

Expert group joint opinion

Evaluation Procedure: Assessment of Study Field

Higher Education Institution: Baltic International Academy

Study field: Economics

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Summary Assessment of the Study Field

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The Baltic International Academy (hereinafter - BIA) is a privately-owned educational institution founded in 1992 as the Baltic Russian Institute. By 2020, BIA has 10 study fields. BIA provides the opportunity to acquire higher education at four study levels. Within the study field "Economics", four study programmes were submitted for accreditation: 1) professional Bachelor programme "European Economics and Business" (42311), 2) professional Bachelor programme "Financial Management" (42343), 3) academic Master study programme "International Finance and Economics" (45343), and Doctoral study programme "Regional Economics and Economic Policy" (51311).

The adopted structure of the management of the study field is appropriate for the development of the study field. The academy management lacks a clear vision about BIA development, there are no strategic documents with target measures. Admission rules and matriculation procedures are set and no complaints have been noticed or heard about their implementation. Academic integrity principles and mechanisms are established and implemented; antiplagiarism software is used effectively. Important information is being published on the BIA website in Latvian and English.

BIA has developed and implemented a Quality policy conforming to Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG, 2015). It says the quality assurance system is based on the EFQM Model. The description of the quality assurance system is publicly available on the official BIA home page only in the Latvian language, no such information is publicly available in English. The Mission and Vision are not publicly available to all interested parties and differ in various documents. BIA performs self-assessments and SWOT/PEST analysis; however, it is not being done in a regular and systematic way. The information about BIA activities is published on the official BIA webpage, but some information is outdated, and some are insufficient. BIA study quality assurance system description complies with the standards set forth in Part 1 of the ESG, however, some processes within the system are not being performed in a real life. Some deficiencies have been noticed in the quality assurance system: lack of clear responsibilities was observed, and continuous improvements documents could not be found.

There is a very detailed Quality assurance plan developed for the study year 2020/2021 with the goals and tasks set to be achieved throughout the year, responsibilities, measurements and planned activities. There is also "Development plan of the study field "Economics" 2016-2022" aiming at the specific development of the study field and quality assurance of the study process with the field. However, no specific Key Performance Indicators are established, and no measurements done in a systematic way to ensure the activities are being performed according to these plans and the targets are achieved.

All the procedures for the development and review of existing programs in the study field are logical, efficient and available for important stakeholders. Graduates are not organized in any form and it is difficult to provide feedback to them, although some of them continue the cooperation with the academy as guest lecturers. Feedback to the stakeholders upon the programs' development could be confirmed, with the exception of the group of graduates. Statistics are being collected regularly.

The budget of the BIA study field "Economics" is established through a dialogue between the founders, BIA management and the study field. The main revenue source is students' tuition fee. Financial resources are adequate and sufficient to implement study field "Economics", relevant study programmes, and to support research activities. BIA has large premises to ensure the study process. Staff and students have an access to BIA resources. BIA infrastructure is adapted to the needs of disabled people. Students are extremely satisfied with BIA and expressed their loyalty. They confirmed that BIA provides all needed support. There is no documentation on the distribution of staff workload. A professional and didactic improvement of teaching staff is ensured by providing various types of training.

BIA strategic documents include a very general description of BIA goals for research development with no target indicators and quantitative measures. Having no quantified measures, there is no mechanism to collect data about staff achievements in research. Staff members use the latest research results in the study process that was confirmed by students. International cooperation in the field of scientific research is ensured, but the clear shortcoming is the lack of research projects implemented by BIA. It is not possible to conclude that international cooperation is improved in a target-oriented manner because no target indicators regarding international cooperation exist in the strategic documents. There is a functioning mechanism to involve staff and students in research (organization of scientific conferences, integration of research in the study process, the system for promoting research activities). However, the communication about BIA provided support should be improved. The usage of innovative teaching methods in the study process is not sufficient, and additional staff training is required.

BIA has a wide range of bilateral agreements for mobility and internships abroad, good collaboration with colleges and schools for attracting students. The criteria related to cooperation and internationalization have been met, however, there are aspects to build on in the future, namely more multi-dimensional partnerships with employers and research institutes, and the development of more diverse forms of internationalization.

There is a limited number of international education or research projects, international lecturers and different innovative models of mobility to support internationalization-related skills among students and staff. Besides, there is limited use of national promotional channels for international student recruitment.

Most recommendations received during the previous assessment procedures have been implemented fully, except the improvement of the scope of scientific activities, both in terms of conference participation, research project participation and number/quality of publications, which could still be improved.

1. Management of the Study Field

Analysis

1 Strategic aim of the study direction of the Baltic International Academy (further - BIA) is set and presented in the SAR. It says that they want to ensure the students with high-level professional education in Economics which would be competitive on the Latvian, European, and international job markets, to improve research skills and competencies, as well as ensure and develop the relationship with the employers in the field of the regional economy. The mission of the BIA, as it is written in the Long-term strategy of activities and development for 2016-2021: »To provide the Latvian economy and society with the internationally competitive high-quality scientific research, higher education, technology transfer, and innovation«. In the SAR it is written another mission: »The BIA is a modern higher education institution, which, in connection with research in the humanities and social sciences, provides the higher education opportunities of various types and levels to the residents of Latvia and the other countries«. It is somehow difficult to assess the compliance of study field aims with the main fields of strategic development of the academy if there are multiple documents. Vision also differs in both documents, which is a little bit strange, as they are both up-to-date. Experts concentrated on the information from SAR and found that in general lines, the aims of study direction are in line with the main fields of the strategic development of the academy and also meet the needs of the society and national economy.

2 Adopted structure of the management of the study field is appropriate for the development of the study field (1.2 in the II - Description of the Study Direction (1. Management of the Study Direction, SAR). Tasks are divided among the management members according to the SAR, processes are described and also charted in the "Management structure of the study field Economics". Decision-

taking system is efficient and the administrative and technical staff contributes to meeting all the needs with regard to the relevant study programmes of the study field. Nevertheless, experts understood from the interviews with management, that there is no clear vision about BIA development, there are no strategic documents with target measures. Management has been asked to provide such documents if they exist, but nothing has been shown or sent to the experts' team.

3 Students are enrolled in the Academy by regulations approved by the BIA Senate - "Enrolment Rules and Matriculation Procedure at the Baltic International Academy" https://bsa.edu.lv/wp-content/docs/admission/uznemsanas_noteikumi_BSA_2020_21_eng.pdf. Admission commission is established each academic year. Admission to the full-time or part-time study programs is carried out in the open and equal competition order based on the results of centralized examinations and admission procedures are logical and efficient. Previous education learning outcomes or professional experience of students can be recognized after the application with additional documents. Academy provided an example of how a student, who applied in a later stage of studies, made the application that was examined, preparing a draft of an individual study plan. The admission commission recognized the achievements and allowed the enrolment in 3rd semester. Students' knowledge is evaluated by tests and examinations, in oral and/or written form. The results of course papers, project work, as well as bachelor's and master's theses are evaluated by a commission. The completion of the study course is evaluated on a 10-point scale by following the Cabinet of Ministers Regulations No. 141, No. 512, No. 240 and the "Regulations on Study Course Exams and Tests at the Baltic International Academy" approved by the BIA Senate (decision No. 211), "The Baltic International Academy regulations for the assessment of study results" https://bsa.edu.lv/wp-content/docs/2020/BSA_stud_rezultatu_nolikums2019.pdf

4 BIA developed Policy Statute on "Privacy" (approved at the BSA Senate sitting, protocol No.137 of 14.02.2019). BIA Internal data protection rules, and "Code of Academic Integrity and Ethics" (approved at the BSA Senate sitting, protocol No.137 of 14.02.2019). Code explains the concept of academic integrity and actions related to it and defines key procedures for dealing with academic integrity violations. Students are acknowledged about the principles of academic honesty, compliance requirements during studies, and sanctions; also explained to students at the beginning of study courses by teaching staff. Upon submitting their final theses, students certify with their signature that the work is not counterfeit or plagiarised. The scientific supervisor of the thesis also certifies it with his / her signature. BIA is using the University of Latvia's Unified Computerized Plagiarism Control System for the control of plagiarism in BIA study papers. All BIA final theses are tested at two levels (before the pre-defense and before the final thesis defense).

