture presentations are prepared in Latvian, which complies with Article 56, section 3, in accordance with the Law on Higher Education Institutions (in Latvian, Augstskolu likums, <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/37967>).

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The sample of the diploma complies with the procedure according to which state-recognised documents of higher education are issued, in accordance with the Cabinet of Ministers Regulations No. 202 of 16 April 2013, "Procedure for Issuing State-Recognised Documents Certifying Higher Education" (Ministru kabineta 2013. gada 16. aprīļa noteikumi Nr. 202 "Kārtība, kādā izsniedz valsts atzītus augstāko izglītību apliecinošus dokumentus", see: <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/256157>).

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The teaching staff members involved in the implementation of the study programmes in the social welfare study field are proficient in the State official language (Latvian), fully complying with Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No. 157 of 8 March 2022, which sets the required level of official language knowledge and procedures for testing proficiency for professional and office duties. The official language competence of each staff member is documented in their individual biographies (CVs), which accompany the Self Assessment Report of the study field. This ensures that all teaching and professional activities within the programme are conducted in accordance with national language regulations. The compliance is formally confirmed by the Vice-Rector for Academic Affairs.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

Based on the content provided, the RTU study agreement complies with the mandatory provisions typically required for a higher education study agreement under Latvian law. Key points confirming compliance include identification of parties and programme details, rights and obligations of the institution, student obligations, fees and order settlements, Personal Data and Intellectual Property, including. Provisions cover student consent for processing personal data (in line with GDPR), publication and use of study works, and ownership of intellectual property created during studies, ensuring legal compliance, termination and refund procedures and

duration and effective date. The agreement contains all standard mandatory elements, including the description of the study programme, rights and obligations of both parties, handling of intellectual property, personal data protection, and provisions for termination, refund, and continuity of studies. It therefore aligns with the legal requirements for study agreements under Latvian higher education regulations.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

RTU ensures that students can continue their education in another study programme or higher education institution through a structured recognition of prior learning process. According to Resolution No. 02000-1.1/29 (4 April 2016) and the accompanying regulation, courses completed at other universities or RTU study programmes are evaluated for equivalence with RTU courses. Recognition may be full, partial, or not granted, based on a comparison of learning outcomes, study course content, and volume, ensuring alignment with RTU study programme requirements. The process allows combining multiple courses into one or recognising one study course as multiple courses, and it applies to courses corresponding to EQF Levels 5-8 from accredited institutions. This framework facilitates student mobility and progression, supporting continuity of studies and academic advancement.

RTU has provided a document (annexe: 01000-2.2.1-e\_262.edoc) certifying that the university guarantees compensation for financial losses to students if the study programme is not accredited or if the study programme license is revoked due to the actions (actions or omissions) of the higher education institution or college, and the student does not wish to continue studies in another study programme. The agreement for the first-cycle (professional bachelor's) study programme is as follows:

"Social Worker" (code: 42762, qualification: Social Worker, degree: Professional Bachelor's Degree in Social Work) — agreement between RTU and the University of Latvia for the first-cycle (professional bachelor's) study programme "Social Work" (code: 42762, qualification: Social Worker, degree: Professional Bachelor's Degree in Social Work).

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

RTU has formally confirmed that students enrolled in the social welfare study field programme - "Social Work" will be provided with compensation in case the study programme is not accredited or its license is revoked (signed by Rector, on 6 June 2025, Doc. Nr. Nr. 01000-2.2.1-e/262).

This includes situations where a student does not wish to continue studies in another programme; in such cases, financial or other losses are covered according to the RTU study agreements, which specify the forms and procedures for compensation.

The confirmation ensures that students' rights and investments in their education are protected, regardless of programme termination.

The RTU policy applies to all types, forms, and languages of study for the social welfare programmes, and any future updates to study agreements will maintain the same principle of loss compensation.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

### **Assessment of the requirement [8]**

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The Professional Bachelor's study programme "Social Worker" fully complies with the Law on Higher Education Institutions and other relevant regulatory enactments in Latvia. The programme adheres to Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No. 305, "Regulations on the State Standard of Professional Higher Education", ensuring that the curriculum, learning outcomes, and qualification level meet the statutory requirements for professional higher education. Graduates are awarded a Professional Bachelor's degree in Social Work and the corresponding Level 6 professional qualification of Social Worker, enabling them to commence independent professional practice in accordance with Latvian legislation. The programme fully aligns with the Professional Standard for the Occupation "Social Worker" (Minutes No. 7, 14 October 2020). Its aims and objectives are formulated to ensure that graduates develop professional competencies, integrating theoretical knowledge, practical skills, normative and ethical understanding, and critical analytical thinking, applicable across social services, healthcare, education, NGOs, public administration, and other social welfare sectors. The study programme equips graduates to operate effectively within the social welfare system, providing them with the skills and competences necessary for planning, coordinating, evaluating, and delivering social services in diverse professional contexts, while adhering to ethical and legal standards.

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

The Bachelor's programme "Social Worker" demonstrates a solid academic and administrative structure. The programme is delivered with identical content at both RTU Liepāja Academy (LA) and RTU Rēzekne Academy (RA), with coherence ensured through centralised management, shared documentation, standardised staff qualification criteria, and joint methodological activities. This unified implementation, aligned with the Professional Standard, ensures comparable competences in assessment, planning, and social intervention across both locations (RTU LA and RA).

The curricular rationale, aims, and objectives of the programme are formulated in accordance with the professional standard for the Social Worker occupation. This alignment guarantees the development of complex professional competences that integrate theoretical knowledge, practical skills, and the normative, ethical, and critical analytical thinking required for professional practice across diverse social work sectors. Access to international databases, simulation facilities, and an extensive network of practice partners supports the development of both academic and applied competences. The programme's relevance is confirmed by the high demand for social workers in the

region.

A key strength lies in the systematic review mechanism for course descriptions in collaboration with employers, which ensures the currency and relevance of the content. The programme equips graduates with a comprehensive set of operational competences essential to the social care system: from client assessment, case management, and needs identification to intervention planning and coordination of social services. Consequently, graduates are prepared to support individuals, families, and communities in a variety of circumstances and are capable of performing all professional tasks immediately upon graduation, as confirmed by employers and alumni during site visits. The excellent employment rate (85–90%) and positive employer feedback further attest to graduates' ability to operate effectively within the social care system.

The practical dimension of the programme is reinforced by the active involvement of practitioners in curriculum design, joint conferences, and service as members of the State Examination Committee. Available resources — including access to digital databases, simulation-based training environments, and an extensive network of placements in municipal institutions, NGOs, and the healthcare sector — enable students to apply theoretical knowledge in real-world contexts. These aspects demonstrate that the bachelor's level programme possesses a coherent and adequate resource base to achieve the intended learning outcomes and support consistent delivery across both regions.

Nevertheless, despite this solid operational foundation, a number of risks require attention to maintain long-term quality standard:

1. Human Resource Sustainability - There is a structural deficit of teaching staff with formal qualifications specifically in Social Work, alongside a small number of lecturers carrying an excessive teaching load.
2. Risk Management and Communication: - The closure of the previous programme (SWSR) and the transition of students present communication vulnerabilities that may lead to student attrition.
3. Curricular Structure and Risk of Superficiality - Efforts to streamline the curriculum have resulted in "over-optimisation" through the consolidation of different study fields into single courses. This approach dilutes the focus on discipline-specific competences and risks superficial treatment of specialised subjects.
4. Development of Transversal Skills - The omission of systematic integration of public speaking skills into the curriculum limits the full professional profile of graduates.
5. Infrastructure Sustainability - Reliance on external project-based funding for ICT infrastructure modernisation creates long-term uncertainty in the absence of an institutionalised investment plan

Strengths:

1. The study programme demonstrates full compliance with national higher education legislation, state standards, and professional regulations, ensuring that graduates are fully prepared for recognised professional practice within the Latvian social work sector.
2. The relationship between academic staff and students is characterised by openness, mutual respect, and personal engagement, contributing to a supportive learning environment.
3. Employers are actively engaged in the study process by participating in final thesis defence commissions and contributing to the ongoing development and improvement of the study programme.
4. The integration of academic study, scientific input, and extensive professional practice placements through cooperation agreements ensures that graduates are both research-informed and practice-ready, directly aligning the study programme with labour market needs.
5. The study programme demonstrates a high graduate employment rate, confirming its relevance to professional needs.

6. The management has shown responsiveness to stakeholder feedback by implementing significant structural improvements in study programme organisation and delivery.