5 Almost all information about the study direction and the corresponding study programs (including self-assessments) are published on the BIA website <https://bsa.edu.lv/en/> and they comply with the information available in the official registers and the BIA quality management system. Necessary information for students is being provided. Some undesired slips (different vision, mission statements) have already been described earlier. The website is presented in three languages: Latvian, English, and Russian.

Conclusions. Strengths and weaknesses

The strategic aim of the study direction is set and presented in the SAR. Different mission and vision of the BIA appear in the Long-term strategy of activities and development for 2016-2021 and in the SAR. The adopted structure of the management of the study field is appropriate for the development of the study field, but the chart lacks some of the councils. The academy management lacks a clear vision about BIA development, there are no strategic documents with target measures. Admission rules and matriculation procedures are set and no complaints have been noticed or heard about their implementation. Academic integrity principles and mechanisms are established and implemented; antiplagiarism software is used effectively. Important information is being published

on the academy's website in both languages that are implemented.

Strengths:

- 1 Effective admission procedures and recognition of previously acquired education and experiences are in place.
- 2 It has been declared an effective use of the antiplagiarism software.

Weaknesses:

- 1 It has been detected confusion about the valid mission and vision of the study direction in different documents.

2. Efficiency of the Internal Quality Assurance System

Analysis

1. BIA has developed and implemented a Quality policy conforming to Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG, 2015). The Policy was approved by BIA Senate on October 23, 2019, minutes Nr. 140. The Policy is publicly available on the official BIA home page www.bsa.edu.lv in Latvian and English (https://bsa.edu.lv/wp-content/docs/nolikums/quality_policy.pdf).

BIA study quality assurance system document was approved by BIA Senate on October 7, 2020. It says the quality assurance system is based on The EFQM Model. There is a weak connection between Quality assurance policy and quality assurance system. The statements in the Quality assurance policy are not reflected throughout the quality assurance system description.

The description of the quality assurance system is publicly available on the official BIA home page only in the Latvian language (https://bsa.edu.lv/wp-content/docs/2020/BSA_Studiju_kvalitates_nodrosinasanas_sistema.pdf), no such information is publicly available in English.

In the quality assurance system are not defined clear responsibilities for the activities. Management and the team responsible for the preparation of SAR were not able to demonstrate the existence of detailed documents, nor to explain how they assure continuous improvements, no examples have been mentioned. In this way, it is difficult to confirm the assurance of continuous improvement, development, and efficient performance of the study direction "Economics".

According to SAR, the Mission of BIA is "Multilingual Education for the Global World" (SAR, p.13). However, in the "Long-term strategy of activities and development for 2016-2021," it is stated that the Mission of BIA is "Teaching and learning. Research and development. To provide the Latvian economy and society with the internationally competitive high-quality scientific research, higher education, technology transfer and innovation." The same situation is with BIA Vision. According to SAR, it is "The BIA is a modern higher education institution, which, in connection with research in the humanities and social sciences, provides the higher education opportunities of various types and levels to the residents of Latvia and the other countries." (SAR, p.13). According to the "Long-term strategy of activities and development for 2016-2021" the Vision is "The BIA is an internationally recognized, modern and one of the leading science and innovation universities in the Baltic States." The Mission and Vision are not publicly available to all the stakeholders.

In order to achieve the headline target and vision of BIA, there are 7 targets developed to be achieved by 2021. There are also 6 tasks defined, each of them is divided into several subtasks. The strategy document also contains SWOT analysis where HEI has identified its strength and weaknesses as well as opportunities and threats and PEST analysis where HEI identified external influencing factors.

The quality assurance system contains the description of main processes divided into 3 groups – management processes, study assurance processes and human, material and information resources

management processes aiming to ensure the achievement of strategic goals and objectives of BIA, quality assurance of the study field and the study programmes, the planned outcomes of the study processes, trends in higher education in Latvia and abroad, the development trends of Latvian, the EU and worldwide economy and the continuous improvement of quality assurance system. The Quality assurance manager appointed by BIA Rector is responsible for the development and improvement of quality assurance documentation and processes' description in cooperation with responsible academic and administrative staff. In order to continuously improve the internal quality assurance system, BIA employs various evaluation and assessment methods, such as expert evaluation (internal and external), questionnaires, registration and calculation methods. However, the quality assurance system contains a description of the processes that do not take place in reality. During the visit the expert panel has requested the evidence of the following: Process V1 – Management review, V3 Internal quality audits, however, there were no records supporting that those processes are performed regularly. According to the BIA study quality assurance system the self-assessment of the study field and the study programmes takes place once a year and the results are publicly available on BIA official web page www.bsa.edu.lv. However, the latest self-assessment report available on request from the expert group is dated 2017/2018. There is no information about self-assessment reports of the study field economics at <https://bsa.edu.lv/en/self-assessment/>, neither in Latvian version <https://bsa.edu.lv/pasnovertejumi/>. Therefore, there is a doubt if the system ensures continuous improvement and development of the study field and the relevant study programmes.

BIA publishes information about its activities on the official HEI web page. The information is relevant, but not always sufficient as stated above and some information is outdated or links are missing. For example, part “”Studiju procesu reglamentējošie iekšējie normatīvie dokumenti”” (Internal regulatory documents regulating the study process) contains the following heading “2019./2020. gada studiju un norīšu kalendārs”, which is outdated (checked by experts on April 12, 2021).

2. BIA study quality assurance system has a detailed description and schematic representation of the study programme improvement process. The improvement is based on the results of measurement of the actuality of the study programmes and the study courses, the stakeholders' satisfaction, the evaluation of teaching staff performance, internship reports, employers feedback and the results of the final thesis.

The feedback from the students on their satisfaction and the improvement suggestions is obtained in several ways – via direct contact during lectures, students questionnaires at the end of each semester on the quality of lectures and the students' general satisfaction with BIA, via students representatives and the Student Parliament. The students also submit the evaluation at the end of each course in Moodle environment. Upon completion of studies, the graduates provide BIA with information about their employment. The feedback from employers is collected via surveys as well as during the internship provision process. The amendments to the study programme are approved by BIA Senate.

The development and approval of a new study programme take place according to the established procedure “REGULATIONS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT, APPROVAL AND AMENDMENT OF THE STUDY PROGRAMMES AT THE BALTIC INTERNATIONAL ACADEMY” approved at the BIA Senate meeting on 09.07.2020 (Minutes No. 143), taking into consideration the requirement set out in the regulatory enactments and the Constitution of BIA. Study programs are developed according to the requirements of the standards – they consider the proportion of compulsory and elective courses and their volume in credit points (SAR, II - Description of the Study Direction (2. Efficiency of the Internal Quality Assurance System), point 2.2). Study program levels are designed to create continuity.

The draft is prepared by the Faculty Council and then approved by BIA Senate. The procedure is very detailed and aims to the achievement of the highest quality of the study programmes. The

composition of the Faculty Council is approved by the Senate and consists of programmes directors, academic staff and student representatives. The example has been presented: due to changes of the Profession Standard, the Faculty Council decided to review a program by following the current regulatory framework and the Regulation of Cabinet of Ministers No. 512 of 26 August 2014, "Provisions on the Second-level National Standard of Vocational Higher Education", labor market requirements and scientific trends. The faculty council elaborated changes in the study program's curriculum. The draft was submitted to the BIA Senate for discussion and approved on October 23, 2019, at the Senate sitting (Protocol No. 140).

Feedbacks upon program development to students and employers have been confirmed, while the feedback to graduates couldn't be proven.

The process of submitting complaints and the further actions are described in detail in SAR (SAR p.57-60). During the meetings with the students, the expert panel got the confirmation the students are aware of the process, the process is effective, and those students who had submitted complaints were satisfied with the process and with the outcomes. The complaints and suggestions for improvement can be submitted in a paper form to the BIA information centre, by e-mail or filling the form on the website. However, there is no written formal complaint procedure.

3. BIA regularly collects, analyses and submits statistical data on relevant study programmes according to regulatory enactments and internal regulations. The internal statistical information – the results of the surveys from students, graduates, employers and teachers are processed by the BIA computer centre, then analysed by the BIA analytical center and provided for further actions to BIA management, the BIA Board, programmes managers and heads of the departments. The data then used for the improvement of the study programmes and the study process.