Weaknesses:

1. The research activities of academic staff, including those involving students, could be more strongly focused on topics directly related to social welfare and social work.
2. Some graduates reported challenges in securing appropriate internship placements corresponding to their field of study.
3. Opportunities to develop public-speaking and presentation skills are limited and should be more systematically embedded across study courses.
4. While current ICT and simulation facilities are adequate, their limited scale may become a bottleneck as demand increases; addressing this risk in a timely manner would strengthen the sustainability of practice-oriented and hybrid learning formats.
5. Certain study courses have become overly broad as a result of curriculum streamlining efforts, which may dilute focus on discipline-specific competencies.
6. The proportion of academic staff holding a formal qualification in social work remains low, potentially limiting the depth of subject-specific expertise within the programme.
7. The high teaching workload of key academic staff poses a risk to sustainability and may affect opportunities for research and professional development.

## Evaluation of the study programme "Social Worker"

Evaluation of the study programme:

Good

## 2.6. Recommendations for the Study Programme "Social Worker"

### Short-term recommendations

- |  |
|--|
| 1. Enhance the system for securing internship placements to ensure timely and appropriate practice opportunities for all students.   |
| 2. Strengthen students' public speaking and presentation skills through integrated study activities and course assignments.  |
| 3. Review and optimise the teaching workload distribution, particularly for staff responsible for a large number of courses.   |
| 4. Focus research efforts on topics relevant to social work by embedding these themes in research projects, study courses, and student theses, supported by workshops, mentoring, and access to field-specific data. |
| 5. Develop partnerships with social service organisations to involve experienced practitioners as part-time or guest lecturers in the study process.   |

### Long-term recommendations

- |   |
|---|
| 1. Expand and modernise information and communication technology-equipped classrooms and simulation facilities, particularly at Liepāja Academy and Rēzekne Academy, and establish a sustainable renewal plan to maintain technological resources beyond individual project cycles. |
|---|

2. Implement programme-level financial reporting mechanisms that clearly demonstrate how income is reinvested to enhance study quality. By introducing an annual budget allocation dedicated to curriculum innovation and targeted quality improvements.
3. Enhance proactive student recruitment strategies, including outreach to secondary schools, the introduction of flexible study options for employed adults, and targeted promotion in regions with a strong demand for social welfare professionals.
4. Increase the proportion of academic staff holding qualifications in Social Work to ensure that the majority of teaching personnel meet the required professional standards.
5. Strengthen research capacity and output in the field of social welfare, promoting greater alignment between academic activities, societal needs, and national research priorities.
6. Advance internationalisation and academic collaboration by expanding partnerships with foreign Social Work programmes through joint research projects, conferences, student and staff exchanges, and co-authored publications, thereby improving academic excellence and international visibility.
7. Attract and retain qualified social work professionals as academic staff, by offering competitive employment conditions, structured professional development opportunities, and incentives that encourage both research and teaching engagement.

## **II - "Social Work Management" ASSESSMENT**

### **II - "Social Work Management" ASSESSMENT**

#### **2.1. Indicators Describing the Study Programme**

##### **Analysis**

##### 2.1.1.

The Master's level study programme "Social Work Management" complies with the field of study "Social Welfare". The study programme (code 47762) is a second-cycle (Professional Master's) study programme, aimed at training high-level specialists (Senior Social Workers).

The study programme corresponds to Level 7 of the EQF. Its objectives, learning outcomes, and targeted qualification are directly aligned with the dimensions of management, research, and innovation in the social field. By extending implementation to two RTU locations (Liepāja and Rēzekne), the programme strengthens its strategic role as a provider of regional managerial expertise in social work.

##### 2.1.2.

The title ("Social Work Management"), the qualification ("Senior Social Worker") and the degree awarded upon completion ("Professional master's degree in social work") correspond to the objective of training social work specialists with both management and research competences. The study programme's objectives are directly linked to the Learning Outcomes (LOs), which include leadership skills, critical analysis, and the ability to formulate evidence-based solutions (SAR, pp. 105-106).

The language of instruction is Latvian. This is a justifiable choice, given that the study programme primarily targets graduates from Latvia and aims to train social work professionals to meet local and regional Latvian needs.

The study programme offers two admission pathways with the following study duration: 1) one year and five months (90 ECTS) for those holding a Professional Bachelor's degree in the field, and 2) two

years (120 ECTS) for those from related fields. The differentiated duration is, economically and academically efficient. This structure, together with the admission examination (written test and motivation/experience interview), is relevant and coherent, as it ensures that all students, regardless of background, are adequately prepared for the rigours of management in social work. The interview assesses leadership and communication skills—crucial aspects for a future manager.

### 2.1.3.

The study programme presents clear and well-documented evidence of extensive corrective actions, thereby demonstrating a robust quality assurance system (SAR, pp.108-110). RTU has implemented the following measures:

1. Full transition to the ECTS system to ensure international comparability.
2. Revision of the Programme Objectives and Learning Outcomes.
3. Adjustment of the curriculum through the introduction of new courses (e.g. Social Pedagogy - 6 ECTS) and the modification of the internship component (e.g. B1; B2; B3; B4; B5 - "Master's Internship in Specialisation" (9 ECTS)) by adding a new element - professional supervision as a tool for professional development. To ensure the quality of supervision, the university has engaged a specialist from the Latvian Association of Supervisors, a recognised professional body.
4. Strengthening of the programme through a proposal to implement it in both locations (Rēzekne and Liepāja), with the expectation that this will increase the number of students and improve economic efficiency. It is proposed that a portion of the study courses be delivered online, while seminar activities and other face-to-face components will take place on-site at each of the two academies, ensuring that online delivery does not exceed 50% of the full-time study programme amount.
5. Expansion of the number of thematic focus areas. RTU proposes that the programme should include five thematic focus areas (SAR, p.109; pp.111-115) (referred to as specialisations in the SAR):
  - \* Social Worker for Working with Families with Children
  - \* Social Worker for Working with Children and Youth
  - \* Social Worker for Working with Individuals with Addictions and Codependency
  - \* Social Worker for Working with Seniors
  - \* Social Worker Working with Clients of the Penitentiary System and Probation in the Resocialisation Phase.
6. Revision of the admission and training procedures, as already outlined under the previous criterion.

### 2.1.4.

The social justification is strong. The economic rationale is evident from the organisation of the programme, which delivers courses in an online or hybrid format simultaneously for students from RTU RA and RTU LA, while seminars and practical activities are conducted face to face at each of the two locations. The programme addresses the pressing labour market need for specialists in the field of social work and seeks to assert its identity and uniqueness through the five thematic focus areas. These tracks are designed in accordance with regional needs, and there is a clear justification for their selection (SAR, pp.17-21; pp.108-109; pp.115-118). In fact, three of these specialisations already exist, one is thematically adjusted (Social Worker for Working with Seniors), and one is newly introduced (Social Worker Working with Clients of the Penitentiary System and Probation in the Resocialisation Phase).

On the other hand, these tracks have also been designed in line with available regional resources (laboratories, facilities, and staff). Although the option to create several thematic focus areas is justified by real societal needs, at this stage, it appears that none of the employers' representatives were aware of this diversification plan. It also seems that employers do not emphasise the need for

MA-level graduates, focusing instead on BA-level needs. The integration of new specialisation directions at the master's level could rather be seen as an opportunity for applied research, especially since employers (whom the experts met during the on-site visit) did not appear to be particularly concerned with the specific specialisation directions at the master's level. Perhaps RTU should further reflect on the usefulness of this plan in terms of economic efficiency.

The employability indicators are excellent and confirm the programme's professional relevance. Among the six graduates of the January 2025 cohort, five are already actively integrated into the labour market, holding positions within institutions and services in the field of social work (annexe 5\_Statistical data\_Social Work Management.docx). All (100%) 2023 graduates who responded (11 out of 17) to the survey are employed, occupying positions such as Social Worker, Social Pedagogue, Head of Department, and Organisation Manager.

Examples of organisations employing graduates of the Master's programme include municipal social services (Ogre, Tukums, Valmiera, Liepāja), state institutions (VSAC "Kurzeme"), the non-governmental sector (Children's Palliative Care Association, SAIF "Kurzemes ģimeņu atbalsta centrs"), as well as the education sector (where graduates work as social pedagogues in pre-school institutions). These results confirm the programme's capacity to prepare specialists capable of operating effectively at the micro, meso, and macro levels within the social services system.

2.1.5. Not applicable.

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

The analysis of criteria 2.1.1-2.1.5 demonstrates that the professional Master's study programme "Social Work Management" (47762) is of high quality and demonstrates strong internal coherence. The study programme's solid socio-economic justification is supported by the excellent graduate employment rate. The decisive implementation of major structural improvements (ECTS system, consolidation, curriculum reform, and new thematic specialisation tracks) confirms the existence of a mature, responsive, and evidence-based internal quality assurance system.

Strengths:

1. High rate of immediate student employability.
2. Alignment between acquired competencies and the field of employment: all active graduates work in the same sector for which the programme was designed, confirming the coherence between the training objectives and the actual labour market needs.

Weaknesses:

1. Limited employer relevance of master's "specialisations".
2. Consultations with employers were not sufficiently extensive or detailed regarding the diversification of the master's study programme.

## **2.2. The Content of Studies and Implementation Thereof**

### **Analysis**

2.2.1.

The second-cycle professional Master's degree study programme "Social Work Management" has been developed in accordance with the Regulations: the study programme's aims, content and intended learning outcomes are aligned with the requirements defined in the Standard regarding knowledge, skills and competences characteristic of Level 7 of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) and the Occupational Standard of the Leading Social Worker. (SAR, p. 125).

The study programme is planned to be implemented in two locations - at RTU LA and RTU RA - in

compliance with unified academic, methodological and quality assurance principles. The programme content, intended learning outcomes, and objectives will be identical at both implementation sites. According to the RTU's Self Assessment Report (SAR, p. 128), the unified approach to the study programme will be ensured through a centralised management and coordination mechanism. This will include harmonised study course descriptions, aligned teaching plans, a shared repository of study materials, and a consistent application of assessment criteria and academic requirements.

Experts note that the study programme curriculum combines advanced theoretical modules (e.g., social policy analysis, advanced methods in social work, welfare system management) with applied components that maintain a strong link to professional practice. Internship placements and case studies are supported by RTU's extensive cooperation agreements with social service institutions, municipalities, and NGOs (annexe: 2). This ensures that students can contextualise theory within the realities of social welfare provision.

The study programme curriculum allows students to select elective courses (for a total amount of 3 ECTS) that align with their interests and professional background. During the on-site visit, students additionally expressed a desire for the possibility to choose a study course on public speaking.

Importantly, the study programme emphasises independent research projects and master's theses, which develop students' capacity for evidence-based practice and policy analysis.

The study programme offers two study durations. For applicants with a previously obtained professional bachelor's degree in social work and/or the professional qualification of social worker, the duration is one year and five months. For applicants with an academic or professional education in another field, the duration is two years. During the reporting period, the professional Master's study programme Social Work Management has been implemented and is planned to continue to be implemented as a full-time study programme. Lectures and seminars are delivered in both face-to-face and online formats, with two sessions per month (over two weekends - Thursday, Friday, Saturday).

Experts were informed that after completing the general and professional specialisation courses, students are offered the opportunity to choose the specialisations: five possibilities are offered now (according to Table 3.1.1.1). The previously available specialisation "Social Worker for Work with Diversity" is cancelled. Instead, two new specialisations have been developed to reflect the challenges of contemporary society and international trends: Social Worker for Work with Seniors - This specialisation responds to demographic changes and the ageing of society in Latvia and across Europe. And a Social Worker for Work with Clients of the Penitentiary and Probation System in the Resocialisation Phase is available, too. In Table 3.1.1.1 (SAR, p. 109).

The range of specialisations offered within the study programme "Social Work Management" includes all specialisations mentioned (Specialisation within the programme from the 2026/2027 academic year onwards):

- \* Social Worker for Working with Families with Children;
- \* Social Worker for Working with Children and Youth;
- \* Social Worker for Working with Individuals with Addictions and Codependency;
- \* Social Worker for Working with Diversity, Social Worker for Working with Seniors
- \* Social Worker Working with Clients of the Penitentiary System and Probation in the Resocialisation Phase.

All those target groups are specific, with (potentially) multiple, complicated problems, which need professional, delicate handling - suitable for a senior social worker. The outcomes of the programme correspond to its objectives and tasks as defined in the relevant regulatory framework. They also comply with the knowledge, skills and competences set out in the Professional Standard for Senior Social Worker. The learning outcomes are formulated in line with the descriptors of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF), Level 7. (SAR, p. 122; annexes 6 and 7).

The logical structure of the study programme, with its interconnection between aims, study course content, and intended learning outcomes, ensures the achievement of professional qualification requirements and the development of a senior social worker's professional identity. In Latvia, there is a growing demand for professionals capable of working with complex life situations, supporting the reintegration of former prisoners into society, and ensuring cooperation within interinstitutional teams. (SAR, p. 109).

Experts learned that those specialisations help to cope better in the labour market, but are not obligatory preconditions for the fixed workplace. Experts were told during the site visit by the graduates and employers that the programme enables them to work in the social field as managers. The only problem has been, according to the graduates and employers, that during the studies, it is not possible to practice working with databases, because of the data-protection law. This means that in the first job, graduates must spend some time learning many additional aspects of this profession. In the previous accreditation, there was a suggestion to develop a social pedagogical aspect in the curriculum. According to the RTU's Self Assessment Report (SAR, p. 110), the study programme now has incorporated a new study course "Social Pedagogy" (6 ECTS), delivered in the RTU RA and by a lecturer from RTU RA. As a result, graduates of the programme are ready to work also as social pedagogues, thereby broadening their professional scope and enhancing their employment potential. Not to mention that the social pedagogical aspect is obligatory in social work, too. Experts prize this kind of social pedagogical approach.

The curriculum combines advanced theoretical modules (e.g., social policy analysis, advanced methods in social work, welfare system management) with applied components that maintain a strong link to professional practice. Practice placements and case studies are supported by RTU's extensive cooperation agreements with social service institutions, municipalities, and NGOs. (annexe: 2) This ensures that students can contextualise theory within the realities of social welfare provision. Importantly, the programme emphasises independent research projects and master's theses, which develop students' capacity for evidence-based practice and policy analysis.

#### 2.2.2.

According to the RTU's Self Assessment Report (SAR, p. 124), the awarding of a Professional Master's degree in the Master's study programme Social Work Management is firmly grounded in the theoretical foundations of social work as a scientific discipline, current research findings, and international developmental trends. The content of the programme is developed in accordance with the latest scientific advancements in the fields of social work and social management, integrating research outcomes from both international and Latvian scholars. The Master's thesis, as the final examination component, constitutes a significant part of the study programme. It serves to assess the student's ability to independently carry out scientifically substantiated research in the field of social work management, to analyse the obtained results, and to develop practical solutions for the advancement of the sector. Consequently, the awarding of the Master's degree not only certifies the student's professional competence but also their capacity to apply and generate innovative solutions based on scientific knowledge and sectoral development trends.

A wide range of teaching methods is applied across all study courses, including both traditional academic forms – lectures, introductory lectures, review lectures, and problem-oriented lectures – and interactive, student-centred learning forms, such as pair and group work, thematic discussions, case analysis and simulations, practical sessions, and project-based assignments.

The awarding of the Master's degree is mainly based on a successfully created Master's thesis where a specific topic is analysed to get findings on the relevant topic. For example, on year 2025 and 2023, Masters thesis in the area of addiction prevention (a social work-related issue) and in the area of managing psychoemotional risk factors and stress in the work environment of social workers was written under the supervision respectively have been developed where concrete scientific methods of analysis have been applied to get results and information on these topics (SAR, pp.

117-119).

During the site visit, experts had the possibility to see/read master's theses: the topics suited to the curriculum, and foreign literature was used quite actively. During the on-site visit, experts met a graduate, who is going to enter doctoral study – obviously, the master's degree in the social welfare field gives a good start for that.

### 2.2.3.

According to the SAR (p. 110), in the two-year study programme (120 ECTS), modifications have been introduced to the programme plan with the aim of increasing study efficiency. The quality of achievement is directly connected to the admission process. Starting from the 2026/27 academic year, in the admission process, students without prior education in social work will be admitted in the first semester to acquire the fundamental knowledge and competencies necessary for subsequent studies in both general and specialised courses.

This semester will be considered as an introduction to ensure equal starting opportunities for all students, regardless of their previous educational background. The second group, with a study duration of 1 year and 5 months (90 ECTS), will be admitted once the students of the two-year programme have completed their first semester. As these students already hold prior education in social work, they are not required to undertake the introductory semester. After this initial stage, both groups will be merged into a single study stream, in which they will continue to pursue the content of the study programme together.