According to SAR BIA performs self-assessment on regular basis, collects and analyses information on the study programmes of the study field and performs SWOT analysis. Based on SWOT analysis in order to utilise the opportunities and avoid the threats the following priorities have been set for the study field (SAR, p.40):

1st priority: a satisfied student (and a reduction in students' dropouts);

2nd priority: increasing the number of students;

3rd priority: improvement of internal regulatory documents;

4th priority: development of scientific activity;

5th priority: development of international cooperation.

However, there is no action plan with clear roles and responsibilities, neither Key Performance Indicators established for the measurement of the activities and their progress. As stated above there is no evidence that self-assessment is done in a systematic way.

4. BIA study quality assurance system description complies with the standards set forth in Part 1 of the ESG. BIA has defined the most important quality assurance criteria, such as the level of students and graduates satisfaction, competitiveness in the labour market, employers feedback, national and international accreditation, enrolment and graduation rates and financial indicators. BIA has identified that special attention shall be paid during the forthcoming years to the improvement of Quality policy and the involvement of all stakeholders in the improvement of internal documentation and decision-making process.

The biggest challenge for the BIA is the provision of funding to guarantee the continuous development and funding for research activities, as the BIA budget consists only of the student tuition fees and founders' contributions.

There is a very detailed Quality assurance plan developed for the study year 2020/2021 with the goals and tasks set to be achieved throughout the year, responsibilities, measurement and planned activities. The plan is developed in accordance with BIA "Long-term strategy of activities and development for 2016-2021", which was approved at the BIA Senate meeting on January 12, 2016, minutes Nr. 124. The strategy has been developed taking into consideration the guidelines for the development of science and education set out in the EU and Latvian policy planning documents, and

in compliance with the Constitution of BIA and Latvian laws and regulations. Another document was present to the expert panel "Development plan of the study field "Economics" 2016-2022" aiming at the specific development of the study field and quality assurance of the study process with the field. Special attention is paid to attract the necessary funding (participation in national and international projects, Erasmus+, structural funds, etc.), efficient usage of the resources and improvement of the range of services. However, there are no established Key Performance Indicators that would be periodically measured to ensure the progress of the development plan.

According to SAR appendix "Compliance of the study fieldn to the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the Common European Higher Education Area (ESG) (1st part)" the information about Self-evaluation of the study fields and Self-evaluation of the study programmes shall be publicly available on official BIA home page, however, no information about self-evaluation for study field "Economics" and the related study programmes was found.

Conclusions. Strengths and weaknesses

BIA has developed and implemented a Quality policy conforming to Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG, 2015). BIA study quality assurance system document was approved by BIA Senate on October 7, 2020. It says the quality assurance system is based on The EFQM Model. The description of the quality assurance system is publicly available on the official BIA home page only in the Latvian language, no such information is publicly available in English. The Mission and Vision are not publicly available to all interested parties and differ in various documents. BIA performs self-assessments and SWOT/PEST analysis; however, it is not being done in a regular and systematic way. The information about BIA activities is published on the official BIA webpage, but some information is outdated, and some are insufficient. BIA study quality assurance system description complies with the standards set forth in Part 1 of the ESG, however, some processes within the system are not being performed in a real life. Some deficiencies have been noticed in the quality assurance system: lack of clear responsibilities was observed, and continuous improvements documents could not be found.

There is a very detailed Quality assurance plan developed for the study year 2020/2021 with the goals and tasks set to be achieved throughout the year, responsibilities, measurements and planned activities. The plan is developed in accordance with BIA "Long-term strategy of activities and development for 2016-2021", which was approved at the BIA Senate meeting on January 12, 2016, minutes Nr. 124. There is also "Development plan of the study field "Economics" 2016-2022" aiming at the specific development of the study field and quality assurance of the study process with the field. However, no specific Key Performance Indicators are established, and no measurements done in a systematic way to ensure the activities are being performed according to these plans and the targets are achieved.

All the procedures for the development and review of existing programs in the study direction are logical, efficient and available for important stakeholders. Graduates are not organized in any form and it is difficult to provide feedback to them, although some of them continue the cooperation with the academy as guest lecturers. Procedures for the approval and refreshing of programs are established. Feedback to the stakeholders upon the programs' development could be confirmed, with the exception of the group of graduates. Statistics are being collected regularly.

Strengths:

- 1 BIA has developed and implemented a Quality policy conforming to Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area.
- 2 BIA performed SWOT and PEST analysis, identifying strengths, weaknesses and influencing factors.
- 3 Several strategical documents are developed at BIA aiming at the development of study field and study programmes and continuous improvement, e.g. "Long-term strategy of activities and

development for 2016-2021", " Quality assurance plan developed for the study year 2020/2021", "Development plan of the study field "Economics" 2016-2022".

4 The procedure on the development and improvement of the study programmes is very detailed and effective. The improvements is done based on feedback from all stakeholders which is collected by the means of surveys, feedback from internships, meetings and direct personal contacts.

5 BIA regularly collects the relevant statistical data and uses it for the improvement of the study programmes and the study process.

6 The process for submitting complaints and improvement suggestions is in place and effective.

Weaknesses:

1 There seems to be disintegration between strategy, quality policy, vision, mission and reality. The processes described in the internal quality assurance system do not take place in real life on a regular basis. There is no clarity about the BIA development direction.

2 Quality policy, the description of internal quality assurance system, Mission and Vision, are not publicly available to the stakeholders in the English language.

3 There is a lack of clear responsibilities regarding the continuous improvement of the study direction.

4 It has been found the inability to display certain quality assurance documents. Some information on the BIA official home page is missing (there are headlines with no links) or outdated.

5 There is no written complaint procedure available to the students and other interested parties.

6 There are no Key Performance Indicators established, no clear responsibilities and no measurements done in a systematic way to ensure the activities are being performed according to the strategic plans and the targets are achieved.

3. Resources and Provision of the Study Field

Analysis

3.1 Based on the SAR (Part II, 3.Resources and Provision of the Study Direction), the budget of the Baltic International Academy (further – BIA) and study direction "Economics" is established through a dialogue between the founders, BIA management and the study direction. Three main sources of income are: 1) student tuition fees and other services related to the study process, 2) revenues for scientific activity (financing of projects from the state budget, income from scientific works, EU structural funds and other revenues), 3) other revenues (Latvian and international project funds, income from renting, selling books, organizing various courses, etc.). Tuition fees cover 85%-90% of study process expenses. Revenues from tuition fee are relatively stable (based on the Annex "Revenue from the tuition fee for the study direction "Economics").

The budget for research in the study field "Economics" takes approximately 7% of the total BIA research budget (as per 2017-2019). During the additional meeting with management, the question about the system for financing the scientific research was asked. The answer was that this system is based on the Regulations of remuneration. Management explained that this money is being spent to support Doctoral students, as well as to provide support for scientific publications and participation in scientific conferences.

Financial resources are adequate and sufficient to implement study field "Economics", relevant study programmes, and to support research activities.

3.2 The study process at the BIA is realized in Riga. BIA owns two buildings in Riga (Lomonosova iela 4 and Lomonosova iela 1/4, Riga) and also halls of residence. The total area of Riga premises is over 7000m². BIA has 29 study rooms and 6 rooms with 119 computer-equipped working places). Study rooms are equipped with visual presentation equipment (multimedia video projectors; DVD / VHS equipment), computers, and TV to ensure teleconferencing.

Using the support of the ERAF project to improve infrastructure, BIA was able to create infrastructure with access for disabled people.

BIA has a well-functioning e-teaching platform with an integrated Big Blue Button video-conferencing system. The special course for staff has been developed in Moodle, containing all the work instructions. There is also an internal information system NEXUS that allows compiling academic and financial data on the CAF staff, academic staff and students, as well as preparing academic transcripts and diploma supplements.

BIA has several cultural centres (Nordic centre, German centre, Russian culture centre). Centres are part of the BIA library and are used for reading, group works, meetings, as well as offered for rent.

The Baltic International Academy has a central library in Riga. The funds of the Library are sufficient to ensure the study process. The library in Riga is available 6 days per week from 10:00 until 19:00. It ensures free printing & scanning services.

During the visit, students expressed their satisfaction with BIA provided information on the website and library. Students also are satisfied with the e-learning platform (Moodle) and stated that there were no problems during COVID times because BIA adapted very well.