These changes promote academic inclusiveness and provide stronger support for students without prior experience in social work, while maintaining high-quality standards in professional preparation. At the same time, this model fosters an interdisciplinary and experience-based learning environment, where students with varying levels of prior knowledge study together, creating opportunities for mutual learning and enhancing the academic and professional value of the programme. It can be considered a student-centred approach.

According to the information available to the expert group (SAR, p. 124), to evaluate whether the programme meets actual labour market demands, the graduate career trajectories are monitored and their feedback is systematically analysed. A range of methods is used for this purpose: regular graduate surveys and interviews on employability and the relevance of acquired education to professional tasks; employer surveys on the professional competence levels of graduates; analysis of publicly available labour market statistics and graduate employment databases. In addition, information from the RTU Career Centre and the monitoring of selected graduates' professional experience is utilised.

In Table 3.2.3.1 "Study methods applied and their contribution to the achievement of programme objectives" (SAR, p. 126), the study methods are described. The expert's opinion is that the methods applied in the implementation of the programme are purposefully and consistently selected, complementing one another and ensuring the attainment of intended learning outcomes and programme objectives. In this way, both the acquisition of academic knowledge and the development of professional skills are promoted, preparing students for employment in the field of social work management in line with contemporary professional requirements and societal development trends. Experts were told in the on-site visit that a significant contribution to the relevance of study course content is also provided by the experiences and feedback gained by students during professional placements and employment, as well as by the recommendations of social institutions hosting practice placements.

Specific improvements introduced on the basis of feedback from target groups: for example, the development of the course Human Resource Management in Social Work, whose content incorporates dimensions such as digital tools for teamwork, responding to employer recommendations on the need to strengthen digital competencies in management processes.

In professional practice (9 ECTS), supervision is now added as a structured tool of reflective practice:

as a significant component of adult learning and professional self-development.

Supervision fosters not only the deepening of professional competencies but also a sense of self-efficacy and the capacity to work in complex and emotionally demanding situations. This approach ensures students' preparedness for the role of leading social workers, as supervision can be considered as a metacognitive element of the learning process.

#### 2.2.4.

Practice and professional specialisation courses enhance the ability to address real professional situations and challenges in work with specific target groups. Experts were told in the site visit that to ensure high-quality supervision, a specialist from the Latvian Association of Supervisors has been engaged, providing professional support that enables students to gain deeper insights into challenges encountered in practice and to strengthen their professional identity. In the SAR (p. 110), is written, that taking into account the recommendation provided by the previous accreditation experts — "Develop specific regulations for each internship, which would include the description of the aims, objectives, outcomes, and duties for each stakeholder in the realization of the practice, as well as the documentation which should be filled in both by students and practice supervisors at the institution during and end of the field placement" — the content of the specialised internships (B1; B2; B3; B4; B5 "Master's Internship in Specialisation" (9 ECTS)) has been supplemented with supervision as a significant instrument for professional development and reflection.

Supervision provides students with the opportunity to analyse and critically reflect on their practice experiences, thereby strengthening their ability to integrate theoretical knowledge with professional challenges. It enables not only the deepening of professional competences but also the development of professional identity, a sense of self-efficacy, and the capacity to work in complex and emotionally demanding situations. This approach ensures students' long-term preparedness for the role of leading social workers, as supervision functions as a metacognitive element of the learning process, enabling them to recognise, manage and enhance their own professional practice. (SAR, p. 124, pp. 128-130).

#### 2.2.5. Not applicable.

#### 2.2.6.

According to the SAR (p. 131), the topics of the final theses demonstrate students' ability to identify and investigate current issues in social work practice, with a particular focus on aspects of management and organisational processes in social work. A notable trend is the growing interest among students in topics that reflect labour market demands and current developments in the social work sector in Latvia. The final thesis topics are purposefully selected, aligned with current labour market needs and developments in the social work sector, and contribute to the enhancement of students' practical and research competences, thus ensuring the achievement of the programme's aims and intended learning outcomes.

An analysis of thesis assessments during the reporting period reveals that the majority of works received high or above-average evaluations, indicating a strong level of student preparedness, the ability to conduct independent research, analyse practical situations, and propose solutions to real-world problems.

Most theses were graded "8" (very good) and "9" (excellent), with several receiving the maximum grade of "10" (outstanding). Several theses received recognition from placement institutions and professionals in the social sector, indicating their practical relevance and potential impact in the labour market. In some cases, the findings and recommendations of these have been used to improve internal processes within organisations or to support the development of new services. Experts prize this kind of connectedness with the local community and its needs.

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

The programme is planned to be implemented in two locations – at RTU LA and RTU RA. The awarding of a Professional Master's degree in the Master's study programme Social Work Management is firmly grounded in the theoretical foundations of social work as a scientific discipline, current research findings, and international developmental trends.

The outcomes of the programme correspond to its objectives and tasks as defined in the relevant regulatory framework. The previously available specialisation "Social Worker for Work with Diversity" is cancelled. Instead, two new specialisations have been developed to reflect the challenges of contemporary society and international trends: Social Worker for Work with Seniors – This specialisation responds to demographic changes and the ageing of society in Latvia and across Europe. And a Social Worker for Work with Clients of the Penitentiary and Probation System in the Resocialization Phase is available, too. In the previous accreditation, there was a suggestion to develop a social pedagogical aspect in the curriculum. According to the SAR (p. 110), the study programme now has incorporated a new study course "Social Pedagogy" (6 ECTS), delivered by a lecturer from RTU RA.

A significant contribution to the relevance of study course content is also provided by the experiences and feedback gained by students during professional placements and employment, as well as by the recommendations of social institutions hosting practice placements.

The final thesis topics are purposefully selected, aligned with current labour market needs and developments in the social work sector. In some cases, the findings and recommendations of these have been used to improve internal processes within organisations or to support the development of new services.

Practice and professional specialisation courses enhance the ability to address real professional situations and challenges in work with specific target groups. The experts' conclusion is, according to the site visit, that the programme enables them to work in the social field as managers.

### Strengths:

1. The final theses demonstrate practical relevance and contribute to addressing issues within the local community.
2. Graduates and employers actively participate in the final thesis defence commissions, strengthening the link between academic learning and professional practice.
3. The content of study modules is regularly updated to reflect current developments and the needs of the local community.
4. The inclusion of the new study course "Social Pedagogy" (6 ECTS), taught by a lecturer from RTU Rēzekne Academy, enhances the programme's academic scope and interdisciplinary depth.
5. The implementation of the programme across two regional locations—RTU Liepāja Academy and RTU Rēzekne Academy—broadens accessibility and strengthens regional outreach.
6. Integration of advanced theory and practice – the curriculum combines high-level theoretical modules with applied placements and case studies, ensuring graduates develop both analytical skills and professional competencies.

### Weaknesses:

1. Due to data protection regulations, students are unable to gain practical experience working directly with client databases, which limits the development of certain professional skills (acknowledging that this restriction is beyond the academy's control).
2. The curriculum currently does not include a structured opportunity to develop public-speaking

and presentation skills.

3. The integration between research activities and practical industry needs could be further strengthened, including closer alignment of staff research, collaboration projects, and student involvement in applied research initiatives.

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

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The awarding of a Professional Master's degree in the Master's study programme Social Work Management has been grounded in the theoretical foundations of social work as a scientific discipline, current research findings, and international developmental trends. The final thesis topics are purposefully selected, aligned with current labour market needs and developments in the social work sector. In some cases, the findings and recommendations of students' theses have been used to improve internal processes within organisations or to support the development of new services.

The outcomes of the programme correspond to its objectives and tasks as defined in the relevant regulatory framework. Students' final theses have practical value to the local environment.

## **2.3. Resources and Provision of the Study Programme**

### **Analysis**

#### 2.3.1.

The Master's study programme in Social Welfare is academically advanced and oriented toward preparing graduates for leadership, analytical, and research roles in social services and policy-making. Consequently, the adequacy of the study, scientific, informative, material, technical, and financial provisions must be judged against higher-level expectations: students are not only to gain advanced professional competences but also to develop critical, research-based approaches to social policy and practice. The study provision is well-structured and aligned with the programme's objectives.

The informative provision is comprehensive. Master's students have full access to RTU's central and regional libraries, which provide Latvian and international literature in social sciences, as well as electronic databases such as EBSCO, ProQuest, and ScienceDirect. (SAR, pp. 132-133) These resources are crucial for supporting the research-oriented components of the programme, particularly the preparation of theses. Access to remote e-resources ensures that students at regional LA and RA are not disadvantaged compared to those in Rīga. While the library resources are adequate, the SAR (SAR, pp. 132-133) offers limited information on whether acquisitions are systematically updated to reflect emerging international scholarship in specialised areas of social policy and welfare research.

The material and technical provision supports both classroom and hybrid learning. Regional academies have videoconferencing and simulation rooms, as well as mobile 360-degree cameras. (annexe: "Information submitted to experts upon request") These allow flexible learning modes, which are particularly valuable for master's students, many of whom are professionals studying part-time. Simulation environments further support the programme's applied components. However, the limited number of such facilities creates a risk of over-demand, especially as bachelor's and short-cycle students also rely on the same infrastructure.

From an evaluative standpoint, the provisions for the Master's programme are appropriate and adequate to support its learning outcomes. Students benefit from strong academic and scientific input, comprehensive library access, and practice-based cooperation with social service providers. The financial framework is sustainable, and ICT facilities enhance learning flexibility.

However, there are areas for improvement. The number of ICT-equipped and simulation facilities should be expanded to meet growing demand. More systematic integration of international research literature into teaching would further strengthen the academic depth of the programme. Finally, clearer programme-level financial planning and reinvestment strategies would enhance transparency and ensure targeted support for continuous development.

In conclusion, the criterion is met. The Master's programme in Social Welfare is supported by adequate study, scientific, informative, material, technical, and financial provisions that align with its advanced academic-professional profile and ensure high-quality outcomes. Improvements should focus on infrastructure scaling, systematic updating of academic resources, and transparent programme-specific financial reinvestment.

2.3.2. Not applicable.

2.3.3.

The funding model of the Master's programme is based on a combination of state-funded study places and tuition fees, consistent with RTU's overall financing structure. (SAR, pp. 133-138) State funding reflects the strategic priority of social welfare in Latvia, while tuition fees provide an additional stream of revenue, particularly from part-time students who often pursue the programme alongside employment in the sector. This dual-source funding model ensures stability and diversification, reducing dependence on a single income channel.

The financial provision for the programme is stable. Funding sources include state-funded study places and tuition fees, supplemented by project-based investments. The SAR (SAR, pp. 132-133) confirms that enrolment numbers are sufficient to maintain the programme's profitability and ensure sustainability. Financial resources cover teaching staff, infrastructure maintenance, and library/database subscriptions. Nonetheless, transparency regarding programme-specific reinvestment (e.g., in new research-oriented modules, advanced data analysis software, or thesis supervision training) remains limited, and reliance on project funding for ICT infrastructure raises questions about sustainability once project cycles end.

The programme consistently maintains the minimum student numbers required for profitability. The demand for advanced qualifications in social welfare and social policy is strong, driven by municipal institutions, social services, and NGOs that require managers, supervisors, and policy specialists with higher-level competencies. Regional implementation at LA and RA further contributes to sustainability, drawing on local demand and expanding accessibility beyond Rīga. This regional relevance strengthens the programme's ability to recruit sufficient numbers and maintain financial viability.

The use of funding ensures the implementation of the programme in practice. Resources cover teaching staff salaries, library subscriptions, infrastructure maintenance, and ICT resources. Investments from national and European projects have further enhanced programme delivery, particularly in areas of hybrid learning, videoconferencing, and simulation facilities. Annexe: "Information submitted to experts upon request") Such investments are especially relevant for the Master's level, where flexible formats are needed to accommodate working professionals.

From a developmental perspective, financial resources do more than maintain existing operations; they also contribute to programme improvement. Staff CVs (annexe: II.2.3. "Mācībspēku CV") and publication lists show that resources support participation in international conferences, applied research, and project activities. These activities not only enhance academic quality but also feed back into curriculum development. However, while the SAR (SAR, pp. 133-138) confirms the

sufficiency of funding, it does not provide detailed breakdowns at the programme level, making it difficult to assess the degree of targeted reinvestment into areas such as curriculum innovation, advanced research modules, or modern analytical tools for student theses.

A further point of concern is the reliance on project-based external funding for significant infrastructure upgrades. While EU and national projects have enabled valuable investments, there is no evidence of a stable institutional financial strategy ensuring the replacement or renewal of technical resources once project cycles end. This creates potential risks for long-term sustainability.

Overall, the funding available to the Master's programme is sufficient and reliable, ensuring both the full implementation of the study process and the programme's profitability. Student numbers are consistently adequate, reflecting labour market demand and regional accessibility. However, improvements are needed in programme-level financial transparency, strategic reinvestment planning, and reducing reliance on external project funding.

In conclusion, the criterion is met. The Master's programme in Social Work Management has adequate funding, diversified sources, and sustainable student enrolment that together guarantee the viability of the programme and create conditions for ongoing development. The system would be further strengthened by greater transparency in programme-specific allocations and by developing a long-term institutional strategy for infrastructure renewal independent of project cycles.

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

The analysis of criteria 2.3.1 and 2.3.3 demonstrates that the Master's study programme in the study field of Social Welfare at RTU is supported by adequate and appropriate resources, ensuring both the implementation of a high-quality study process and the achievement of advanced learning outcomes.

The study, scientific, and informative provisions correspond to the professional orientation of the programme. The curriculum integrates advanced theoretical modules with applied practice, supported by extensive cooperation agreements with municipalities, NGOs, and healthcare providers. Academic staff contribute to active scientific research and publications, which enrich the study process, while access to RTU's central and regional libraries and international databases ensures that students can engage with high-level academic literature.

The financial provision is stable and diversified, based on both state-funded study places and tuition fees, and supported by project-based investments in ICT and infrastructure. Student numbers consistently meet or exceed the minimum required for profitability, ensuring sustainability and enabling development of the programme. Nonetheless, greater transparency in programme-level reinvestment and reduced reliance on external project funding would further strengthen long-term stability.

In conclusion, the requirements of part 2.3 "Resources and Provision of the Study Programme" are met for the Master's study programme in the study field of Social Welfare. The available provisions are sufficient, appropriate, and sustainable, creating strong prerequisites for achieving the intended learning outcomes, though continuous improvement is recommended in the areas of infrastructure scaling, programme-level financial planning, and systematic updating of international academic resources.

Strengths:

1. Comprehensive library and database access - master's students benefit from equal access to RTU's central and regional libraries and a wide range of international electronic databases, which directly support research projects and master's theses.
2. Stable and diversified funding model - programme sustainability is ensured through a combination of state-funded study places, tuition fees, and project-based investments, with

enrolment numbers consistently meeting profitability thresholds.

Weaknesses:

1. Limited availability of specialised ICT and simulation facilities – although videoconference rooms and simulation spaces exist, their number is too small for the demands of master’s students, who require flexible schedules and research-oriented learning environments.
2. Insufficient programme-level financial transparency – while funding is stable overall, the SAR provides little evidence of how resources are specifically reinvested into curriculum innovation, advanced data analysis tools, or thesis supervision support.
3. Reliance on project-based funding for development – significant improvements in ICT and infrastructure have been tied to EU-funded projects, creating uncertainty about sustainability once project cycles conclude.

## Assessment of the requirement [6]

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The Master’s study programme in Social Welfare fully meets the conditions for implementation and achievement of learning outcomes. The study provision effectively integrates advanced theoretical and policy analysis with applied research and practice, ensuring that graduates are equipped for leadership and evidence-based professional roles. Scientific provision is strong, supported by doctoral-qualified academic staff actively engaged in research relevant to the field, which enriches teaching and thesis supervision. Informative provision ensures equitable access to comprehensive library and digital database resources that support advanced academic inquiry across all campuses. Material and technical resources—including hybrid learning technologies and simulation facilities—are sufficient to meet programme needs and enable flexible, practice-oriented learning. Financial provision is stable and diversified, providing a sustainable basis for programme delivery and continuous enhancement. Collectively, these provisions ensure high-quality implementation and the achievement of advanced learning outcomes, confirming full compliance with requirements.

## 2.4. Teaching Staff

### Analysis

#### 2.4.1.

RTU requirements for selecting academic staff are in line with the national requirements regarding their qualifications (acquired degree and qualification or sufficient professional qualifications and experience that is in line with the study programme).

The programme will be offered at both RTU LA and RTU RA. A hybrid model is planned, with courses delivered both on-site and online, while seminars and practical activities are conducted on-site, with different staff assigned to each location. At this stage, it is unclear what proportion of direct contact hours will be conducted online versus face-to-face.

According to the additional information provided in Annexe II.2.3.7 (updated annexe) at the Social Worker programme level, 26 staff members, of whom 4 are from RTU RA and 22 from RTU LA. Seven of the 26 have a degree in Social Work.