BIA provides teaching staff and students with access to different databases (SCOPUS, ScienceDirect and others). Teaching staff members to know about it and use it (confirmed during the on-site visit via discussion with staff). The students at all levels confirmed that they know about the access to databases, some of them (and all Doctoral students) use the opportunity of this information source. Students confirm their awareness about the available databases.

Students and staff have access to computer classes, library fund, reading rooms, study auditoriums, bookshop and cafeteria. Buildings are well suited for ease of access and follow current practices of accessibility. The overall quality of infrastructure is good and is oriented towards a successful study process.

Staff members of BIA during the meeting explained the process of applying for new resources. Staff approaches the programme director, the programme director asks the Dean, and the Dean asks BIA board members for approval of the request.

There is no specific document describing procedures for the improvement and purchase of the material, technical, methodological, and informative provision at BIA.

3.3 Based on the information from the SAR (Part III, 3.6), 60 teaching staff members are involved in the implementation of the study direction "Economics". Based on the information provided in the Annex "List of teaching staff involved in the study direction "Economics" (01.10.2020)", 38 of them (63%) hold Doctor Degree. 35 of them (58%) are employed at the BIA on a permanent basis (elected staff). 29 of the elected staff members (82%) are with a Doctor degree that is a very high indicator. The director of the study field told that Programme directors are mainly responsible for attracting the staff, but everyone can participate in the process. The procedure of staff election is based on the "Regulations on the academic positions of the Baltic International Academy" (available only in Latvian on the BIA website https://bsa.edu.lv/wp-content/docs/2020/BSA_akad_amati.pdf).

Based on the SAR (Part III, 3.6) "the workload is determined by the "Regulations on Wages" approved by the BIA Senate. Workload (hours per year) depends on the position...Methodological and scientific work for BIA academic staff (assistants, lecturers, docents, associate professors, professors) up to 75 acad. hours in the school year are included in the annual workload." During the visit, it was clarified that "Regulations on the remuneration" is an internal BIA document and is not publicly available. After the meeting the information was provided, but not in the form of Regulations, but in the form of several tables containing remuneration rates for different academic positions. These tables do not contain any information about the duties included in staff workload. However, academic staff members confirmed that academic and research workload is balanced; it is possible to combine research activities with the lectures.

The needs of staff are identified by management during the meeting of the Study field council and

Study programme council, as well as through surveys (clarified during the additional meeting with BIA management). Staff members confirmed that they participate in surveys, and the management takes into account their feedback.

Based on the interviews with academic staff members, it was clarified that the different types of training are provided by BIA (usage of ICT-based platforms for teaching, English courses, course “Innovations in Education”). Besides, academic staff members mentioned training to improve research competencies organized by the Methodological Council. During the additional meeting with management, a Vice-Rector for Science explained that also informal training takes place, for instance, inviting staff members to participate in the writing project applications.

During the visit, some teaching staff members confirmed that they use Erasmus+ opportunities. Those who do not use explained this with the limited time resources (because of employment in a business sector). The information about incoming and outgoing staff mobility is available in the SAR (Part II, 3. Resources and Provision of the Study Direction, Annex “Information on the exchange of academic staff”).

3.4 During the meeting with the academic staff members they mentioned different kinds of support measures provided to students, e.g. additional consultations, the list of books provided in advance to get prepared for the course, frequent communication using different channels, informative support (for instance, guest lectures from Latvian investment agency to provide information about events in the area of innovations). Staff members also mentioned psychological support to students that helps to decrease drop-out. Students confirmed that the lecturers are very helpful and available at any time (via e-mail, phone calls, in Moodle). During the pandemic situation, it is possible to organize video consultations as well.

Based on the discussion with the director of the Doctoral programme, support for Doctoral students includes: 1) specific seminars to prepare students for defence, 2) supervisor assistance (contacts at least once per week), 3) meeting hours with the programme directors to discuss the issues, 4) free of charge publications at BIA, 5) financial support for SCOPUS/Web of Science publications (50%). During the visit, doctoral students confirm that they have support from supervisors. There is also language support and specific consultations to improve research competencies. Doctoral students appreciate courses related to research methodology. Doctoral students know about the study requirements and confirm that information and step-by-step explanations were provided by Professors. However, doctoral students are not fully informed about the financial support for research available at BIA.

Conclusions. Strengths and weaknesses

The budget of the BIA study direction “Economics” is established through a dialogue between the founders, BIA management and the study direction. The main revenue source is students’ tuition fee. Financial resources are adequate and sufficient to implement study field “Economics”, relevant study programmes, and to support research activities.

BIA has large premises to ensure the study process. Staff and students have an access to BIA resources. BIA infrastructure is adapted to the needs of disabled people.

Students are extremely satisfied with BIA and expressed their loyalty. They confirmed that BIA provides all needed support.

There is no documentation on the distribution of staff workload. A professional and didactic improvement of teaching staff is ensured by providing various type of training.

Strengths:

1 Stable revenue, based on students’ tuition fee.

2 Well-functioning e-teaching platform with integrated Big Blue Button video-conferencing system.

- 3 Infrastructure with the ensured access for disabled persons.
- 4 Ensured access to different databases (SCOPUS, ScienceDirect and others).
- 5 Regular staff training to improve language and pedagogical competencies.
- 6 Systematic and various support provided to students.

Weaknesses

- 1 There is no document containing information about the research-related duties included in staff workload.

4. Scientific Research and Artistic Creation

Analysis

4.1. Based on the SAR, scientific activity is an integral part of the BIA operations. However, BIA Long-term strategy of activities and development for 2016-2021 (available on BIA web site in Latvian and English https://bsa.edu.lv/wp-content/docs/2020/bsa_strateg_eng.pdf) has a very general description of BIA goals for research development. The relevant section of the strategy “4.2. Description and development of scientific research activities” (pp.22-23) contains the formulation of objectives with no target indicators and quantitative measures. The Development Plan for study field “Economics” (Annex to the SAR) contains the development goal “development of scientific research capacity of academic staff and students” and six corresponding objectives with no quantitative indicators and target measures as well. During the meeting with the group responsible for SAR preparation, the information was received that there are no other documents containing quantitative target measures. The director of the study field “Economics” (who is in the position for only 1 week) told that the document should be developed and it was one of the reasons why the person in this position was replaced. In the SAR, “Scientific research work strategy” is mentioned, but during the meeting with the group responsible for SAR preparation it was clarified that no separate strategic document is available; research strategy is a part of BIA strategy.

During the meeting with the group responsible for SAR preparation, there were no clear answers provided about key performance indicators used at the BIA. The question about quantitative target measures for research development and staff development was asked once again during the additional meeting with BIA management. The proposed document for investigation was “BIA Study quality assurance system” (available on BIA website in Latvian https://bsa.edu.lv/wp-content/docs/2020/BSA_Studiju_kvalitates_nodrosinasanas_sistema.pdf). This document contains several indicators, but still no quantitative target measures.

The responsibilities for the achievement of the goals defined in the BIA strategy and Development plan for study direction “Economics” are not clear. During the additional meeting with management, the experts received the information that responsibilities are described in the document “BIA Study quality assurance system” (available on BIA website in Latvian https://bsa.edu.lv/wp-content/docs/2020/BSA_Studiju_kvalitates_nodrosinasanas_sistema.pdf). However, taken into account the lack of quantitative indicators, the dissemination of responsibilities has a formal nature.

Three research directions of the study field “Economics” are defined in the SAR (Description of the study direction, 4.1). BIA web site also contains information about the research directions for the study field “Economics” (in Latvian and English, <https://bsa.edu.lv/en/research-areas/>), but only two research directions are mentioned.

The defined research directions relevant to the content of the study programmes within the field “Economics”. International cooperation within research directions is highly appreciated. However, the information about the outcomes within research directions (for instance, joint publications with foreign colleagues) is missed and it does not allow to evaluate the progress achieved.

Doctoral Programme “Regional Economics and Economic Policy” is realized within the study direction. The goal of the programme “to enable doctoral students in economics to acquire the

highest level of study methods and research work organization, principles of management, to prepare qualified specialists for independent scientific and pedagogical work, to acquire internationally comparable competence in economics and internationally comparable doctoral degree in economics and business” complies with the strategic goal of the BIA “Integration of science and research in all study fields and ensuring the scientific excellence and international competitiveness in the priority research areas” (BIA Long-term strategy of activities and development for 2016-2021, p.5).

4.2. The relationship between scientific research in the study field and the study process has not been sufficiently explained in the SAR. There were no provided examples describing the use of the research outcomes in the study process. However, conclusions can be made, based on the information provided in the Annex “Directions of scientific work and scientific publications of the academic staff”. The academic staff members are listed with the corresponding information about their study courses and scientific publications. In most cases, the areas of scientific activity are relevant to the taught study courses.

During the on-site visit, staff members confirmed that they use the latest research results in the study process; several examples were provided. Students also confirmed that lecturers tell them about research results during the courses.

In the SAR, it is stated that “in cooperation with employers, students have an opportunity to research” (Description of the study direction, 4.2). During the meeting with the group responsible for SAR preparation, a certain example was provided. For instance, students can address employers to select the topic for the final thesis and link the research with a concrete company. However, during the meeting with employers, no evidence about cooperation in research was received. During the meeting with students, there was also no confirmation of such collaboration.

4.3. BIA makes efforts to ensure international cooperation in the field of scientific research within the study field “Economics”.

BIA regularly organizes a conference for young researchers “The time of challenges and opportunities: problem solutions, prospects” in cooperation with the Sting Academy (Czech Republic), Šiauliai State College (Lithuania), SHEI “Banking University” (Ukraine), International University «MITSO» (Belarus), St Petersburg State University of Economics (Russia). The annual conference “The transformation process in law, regional economics and economic policies: the current problems of economically-political and legal relations” is organised in cooperation with the Siedlce University of Natural Sciences and Humanities (Poland).

The research directions defined for the field “Economics” (Description of the study direction, 4.1) involve staff members from BIA and foreign partner Universities.

Research internationalization could be promoted through participation in international research projects. However, BIA does not have any. Projects mentioned in the SAR (Description of the study direction, 4.3) are not research projects, but mostly Erasmus+ mobility exchange projects and Capacity Building projects. Considering that some non-research projects could have a research component, this information (if relevant) should be stressed. Now, it is missed.

BIA has developed an “Internationalisation policy 2019 – 2021” (available on the BIA website in Latvian and English https://bsa.edu.lv/wp-content/docs/2020/BSA_internationalisation_strategy.pdf). It is related to the strategic objectives of the Development Strategy for 2016-2021. However, it is not possible to conclude that international cooperation is improved in a target-oriented manner because no target indicators regarding international cooperation exist in the strategic documents.

4.4. The mechanism for the involvement of the teaching staff in scientific research should be based on internal rules and requirements. It is stated in the SAR (Description of the study direction, 3.6), that methodological and scientific work for BIA academic staff up to 75 acad. hours is included in the annual workload.” Besides, it is stated that workload duties are defined in REGULATION, but the link to regulation was not provided. During the meeting with the group responsible for SAR preparation, it was clarified that this refers to “Regulations on the remuneration” that is an internal BIA document

and is not publicly available. After the meeting the information was provided, but not in the form of Regulations, but in the form of several tables containing remuneration rates for different academic positions. These tables do not contain any information about the duties included in staff workload.

“Regulations on the academic positions of the Baltic International Academy” (available only in Latvian on the BIA website https://bsa.edu.lv/wp-content/docs/2020/BSA_akad_amati.pdf) contain the requirements for staff to be elected for academic positions at the BIA (including research-related requirements). During the additional meeting with management, the experts clarified that the salary level is connected to research results. Now, there is no documented procedure, and staff members should write a free-form application to Vice-Rector for Science mentioning their scientific achievements in order to get additional remuneration. In the future, the internal BIA system NEXUS will be connected with the NZDIS system, and the information will be collected automatically.

During the meeting with staff, staff members affirmed that it is possible to combine a pedagogical workload with research.

“The system for promoting the scientific activity of academic staff, master students and doctoral students of the Baltic International Academy” is described on the BIA website in Latvian and English (<https://bsa.edu.lv/en/system-of-promotion-of-scientific-activity/>). There is no publicly available information about the application procedure for staff. During the meeting with the director of the study field, no answer about the application procedure was received. However, during the on-site visit, staff members confirmed that it is possible to get support from BIA to finance publications or participation in conferences. Application for support should be addressed to the Vice-Rector for Science.

BIA provides teaching staff with access to different databases (SCOPUS, ScienceDirect, and others). Teaching staff members to know about it and use it (confirmed during the on-site visit via discussion with staff).

BIA organizes international scientific conferences in which BIA staff can participate (the list of planned conferences in 2021 is available in Latvian and English on the BIA web site <https://bsa.edu.lv/en/plan-of-conferences-for-2019-2020-academic-year/>) The participation is free of charge. During the on-site visit, confirmation from staff members was received.

BIA has scientific journals; the information about them is available on BIA website <https://bsa.edu.lv/en/journals> Thus, staff members from the field “Economics” have the possibility to publish their papers at the BIA.

Based on the information from the self-assessment report (Description of the study direction, 4.1), 60 teaching staff members are involved in the implementation of the study direction. 38 of them (63%) hold Doctor Degree. Among the persons with Doctor Degree, 11 (29%) were the experts of the Latvian Council of Science (LCS) during the reporting period; experts rights of 3 persons terminated in 2017 and 2018 (checked in sciencelatvia.lv on 10.04.2021.). Expert status indicates a high level of the engagement of teaching staff into research activities because the pre-requisite is the high-level publications published during the last three years (Regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers No. 320, 09.07.2019.) However, only five holders of the LCS rights are among permanent staff members of the BIA within the study field “Economics” (based on SAR, Description of the study direction, 4.1).

The statistics about scientific publications published by the BIA staff members are available in the SAR (Description of the study direction, 4.4). There is visible progress in the number of SCOPUS publications during the reporting period that is highly appreciated. According to the information provided in the SAR Annex “List of scientific publications”, 47 of 60 staff members have publications in the reporting period.

Based on the SAR, most academic staff members (approx. 75%) participate in international conferences. Evidence is provided in the Annex “Conferences” (Description of the study direction, 4.4). Approximately 35% of academic personnel has experience in international projects (checked in CV, SAR Annex “CV”). This relatively small number of engaged staff members could also be

explained by the small number of projects implemented by BIA.

During the meeting with the director of the study field, there was no additional information provided about the encouragement of staff to do research. The viewpoint of the director of the field is that staff members should understand the importance of research if they want to be elected or to improve their position at the BIA, and no specific measures to encourage staff are needed. The election criteria are described in the Regulations on the Board of professors of the Baltic International Academy and election of associate Professors and Professors. The document is not publicly available, it was provided to the expert during the visit upon request. During the meeting with staff, the representatives of study programmes at all levels confirmed that they are involved in research. The level of involvement of the teaching staff in research is evaluated as satisfactory in Bachelor programmes. However, based on the information in CVs, not all staff members involved in the implementation of the Master and Doctoral programmes have scientific publications indexed in SCOPUS, Web of Science, or ERIH+, as well as participation in research-related and other international projects (analysis is provided separately for the programmes).

4.5. For students, it is obligatory to conduct research for the development of a Bachelor or Master's Thesis. This requirement is described in the "Regulation on the preparation and defence of diploma works at the Baltic International Academy (available on BIA website in Latvian and English, https://bsa.edu.lv/wp-content/docs/2020/BSA_diplomdarbu_nolikums_ENG.pdf). The director of the study field and directors of the programmes also mentioned study works (with a research component) that should be developed by students every year. Participation in conferences and publications of scientific articles is obligatory for Master students (Regulation, paragraph 4.9).

There is a specific study course about research methods in the Bachelor programmes (Theory and Methodology of Scientific Research, 1 CP) and in the Master programme "International Finance and Economics" (Master's Thesis Methodology and Practical Research, 4 CP).

Various databases (including SCOPUS) are available for students to support them in conducting research and preparing the final Thesis. During the on-site visit, the students at all levels confirmed that they know about the access to databases, some of them (and all Doctoral students) use the opportunity of this information source.