There are 35 study courses (incl.5 internship courses) with 58 involved staff (please note – these are not unique staff member counts!) out of which 46 (79%) are RTU LA faculty members. Only the

study course “Social pedagogy” has overlapping staff members – one from Liepāja and one from Rēzekne (information from Annex II.2.3.7 (updated annex)). This indicates that the academic workload is divided strongly based on the location (since there seems to be no real division that covers both locations, e.g. one study course is taught by staff in RTU LA AND RTU RA). Moreover, since the SAR states that “The lectures will be delivered online, the same staff will be involved in both locations, while different staff will support the practical activities” it is not clear, to what extent the academic staff from (mainly) Liepāja provides lectures face-to-face and how much the study process is organised online (or even hybrid).

The study programme is a professional study programme; therefore Law on Higher Education Institutions (paragraph 39) accepts as a qualification for the involved academic staff also a person without a PhD, as long as they have sufficient professional experience. In this case, however, the academic staff without a PhD tend to be non-elected lecturers. Out of the elected academic staff (data from Annexe II 2.3.7, updated), 63% have a PhD-level degree. 12 members of the teaching staff involved in the study programme are not elected, and out of these 67% have a Master's degree. Out of all the involved teaching staff (elected or not), at least 44% have a degree in educational sciences (dr./mg.paed.; not counting other disciplines, e.g. philosophy, field of science). According to the information provided in the Annexes (Annexe II 2.3.7) and the Curriculum Vitae of the staff, the qualifications are sufficient and correspond to the study programme and the study courses.

The language requirements correspond to the requirements of the Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No. 157 of 8 March 2022.

The scientific provision is robust and appropriate for a master's level study programme. Academic staff hold doctoral degrees in relevant fields and actively contribute to scientific research, with publications covering themes such as child welfare, family support, rehabilitation, and educational psychology. (annexe: II.2.3. "Mācibuspēku CV", annexe: "Information submitted to experts upon request") Annexe (annexe: II.2.4.4) demonstrates that faculty members publish in peer-reviewed journals and contribute to national and international conferences, ensuring that teaching is informed by current research. Furthermore, participation in international projects and networks provides students with opportunities to engage in research-informed discussions, enhancing the programme's academic quality.

#### 2.4.2.

In the process of changes in the composition of the academic staff, the RTU demonstrates an adequate analysis, based on the needs of the study programme. This is revealed in the SAR (pages 133-134) when giving an example of including more teaching staff with a PhD.

Based on other teaching staff who have joined the study programme (elected or not), an indication of a trend towards including more staff members with Dr Paed. degrees can be observed. A notable part of the study programme might be in relation to working with youth or families with children; however, these topics within study courses are much more present in the study field's study programme “Social worker” and not the master's study programme.

RTU analyses the potential changes in the composition of the academic staff and takes measures to mitigate any negative effect to the study programme (see SAR pp.133-134), analysing the potential gaps left by the staff who have decided to end the working contract and taking measures to attract potential staff members. However, these decisions seem to be based on descriptive analysis (SAR pp.133-134); this also should be reflected in a more data-based approach (which courses are covered by what kinds of competencies and what is the knowledge base that is needed for implementing these courses).

#### 2.4.3. Not applicable.

#### 2.4.4.

Since a considerable part of the teaching staff are not elected academic staff (See Annex II, 3.2.7. Excel column "Election Status at the Higher Education Institution (Yes/No)"), it means that the publishing in peer reviewed editions is not the primary proof of qualification, also there is the aspect of practical experiences (since 11 of the teaching staff are not elected as academic staff with a good proportion of them without a PhD level degree, see section 2.4.3.). Nonetheless, some of these teaching staff members are still authors of recently published papers (e.g. academic staff for the study course Research and Innovation in Social Work).

Most of the elected academic staff have research publications (see annex II 2.3.7.; missing information regarding the academic staff involved in the study course Social Work in Addiction Prevention, Treatment and Rehabilitation), however, the majority of the academic staff seem to write their papers in the field of education (e.g. the academic staff members for study courses: Approaches and Strategies for Intervention in Social Work with Senior; Professional Ethics, Competence and Communication in Social Work Management; Research and Innovation in Social Work; etc.). In some cases, this has a legitimate basis (e.g. for the study course "Social Pedagogy"); however, a strong leaning towards the educational field of science can be detected from the academic staff's publishing practices. which reveals the need to have more research activities in the field of the study programme.

Overall, it can be concluded that the publishing practices of the teaching staff are sufficient based on the provided information (Annexes: CV of the teaching staff). The publications seem to be in many different areas; however, quite prevalent are publications in the education field or language or culture.

#### 2.4.5.

According to RTU's Self Assessment Report (SAR, p.136), study field meetings take place on a regular basis (SF Council meetings). Also, the cooperation is implemented through mutual projects and co-authoring publications. Since the programme is going to be implemented also in RTU RA and RTU, this aspect of mutual cooperation is going to become even more present. RTU LA states that regular meetings and course evaluations take place regularly; however, there is no provided schedule or description of a mechanism in place for this.

RTU LA has taken the opportunity to have a specific activity (a programme from European Structural funds) in order to strengthen the involvement of docents (who are mainly from the industry) in the process of evaluating and improving the study courses in order to have stronger links to the industry (SAR pp.135-136). This is a welcome activity, even if it is a project-based (and since a one-time activity).

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

In conclusion, the academic staff meets national qualification standards, with a strong share of them holding PhD-level degrees and relevant experience; however, the share of the academic staff with qualifications and research activities indicates a strong link to the education field rather than social welfare.

RTU takes measures to address staff changes, though the approach remains largely descriptive (or case-by-case when the need arises) rather than data-driven. While research activity and cooperation are sufficient, there is a clear need for stronger alignment of publications and expertise with the study field.

Strengths:

1. Publishing activities are sufficient, with some part of the papers being published in WoS/Scopus or ERIH+ indexed journals/databases.

2. A good part of the academic staff holds a PhD-level degree.

Weaknesses:

1. The focus of research activities and, therefore, the outputs of the academic staff are not in the social welfare field.

### **Assessment of the requirement [7]**

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The qualification of the academic staff and visiting lecturers complies with national regulatory requirements and the conditions for implementing the study programme. Most elected academic staff hold PhD-level degrees, while non-elected staff possess relevant master's degrees and significant professional experience, as permitted by the Law on Higher Education Institutions.

## **2.5. Assessment of the Compliance**

### **Requirements**

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The second-cycle professional Master's study programme "Social Work Management" (Education classification code 47762) fully complies with the requirements of the Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No. 305 of 13 June 2023 "Regulations on the National Standard of Professional Higher Education". Graduates of the study programme meet the qualification requirements necessary to work as a leading social worker that corresponds to the fifth professional qualification level which corresponds to the seventh level of the European Qualifications Framework (7. EQF). Moreover, completion of the study programme ensures eligibility for doctoral studies, confirming full alignment with both national and European higher education standards.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The second-cycle professional Master's study programme "Social Work Management" fully complies with the Professional Standard for the Occupation "Senior Social Worker" (see: <https://registri.visc.gov.lv/profizglitiba/dokumenti/standarti/2017/PS-171.pdf>), which corresponds to the programme's emphasis on advanced management, strategic planning, research, and leadership competences. The programme structure offers a balanced combination of theoretical coursework, professionally oriented study courses, management and leadership modules, research activities, and supervised professional practice. Together, these components ensure that students acquire the knowledge, skills, and competences specified in the Professional

Higher Education Standard and in the Professional Standard for Senior Social Workers, which forms the basis for the qualification awarded upon graduation. The programme's compliance is evidenced in Annexe 6, which outlines the correspondence between the intended learning outcomes, study course content, and qualification requirements.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The study programme is implemented in the Latvian language, and all its study course descriptions and lecture presentations are prepared in Latvian, which complies with Article 56, section 3, in accordance with the Law on Higher Education Institutions (in Latvian, Augstskolu likums, <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/37967>).

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The sample of the diploma complies with the procedure according to which state-recognised documents of higher education are issued, in accordance with the Cabinet of Ministers Regulations No. 202 of 16 April 2013, "Procedure for Issuing State-Recognised Documents Certifying Higher Education" (Ministru kabineta 2013. gada 16. aprīļa noteikumi Nr. 202 "Kārtība, kādā izsniedz valsts atzītus augstāko izglītību apliecinošus dokumentus", see: <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/256157>).

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The teaching staff members involved in the implementation of the study programmes in the social welfare study field are proficient in the State official language (Latvian), fully complying with Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No. 157 of 8 March 2022, which sets the required level of official language knowledge and procedures for testing proficiency for professional and office duties. The official language competence of each staff member is documented in their individual biographies (CVs), which accompany the Self Assessment Report of the study field.