BIA in cooperation with foreign partners every year organizes the conference "Time of challenges and opportunities: problems, solutions and prospects" for students (<https://bsa.edu.lv/en/xi-international-scientific-and-practical-conference-time-of-challenges-and-opportunities-problems-solutions-and-prospects-project/>). During the on-site visit, students confirmed that they know about BIA conferences. Some of them participated and some are going to participate.

In the document "The system for promoting the scientific activity of academic staff, master students and doctoral students of the Baltic International Academy" (<https://bsa.edu.lv/en/system-of-promotion-of-scientific-activity/>), it is stated that BIA students are provided with benefits for payment for participation in BIA scientific conferences. During the on-site visit, it was clarified that not all the students are informed about the system of promotion.

4.6. According to the self-assessment report, there is a number of innovative solutions implemented and available for study direction "Economics". BIA uses Moodle platform for e-studies and a video-conferencing system Big Blue Button. Academic staff uses them on a regular basis.

NEXUS platform contains information regarding the curriculum content, staff and student case management, financial resources and document flow processes. During the visit, NEXUS was demonstrated to the experts.

Neurocognitive Implicit Laboratory was described in the SAR. It is a laboratory equipped with encephalography equipment, computers to detect external audio and visual stimuli, specific software. Based on the SAR (Description of the study direction, 4.6), the aim of the laboratory is to provide a scientific-technical basis for students' research. During the visit, it was not possible to see

the equipment. The explanation was that it is very expensive and is not available for demonstration for safety reasons.

Regarding the innovative teaching methods, the director of the study field mentioned only the usage of the e-learning platform. Directors of the Bachelor and Master programme mentioned only the usage of the e-learning platform and guest lectures. The director of the Doctoral programme also mentioned guest lectures and presentations. During the meeting with students, they additionally mentioned “case studies”. One student told about participation in the business game but added that these kinds of activities do not often take place, and students need more.

Conclusions. Strengths and weaknesses

BIA strategic documents include a very general description of BIA goals for research development with no target indicators and quantitative measures. Having no quantified measures, there is no mechanism to collect data about staff achievements in research.

Staff members use the latest research results in the study process that was confirmed by students. International cooperation in the field of scientific research is ensured, but the clear shortcoming is the lack of research projects implemented by BIA. It is not possible to conclude that international cooperation is improved in a target-oriented manner because no target indicators regarding international cooperation exist in the strategic documents.

There is a functioning mechanism to involve staff and students in research (organization of scientific conferences, integration of research in the study process, a system for promoting research activities). However, the communication about BIA-provided support should be improved.

The usage of innovative teaching methods in the study process is not sufficient, and additional staff training is required.

Strengths:

- 1 Staff members use the latest research results in the study process.
- 2 The system for promoting the scientific activity of academic staff and students is developed.
- 3 BIA provides teaching staff with access to different databases (SCOPUS, ScienceDirect and others).
- 4 BIA organizes international scientific conferences in which BIA staff can participate for free.
- 5 There is a clear mechanism to involve students in research. Research is an integral part of the Final Thesis for Bachelor and Master students. Participation in research activities is the obligatory prerequisite for the defence of the Master Thesis
- 6 Well-established e-learning platform (Moodle with BigBlueButton).
- 7 Well-established NEXUS platform to collect data about students and staff.

Weaknesses:

- 1 There are no quantified performance targets stated for the study direction regarding the research activities (for instance, number of publications in SCOPUS/Web of Science, number of publications in ERIH+ journals, peer reviewed monographs, number of joint publications with foreign Professors, number of conferences teaching staff members take part in, etc.).
- 2 Three research directions of the study field “Economics” are defined in the SAR (Description of the study direction, 4.1), but only two research directions are mentioned on the BIA website (in Latvian and English, <https://bsa.edu.lv/en/research-areas/>)
- 3 No research projects realized by BIA during the reporting period.
- 4 There is no centralized mechanism for the evaluation of staff achievements (data collection) in research.
- 5 Students are not fully informed about the system for the promotion of scientific activities.
- 6 Lack of usage of innovative teaching methods in the study process.

5. Cooperation and Internationalisation

Analysis

5.1 BIA collaborates with higher education institutions (HEIs) both in Latvia and abroad, e.g. through more than 100 bilateral agreements (Annex to section 5 in SAR COOPERATION AND INTERNATIONALIZATION SAR “List of cooperation agreements”). Moreover, cooperation takes place with a diversity of organisations, associations, companies, as well as secondary schools and colleges to recruit students (SAR section 5.1, COOPERATION AND INTERNATIONALIZATION).

According to the Self-assessment report, BIA is a member of many professional associations (Association of Private Higher Education Institutions, International Association of Social Work Schools, Latvian College Association, International alliance for vocational education, European students union, European University Association).

BIA cooperates with several universities in Latvia: Riga Stradins University, Rezekne Academy of Technology, Daugavpils University, Transport and Telecommunication Institute, The University of Latvia, Turība University, BA School of Banking and Finance, Riga Technical University and some others. The lecturers from these universities provide lectures at BIA and BIA lecturers read lectures at these universities.

There is good cooperation established with a number of Polish universities. Outside the EU the cooperation is established with Chinese Culture University, Moscow State University, St. Petersburg State University, several Kazakhstan universities, and some others. However, based on interviews, it seems that the involvement of international HEIs in the learning process is rather traditional, mainly through student and staff exchange. Hence, there is limited use of international education or research project or different innovative models of mobility to support internationalization-related skills among students and staff. New mobility models like a virtual exchange, blended mobility and virtual mobility could be useful for part-time students and also staff in different stages of life, as well as particularly relevant in times of the global pandemic.

According to the interviews, non-academic stakeholders are involved in a range of BIA activities through employer surveys, traineeships, thesis defence Council, as guest lecturers or through the provision of thesis materials. Employers participate in the development of new study programmes and the amendment of the existing ones. However, in order to contribute fully to the achievement of intended learning outcomes, employers could be more systematically involved, through field visits, guest lecturing, real-life project assignments, student competitions etc. Furthermore, contacts with scientific institutes both in Latvia and abroad could be enhanced to support the quality of the PhD programme. Based on the interviews, it became clear that contacts with research institutes are rather restricted, even though conferences are regularly organized with international partner higher education institutions. During the interviews, scientific international collaboration was mentioned - two EU projects “Smart City” and “Green Economy”.

Internationalization plays an important role in BIA strategic development. One of the strategic tasks in BIA “Long-term strategy of activities and development for 2016-2021” is “Stabilizing and expanding the international dimension of activities of higher education establishments in all fields of activity”. The task is divided into 7 subtasks aiming at the achievement of the set objective. BIA has developed Internationalization Policy 2019-2021 that is a medium-long strategic document based on the goals and tasks derived from “Long-term strategy of activities and development for 2016-2021”. The Internationalization Policy is publicly available on the official academy home page in the Latvian language only.

It is positive that the level of English language skills of teaching staff has improved since the previous accreditation, resulting in a higher number of courses offered in English (based on staff interviews). Furthermore, the number of international students has increased dramatically since 2013, now reaching 32% (37 international degree students out of 116 students in total within the study direction, according to Annex with Statistical data on foreign students). There is international mobility in all programmes except the Master-level (as students are often working alongside their studies).

5.2 International cooperation is one of the cornerstones of the BIA strategy. BIA mainly focuses its international cooperation activities on the EU, the Baltic Sea region and Eastern Europe.

Various channels are used for attracting students, e.g. fairs and exhibitions, international recruitment agents, schemes funded by foreign governments, international partner HEIs (SAR, section 5.2 COOPERATION AND INTERNATIONALIZATION). BIA has 400 cooperation agreements with universities around the world, including 145 inter-university agreements under the ERASMUS + programme with universities from 25 European countries.

The number of international degree students has increased during the review period. Currently, there are 500 foreign students studying at BIA from 30 countries. But more could be done, e.g. through visibility gained by participation in the national promotional site of "Study in Latvia" www.studyinlatvia.lv. BIA has an ambitious goal to increase the number of foreign students up to 20% of the total number of students studying at BIA. According to Latvian legislation, foreign students can be attracted only as full-time students. For part-time students, BIA offers such opportunities as participation in scientific exchange programmes, summer schools, vocational training internships.

The appendix to SAR "Information on the exchange of academic staff" provides detailed information on incoming and outgoing mobility of the academic staff during the whole review period. It shall be noted though that in recent years incoming academic mobility significantly prevails the outgoing mobility of the academic staff.