This ensures that all teaching and professional activities within the programme are conducted in accordance with national language regulations. The compliance is formally confirmed by the Vice-Rector for Academic Affairs.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

Based on the content provided, the RTU study agreement complies with the mandatory provisions typically required for a higher education study agreement under Latvian law. Key points confirming compliance include identification of parties and programme details, rights and obligations of the institution, student obligations, fees and order settlements, Personal Data and Intellectual Property, including provisions cover student consent for processing personal data (in line with GDPR), publication and use of study works, and ownership of intellectual property created during studies, ensuring legal compliance, termination and refund procedures and duration and effective date.

The agreement contains all standard mandatory elements, including the description of the study programme, rights and obligations of both parties, handling of intellectual property, personal data protection, and provisions for termination, refund, and continuity of studies. It therefore aligns with the legal requirements for study agreements under Latvian higher education regulations.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

RTU ensures that students can continue their education in another study programme or higher education institution through a structured recognition of prior learning process.

According to Resolution No. 02000-1.1/29 (4 April 2016) and the accompanying regulation, courses completed at other universities or RTU study programmes are evaluated for equivalence with RTU courses. Recognition may be full, partial, or not granted, based on a comparison of learning outcomes, study course content, and volume, ensuring alignment with RTU programme requirements. The process allows combining multiple courses into one or recognising one study course as multiple courses, and it applies to courses corresponding to EQF Levels 5-8 from accredited institutions.

This framework facilitates student mobility and progression, supporting continuity of studies and

academic advancement.

RTU has submitted a document (annexe: 01000-2.2.1-e\_262.edoc) certifying that the university guarantees compensation for financial losses to students if the study programme is not accredited or if the study programme license is revoked due to the actions (actions or omissions) of the higher education institution or college, and the student does not wish to continue studies in another study programme.

The agreement for the second-cycle (professional master's) study programme is as follows:

"Social Work Management" (code: 47762, qualification: Senior Social Worker, degree: Professional Master's Degree in Social Work) — agreement between RTU and the University of Latvia for the second-cycle (professional master's) study programme "Social Work" (code: 47762, qualification: Senior Social Worker, degree: Professional Master's Degree in Social Work (Mg. soc. d.)).

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

RTU has formally confirmed that students enrolled in the social welfare study field programme will be provided with compensation in case the study programme is not accredited or its license is revoked (signed by Rector, on 6 June 2025, Doc. Nr. 01000-2.2.1-e/262).

This includes situations where a student does not wish to continue studies in another programme; in such cases, financial or other losses are covered according to the RTU study agreements, which specify the forms and procedures for compensation.

The confirmation ensures that students' rights and investments in their education are protected, regardless of programme termination.

The RTU policy applies to all types, forms, and languages of study for the social welfare programmes, and any future updates to study agreements will maintain the same principle of loss compensation.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

### **Assessment of the requirement [8]**

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The master's study programme "Social Work Management" demonstrates full compliance with Latvian higher education legislation, national professional standards, and European qualification

frameworks. Its curriculum, staff, language provisions, documentation, and student protection mechanisms ensure that graduates are fully prepared for advanced professional roles, leadership, and research in the social work sector.

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

The “Social Work Management” Master’s programme complies with national standards and the requirements of EQF Level 7. Its dual implementation (RTU Liepāja and RTU Rēzekne) represents a significant strategic advantage, providing access to advanced education in different regions of Latvia. The social justification of the programme is well developed, considering the context in which the two institutions operate and addressing the need for professionalisation of management in social work. The awarding of a Professional Master’s degree in the Master’s study programme Social Work Management is firmly grounded in the theoretical foundations of social work as a scientific discipline, current research findings, and international developmental trends.

The curriculum structure (90–120 ECTS) ensures an appropriate balance of theoretical studies, professional and management coursework, research components, and supervised practice. The intended learning outcomes correspond directly to the Professional Standard for Senior Social Workers and the Professional Standard for Leading Social Workers, confirming that graduates acquire the advanced managerial, analytical, and leadership competences necessary for professional practice. Completion of the programme qualifies graduates for employment in social work positions in accordance with the Latvian Classification of Occupations and other related qualification requirements. Furthermore, the programme provides a solid academic foundation for progression to doctoral studies, demonstrating full compliance with the expectations for second-cycle higher education.

The Committee particularly values the introduction of professional supervision as an integral part of practical placements (9 ECTS), which directly contributes to strengthening students’ professional identity and resilience; the fact that Master’s thesis topics are closely aligned with local realities, generating potential solutions applicable to partner institutions; the excellent employment rates, with graduates holding leadership or specialist positions within social work; and the fact that experiences and feedback gained by students during professional placements and employment, as well as recommendations provided by social institutions hosting trainees, are taken into consideration in the development of curricular content.

Although the programme meets quality standards, our analysis identifies several discrepancies requiring managerial attention:

1. **Academic Staff Research Profile:** While academic staff meet formal qualification requirements (with most holding doctoral degrees) and possess substantial professional experience and continuous involvement in applied projects, research activity and publications are predominantly oriented towards the field of Educational Sciences rather than the core discipline of Social Work (Social Welfare). This misalignment risks weakening the specific scientific foundations expected from a Master’s programme of this profile.
2. **Infrastructure Sustainability:** Material and ICT resources are currently adequate, but major upgrades depend too heavily on external project funding. The absence of a clear institutional strategy for resource renewal using internal funds, and a lack of transparency regarding the reinvestment of revenues directly at programme level, pose long-term risks to the quality of teaching and learning processes.
3. **Misalignment Between Training Priorities and Labour Market Requirements:** Although the programme has introduced new and academically relevant specialisations (e.g., Social Work in the Penitentiary System, Work with Older Adults), consultations with employers indicate that they are not fully aware of these developments and continue to prioritise competencies expected at Bachelor

level. This highlights a communication gap between academic innovation and explicit employer demand.

4. **Monitoring Mechanisms:** The monitoring of graduates' professional careers is based on ad-hoc data collection, as no formal, systematic Graduate Tracer Study is currently in place. This limits the programme's ability to promptly adjust its offer in response to labour market developments.

The "Social Work Management" study programme demonstrates good quality, with elements of excellence in practical experience and employability. However, in order to achieve a higher level of sustainability, it is necessary for RTU to align staff research agendas with the specific field of social work, to reflect more thoroughly on employer requirements, and to secure a financial strategy that does not rely exclusively on external project cycles.

#### Strengths:

1. The topics of students' final theses demonstrate practical value and direct applicability to the institutions where empirical data are collected.
2. Graduates and employers maintain active participation in the university's activities, fostering strong links between education and practice.
3. The study modules are regularly updated to reflect developments within the local community and the evolving needs of the social sector.
4. The inclusion of a new study course, Social Pedagogy (6 ECTS), delivered by a lecturer from RTU Rēzekne Academy, enriches the interdisciplinary perspective of the programme.
5. The planned implementation of the programme at two regional study centres—RTU Liepāja and RTU Rēzekne—enhances accessibility and regional outreach.
6. Doctoral-qualified academic staff are actively engaged in research and publication activities, ensuring that teaching is informed by current scientific evidence and that students acquire strong research competencies.
7. High rate of student employability.
8. The study programme achieves a high rate of graduate employability, with all active graduates working within the professional sector for which the programme was designed, confirming its strong alignment with labour market needs.
9. The study programme ensures that its curriculum, learning outcomes, qualification level, and structure (90–120 ECTS) meet statutory requirements for professional Master's education. The balance between theoretical studies, management-oriented courses, research components, and professional practice aligns with the national standard for professional higher education.
10. Master's degree in Social Work with the qualification of Senior Social Worker qualifies to pursue employment in positions classified under levels 3, 2, and 1 of the Latvian Classification of Occupations and ensures eligibility for doctoral studies, confirming alignment with both national and European frameworks.
11. The balance between theoretical studies, management-oriented study courses, research components, and professional practice aligns with the national standard for professional higher education (Cabinet of Ministers Regulations No. 305).

#### Weaknesses:

1. Due to data protection regulations, students cannot practice using real client databases; this limitation, although beyond the institution's control, restricts training in digital case management.
2. Public speaking and presentation skills are not explicitly addressed within the curriculum, despite their relevance for professional communication.
3. The integration between research activities and professional practice could be further strengthened by expanding collaborative projects, involving students more actively in applied research, and aligning academic staff research topics with sectoral needs.