During the interviews, the expert panel did not get evidence that the foreign teaching staff is involved in the implementation of study programmes on a regular basis (long term contract, teaching the whole course, for example). The study process would benefit from having international lecturers also among the regular staff, as evidenced by interviews where students would like to have more foreign guest lecturers, and employers underline the importance of transversal skills in working life today and in the future.

5.3 BIA has developed a comprehensive system of traineeships, including guidelines with linkages between aims of the study programme, learning outcomes and topics covered during the internship (Annex in SAR "Regulations on Internships at the Baltic International Academy" approved at the BIA Senate meeting on 23.05.2018, minutes Nr. 134). The regulations cover elements of the internship process, aspects to be covered by the students during the training, as well as information on the elaboration of the internship report and the presentation of it. In addition, the hosting organisations are involved in assessing the student and this evaluation is used also for developing the entire study programme. It is also positive that the internship documentation has been translated to English to support the international degree students during their internship process.

Conclusions. Strengths and weaknesses

The criteria related to cooperation and internationalization have been met, however, there are

aspects to build on in the future, namely more multi-dimensional partnerships with employers and research institutes, and the development of more diverse forms of internationalization. All potential measures for attracting international students have not been taken, e.g. the national promotional site of "Study in Latvia" www.studyinlatvia.lv.

Strengths:

- 1 Wide range of bilateral agreements for mobility and internships abroad, good collaboration with colleges and schools for attracting students.
- 2 Increase in numbers of international students, English language skills of staff improved since last accreditation.
- 3 Increase in numbers of courses offered in English, high student satisfaction.
- 4 Well-functioning internship scheme.

Weaknesses:

- 1 Limited involvement of employers and scientific institutes in the education and research process.
- 2 Limited number of international education or research projects, international lecturers and different innovative models of mobility to support internationalization-related skills among students and staff.
- 3 Limited use of national promotional channels for international student recruitment.

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

Analysis

The SAR Annex "Fulfilment of recommendations of experts for the study field" explains actions taken to react on the weaknesses identified during the previous assessment of the study field. There was a concern about the absence of a sustainability strategy and BIA has answered by creating a system of indicators to achieve the BIA's strategic financial objective, investment in attractiveness was ensured and BIA development financial plan for years 2020-2026 was prepared. The development of English language skills of students and academic staff has also been appropriately supported.

There was also a recommendation to significantly improve the scope of research activities. Efforts were made towards improving the scientific work of teaching staff and students, e.g. through participation in international conferences and in the conference arranged by BSA. Cooperation with international partner HEIs is intensifying, but nevertheless, this recommendation is only partially fulfilled.

Regarding study programmes, previous recommendations were mostly given to the doctoral study program "Regional Economics and Economic Policy". The niche for the PhD programme was defined as Regional Economics, Integration and Globalization, Economic Policy. Collaboration with other Latvian PhD programmes has been intensified through the involvement of Professors in the Scientific Committee of the PhD programme.

Expert recommendation for significant improvement of academic staff publications was partly fulfilled, as evidenced by the number and quality of BIA academic staff publications (lecturers' publications in Latvian and foreign higher education institution publications) and scientific journals that are included in the WEB OF SCIENCE, SCOPUS, EBSCO, etc.).

Conclusions. Strengths and weaknesses

Most recommendations have been implemented fully, except the improvement of the scope of scientific activities, both in terms of conference participation, research project participation and

number/quality of publications, which could still be improved.

Strengths:

- 1 More attention given to systematic monitoring of sustainability and implementation of a financial strategy.
- 2 More support of English language proficiency of students and staff.

Weaknesses:

- 1 There is still limited involvement of teaching staff in scientific work, despite the previous expert recommendations.

7. Assessment of the Requirements for the Study Field

- 1 R1 - Pursuant to Section 5, Paragraph 21 of the Law on Institutions of Higher Education, the higher education institution/ college shall ensure continuous improvement, development, and efficient performance of the study direction whilst implementing their internal quality assurance systems:

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

Justification: The internal quality assurance system is developed and implemented, however, some processes are not being performed systematically. There is a lack of clear responsibilities regarding the continuous improvement of the study direction.

Strategic documents contain different statements regarding BIA development. There are no clearly defined performance indicators and no regular performance measurement; so, it is not possible to guarantee the continuous improvement of the study direction. There is still limited involvement of teaching staff in scientific work, despite the previous expert recommendations.

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

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

Justification: There seem to be disintegration between strategy, quality policy, vision, mission and reality. The processes described in the internal quality assurance system do not take place in real life on a regular basis. It has been found the inability to display certain quality assurance documents. Some information on the BIA official home page is missing (there are headlines with no links) or outdated. There is no written complaint procedure available to the students and other interested parties.

- 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

Justification: All the procedures for the development and review of existing programs in the study direction are logical, efficient and available for important stakeholders. Procedures for the approval and refreshing of programs are established. Feedback to the stakeholders upon the programs' development could be confirmed, with the exception of the group of graduates. Statistics are being collected regularly.

- 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 made public.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Justification: General description of the evaluation of students' results is available on the BIA website in "Regulations on the Studies of the Baltic International Academy" only in Latvian (https://bsa.edu.lv/wp-content/docs/nolikums/Stud_nolikums.pdf). The detailed description is available in "The Baltic International Academy regulations for the assessment of study results" that is available only in Latvian on the BIA website (https://bsa.edu.lv/wp-content/docs/nolikums/BSA_studiju_rezultatu_novertejums_09072020.pdf). The procedure of the evaluation of the graduation papers is described in "Regulation on the graduation paper development and defence in the Baltic International Academy" (available on the BIA website only in English https://bsa.edu.lv/wp-content/docs/2020/BSA_diplomdarbu_nolikums_ENG.pdf; the link to the Latvian version contains leads to another document). Description of the study course acquisition results and assessment criteria is available in each particular course description (SAR, Annexes to the programmes).

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Justification: Quality indicators regarding the academic staff are listed in the BIA Study quality assurance system, p.17 (available only in Latvian on the BIA website https://bsa.edu.lv/wp-content/docs/2020/BSA_Studiju_kvalitates_nodrosinasanas_sistema.pdf). Personnel policy (available only in Latvian on the BIA website https://bsa.edu.lv/wp-content/docs/2020/BSA_personala_politika.pdf) contains general statements regarding staff development. Internal procedures and mechanisms for assuring the qualifications of the academic staff and the work quality include:

- Qualification requirements are described in the "Regulations on the academic positions of the Baltic International Academy" (available on BIA website in Latvian https://bsa.edu.lv/wp-content/docs/2020/BSA_akad_amati.pdf)
- Regular staff training organized by the Methodological Council (confirmed by the teaching staff during the on-site visit)
- Regular students' surveys.

- 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: Partially compliant

Justification: BIA regularly collects, analyses and submits statistical data on relevant study programmes according to regulatory enactments and internal regulations. The internal statistical information – the results of the surveys from students, graduates, employers and teachers are processed by the BIA computer centre, then analysed by the BIA analytical center and provided for further actions to BIA management, the BIA Board, programmes managers and heads of the departments. The data then used for the improvement of the study programmes and the study process.

However, there are no Key Performance Indicators established, no clear responsibilities and no measurements done in a systematic way to ensure the activities are being performed according to the strategic plans and the targets are achieved.

- 7 1.6. The higher education institution/ college shall ensure continuous improvement, development, and efficient performance of the study direction whilst implementing their quality assurance systems.

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

Justification: The quality assurance system is developed and maintained. However, the interviewees were not able to demonstrate the existence of detailed documents, nor to explain how they assure continuous improvements. Strategic documents contain different statements regarding BIA development. No clearly stated responsibilities for the processes and no target measures to ensure the possibility to check the progress. Lack of regular performance measurement does not allow to assure continuous improvement based on assessment results.

- 8 R2 - The cooperation with different organisations from Latvia and abroad implemented within the study direction ensures the achievement of the aims of the study direction.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Justification: The criteria related to cooperation and internationalization have been met. BIA has a wide range of bilateral agreements for mobility and internships abroad, good collaboration with colleges and schools for attracting students. There is a well-functioning internship scheme at the BIA.

- 9 R3 - Compliance of scientific research and artistic creation with the development level thereof (if applicable).