4. While current facilities are adequate, the limited number of ICT-equipped and simulation rooms may become a bottleneck as usage increases; addressing this risk proactively would help sustain flexible and research-oriented learning.
5. The current structure of Master's specialisations shows limited employer relevance; broader and more detailed consultations with stakeholders are needed to ensure that programme specialisations meet evolving professional demands.
6. Consultations with employers were not sufficiently extensive or detailed regarding the diversification of master's programmes.
7. The number of staff with qualifications in Social Work involved in the programme is low.
8. More actively expand academic engagement to strengthen scientific excellence in the social work discipline and foster collaboration with other Social Work programmes at the national level.
9. More actively engage with the International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW) and other regional, international professional and scientific organisations, participating in conferences, seminars, academic networks, and exchange initiatives.

## Evaluation of the study programme "Social Work Management"

Evaluation of the study programme:

Good

## 2.6. Recommendations for the Study Programme "Social Work Management"

### Short-term recommendations

1. Introduce an elective or training module on public speaking and professional communication, responding to students' expressed needs and supporting their competence development.
2. Strengthen the practical and professional relevance of the curriculum by systematically involving experienced social work professionals in managerial positions in the development and delivery of specialised study courses and training modules.
3. Enhance academic and professional engagement at both national and international levels to promote scientific excellence in the field of social work, including collaboration with other Social Work programmes in Latvia.
4. Develop a structured plan for research activities within the corresponding field of science to ensure coherence, strategic focus, and long-term impact.

### Long-term recommendations

1. Expand and modernise ICT infrastructure and simulation facilities in regional academies (RTU Liepāja Academy and RTU Rēzekne Academy) to support advanced-level study modules by 2028. Establish and implement a five-year renewal plan for technical equipment to ensure sustainability and functionality beyond external project cycles.
2. Introduce transparent programme-level financial reporting by 2026 that demonstrates how income is allocated for quality improvement. Ensure that at least 10% of the annual programme budget is systematically directed to curriculum renewal, staff training, and the acquisition of specialised research software to support continuous enhancement of academic quality.

3. Increase the share of academic staff holding Social Work qualifications to ensure that the majority (over 50%) of teaching and supervisory staff meet this requirement by 2028. Establish a structured professional development plan supporting current staff in obtaining relevant qualifications through postgraduate studies, certification programmes, or professional experience recognition.

4. Strengthen international academic engagement by 2028 through active participation in the International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW) and other recognised professional networks. Aim for annual participation in at least two international conferences or exchange initiatives to enhance research collaboration, knowledge sharing, and global visibility.

5. By 2027, establish a clear framework linking research activities and outputs in the Social Welfare study field to the corresponding field of science. Ensure that research topics, dissemination, and applied outputs demonstrably support the institution's strategic priorities and the development of the social work profession.

6. By 2027, systematically integrate guest lectures, mentorships, and case-based seminars led by practising social work professionals to enhance practical relevance. Each academic year, organise at least three thematic workshops or seminars focusing on management, supervision, and specialised professional areas aligned with labour market needs.

7. Develop a sustainable institutional funding strategy by 2027 to guarantee that the maintenance of core infrastructure, teaching resources, and student support systems is covered by the RTU central budget. External or project-based funds should be treated as supplementary investments, not as primary sources for essential programme needs.

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

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

##### **Assessment of the Requirements for the Study Field**

Requirements	Requirement Evaluation		Comment
<p>R1 - Pursuant to Section 5, Paragraph 2.1 of the Law on Higher Education Institutions, the higher education institution/ college shall ensure continuous improvement, development, and efficient performance of the study field whilst implementing its internal quality assurance system:</p>	<p>Fully compliant</p>		<p>The Social Welfare field of study demonstrates that it not only has an internal quality management system but also actively and effectively uses it to drive substantial improvements and strategic development. Evidence of study programme structural reforms (ECTS, curriculum adjustments based on feedback from graduates, students, and employers), the design of the management structure (intended to ensure coherence, balance, and support the strategic expansion of the study field), and the 2025-2031 Development Plan (aligned with the SWOT analysis) all confirm that this criterion is fully met.</p> <p>Although internal procedures and mechanisms for assuring the qualifications of academic staff and work quality have some shortcomings, this does not pose a significant risk to the requirement assessment. However, despite the limited direct employer feedback and less explicit labour-market alignment, this does not pose a significant risk to the requirement assessment. RTU has an established network of formal partnerships that ensures access to mandatory practice placements, provides essential methodological support, and enables the integration of applied research into the curriculum. These mechanisms ensure programme relevance, quality, and the achievement of intended learning outcomes. The existing agreements demonstrate that the necessary institutional structures and support systems are in place, ensuring programme quality and graduate readiness. As such, the collaboration network effectively mitigates the primary risks typically associated with limited employer input. While expanding joint research initiatives would enhance RTUs academic profile, this is not a prerequisite for meeting the baseline programme requirements. Experts strongly believe that this minor shortcoming does not impact the overall assessment of the requirement one - internal quality assurance system.</p>

<b>Requirements</b>	<b>Requirement Evaluation</b>		<b>Comment</b>
R2 - Compliance of scientific research and artistic creation with the level of development of scientific research and artistic creation (if applicable)		Partially compliant	<p>RTU has established processes and mechanisms to promote research activities and international collaboration. However, these mechanisms should be implemented more extensively within the study field as well. This is likely related to the recent institutional consolidations, and full integration across RTU RA and RTU LA may take time.</p> <p>Strengthening the connection between academic staff research and the thematic areas of the study field (beyond education) is essential for its further development. One possible direction could be linking the fields of education and pedagogy with social work, although this should not be the sole focus.</p> <p>Consequently, a stronger and more consistent emphasis on social welfare-specific research themes would further enhance integration.</p> <p>Although mechanisms for student involvement in applied research exist, there remains room for improvement regarding the intensity and scope of their participation in research projects.</p>

Requirements	Requirement Evaluation		Comment
<p>R3 - The cooperation implemented within the study field with various Latvian and foreign organizations ensures the achievement of the aims of the study field.</p>		<p>Partially compliant</p>	<p>The cooperation within the Social Welfare study field with institutions, both local and international, is generally well-developed and formally structured. At the national level, partnerships with municipalities, NGOs, employers, and ministries are broad, relevant, and actively contribute to achieving the aims of the study field. Employers participate in curriculum development, internships, and professional councils, ensuring strong alignment with labour market needs. These collaborations directly support learning outcomes and demonstrate systemic engagement. However, international cooperation—though extensive in framework and formally supported through Erasmus+, IASSW, and ESWRA memberships—has yet to yield consistently tangible outcomes.</p> <p>Although well-chosen and institutionally integrated, these partnerships have limited strategic impact due to several factors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* International student enrolment shows a declining trend, indicating reduced effectiveness of attraction measures despite established procedures.</li> <li>* Mobility volumes for students and staff remain modest, constrained by language, funding, and workload.</li> <li>* Memberships in international associations, while valuable for visibility, are not yet systematically leveraged for curriculum innovation, research cooperation, or sustained academic benefits.</li> <li>* The frequency of international guest lectures and joint teaching activities is low, limiting the integration of global perspectives into the study process.</li> </ul> <p>Although the institutional mechanisms for cooperation and mobility are clearly defined and operational, their practical outcomes remain uneven across the study field. The system ensures collaboration on a structural level, yet not all intended benefits—such as enhanced internationalisation of studies, increased intercultural competence, and a steady inflow of international students—are fully realised in practice. Therefore, cooperation within the study field effectively supports its aims at the national level but remains only partially successful internationally. Continued strategic effort is needed to expand active international partnerships, strengthen mobility participation, and translate formal cooperation into sustained academic and professional impact.</p>

Requirements	Requirement Evaluation		Comment
R4 - Elimination of deficiencies and shortcomings identified in the previous assessment of the study field, if any, or implementation of the recommendations provided.	Fully compliant		The contribution of the university to the analysis of recommendations and their application to the specifics of the study field and the corresponding study programmes is evident. During the on-site visit, experts noticed the goodwill and eagerness: suggestions made by the previous evaluation experts' panel are taken seriously. The reform (to be consolidated under the RTU) has been a success. The expert group considers that under one 'mother-university', the quality of curricula usually rises.

### Assessment of the Requirements for the Relevant Study Programmes of the Study Field

No.	Study programme	R5	R6	R7	R8	Evaluation of the study programme (excellent, good, average, poor)
1	Social Rehabilitator (41762)	Not relevant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Good
2	Social Worker (42762)	Not relevant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Good
3	Social Work Management (47762)	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Good

### The Dissenting Opinions of the Experts