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

Justification: There is visible progress in the number of SCOPUS publications during the reporting period that is highly appreciated. According to the information provided in the SAR Annex "List of scientific publications", 47 of 60 staff members have publications in the reporting period. There is limited participation in research-related and other international projects. The level of involvement of the teaching staff in research is evaluated as satisfactory in Bachelor programmes. However, based on the information in CVs, not all staff members involved in the implementation of the Master and Doctoral programmes have scientific publications indexed in SCOPUS, Web of Science, or ERIH+, as well as participation in research-related and other international projects (analysis is provided separately for the programmes).

- 10 R4 - Elimination of the shortcomings and deficiencies identified during the previous assessment of the study direction, if it has been conducted, or the implementation of the provided recommendations.

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

Justification: The development of the English language skills of students and academic staff has also been appropriately supported. Efforts were made towards improving the scientific work of teaching staff and students. Cooperation with international partner HEIs is intensifying. Most recommendations have been implemented fully, except the improvement of the scope of scientific activities, both in terms of conference participation, research project participation and number/quality of publications, which could still be improved.

8. Recommendations for the Study Field

Short-term recommendations

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| 1 The mission and vision of the study direction should be unified in all existing documents and publications. |
| 2 Review and update the information on the BIA official web site. Ensure the important quality documentation is available to the stakeholders in English language (Quality policy, the description of quality assurance system, Mission, Vision and others). |
| 3 Revise the strategic documents and add the quantified target measures for established goals. Key Performance Indicators should be defined and the regular measurements of the processes, their efficiency and effectiveness should be performed. This recommendation is for 1-year period. |

- 4 Revise the documents regarding the staff workload and include the information about staff research-related duties and relevant workload for each position. This recommendation is for 1-year period.
- 5 Update the information on the BIA website regarding research direction for the study field "Economics".

Long-term recommendations

- 1 Review and improve internal strategic documents (Quality policy, Mission and Vision statements, Long-term strategy) so there is a clarity on the development direction and long-term objectives of BIA and what processes and actions BIA commits to perform. Ensure internal quality assurance processes are in place according to the internal procedures.
- 2 Improve the quality assurance system with clear responsibilities especially regarding the continuous improvements, naming of process administrators, and defining time frames, when certain activities have to be concluded.
- 3 Develop and communicate to all stakeholders a written complaint procedure.
- 4 Update the strategic documents (BIA strategy, Development plan of the study direction) and define quantified target measures for established goals in the field of research.
- 5 Investigate the opportunities to apply for research projects or to participate in research projects coordinated by other Universities.
- 6 To develop a mechanism for data collection about staff achievements in research. Possible solution could be a connection of the internal BIA system NEXUS with the NZDIS system.
- 7 Ensure the information delivery towards students about the support for research activities.
- 8 Promote the usage of innovative teaching methods in the study process. Possible activities include specific training for staff, regular round table discussions.
- 9 Increase the volume of guest lecturers and staff mobility to support the learning quality and answer needs by both students and employers, more efforts could also be put into attracting permanent international staff (particularly PhD holders). Use different models of mobility to support internationalization-related skills among students at different stages of life, e.g. virtual exchange (links and definition), blended mobility, good practice and tools are found e.g. through the website Formats - Virtual Mobility (eadtu.eu) and Contact - Virtual Mobility (eadtu.eu).
- 10 Involve employers more actively, through systematic field visits, guest lecturing, real life project assignments, student competitions etc. Ensure cooperation with employers to involve students in research. Measures could be taken to develop contacts to research institutes.
- 11 Explore possibilities of more effective student recruitment; use national resources like the website "Study in Latvia" and more use of social media.
- 12 The participation in scientific work and projects by teaching staff could be further improved (as per already existing recommendation).

II. "European Economics and Business" ASSESSMENT

II. "European Economics and Business" ASSESSMENT

1. Indicators Describing the Study Programme

Analysis

The study programme name “European Economics and Business”, the code of the study programme according to the Classification of the Latvian Education – 42311, type and level of the study programme - professional bachelor study programme, LQF/EQF level 6, amount of credits 160 CP. The degree to be obtained: Professional Bachelor's degree in Entrepreneurship. The qualification to be obtained: Economist. The duration of studies 4 years for full-time studies; 4 years and 5 months for part-time and part-time extramural studies. The Professional bachelor study programme complies with the Cabinet Regulation No 512 adopted on August 28, 2014 “Regulations on the State Standard of the Second Level Professional Higher Education”. However, the degree to be obtained with the programme code 42311 according to Regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers No. 322 adopted on June 13, 2017 “Regulations on the classification of education in Latvia” shall be Professional Bachelor's degree in Economics.

Admission requirements: a secondary general or secondary vocational education or a recognized education corresponding to the study program requirements recognized in Latvia. The description of the study programme in SAR does not contain specific entry requirements – e.g. the level of English language knowledge for the study programme offered in English, however, the information on the official BIA website says: “An applicant who applies for a study programme with the English language of instruction must submit to the Admission Committee the proof of English language proficiency to start his or her studies at the Academy”.

According to SAR, the aim of the study programme is to prepare internationally competitive qualified economist able to work in commercial and private sector in Latvia and Europe who is able to conduct various research in the field and apply it to their professional activities. There are 7 tasks defined for the study programme that corresponds to the achievement of 12 planned results of the study programme. The planned outcome of the study programme consists of the division of knowledge, skills and competencies according to the Latvian Qualification Framework. The goals and the tasks of the study programme are in line with “Baltic International Academy long-term strategy of activities and development for 2016-2021” publicly available at <https://bsa.edu.lv/en/documents/>.

During the interviews and meetings with the students, graduates, teaching staff and employer the expert panel got the confirmation about the topicality of the programme and its conformance to the needs of labour market in Latvia and Europe. The name, goals, tasks, admission requirements and the outcomes of the study programme are interrelated and correspond to the qualification to be obtained, however, the degree to be obtained shall be a Professional degree in Economics, not in Entrepreneurship according to the legal enactments.

Conclusions by specifying the strengths and weaknesses

The aims and objectives of the study programme are clearly defined and achievable, they comply with the general strategic development directions of BIA for the period 2016-2021. The study programme complies with the needs of the labour market in Europe and Latvia. The name, goals, tasks, admission requirements and the outcomes of the study programme are interrelated and correspond to the qualification to be obtained, however, the degree to be obtained shall be a Professional degree in Economics, not in Entrepreneurship according to the legal enactments.

Strengths:

1 The tasks and the aim of the study programme are clearly defined and correspond to the

qualification to be obtained.

2 The tasks of the study programme are interrelated to the results of the study programme and planned outcomes.

3 The goals and the tasks of the study programme are in line with “Baltic International Academy long-term strategy of activities and development for 2016-2021”.

4 The study programme complies with the needs of labour market in Latvia and Europe.

Weaknesses:

1 The degree to be obtained - Professional Bachelor degree in Entrepreneurship does not comply with Regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers No. 322 adopted on June 13, 2017 “Regulations on the classification of education in Latvia”. With the code 42311 and according to the content of the study programme the degree shall be a Professional Bachelor degree in Economics.

2 The description of the study programme contains no entry requirements for the level of English language knowledge necessary for the study programme offered in English.

2. The Content of Studies and Implementation Thereof

Analysis

1.The SAR Annex “Course descriptions” clearly outlines the aims, tasks, content, required previous knowledge, assessment methods and readings for each course. During the first two years the students acquire compulsory subjects like economics science, science development, basic principles and methodology of different branch theory and research work. During the 3rd and 4th year students choose compulsory elective subjects to understand different economics branches and sub-branches. Students start working on the bachelor's thesis already from the third year of studies and finish it at the end. Throughout the study period the students complete the practice tasks at different levels (SAR section 2.4). There are well-documented regulations and guidelines for practice, with tasks linked to learning outcomes. The internship process for international students is appropriately supported by instructions and traineeship-related information translated to English. Interviews also indicated satisfaction with the practical components of the study programme.

The SAR describes appropriate measures to increase the relevance of the curricula have been made, through introduction of courses reflecting needs in society and by employers, such as digital skills, practical skills, sustainability-related courses, communication, transversal skills like critical thinking, analytical ability, language skills. There is good reference to Latvian government forecasts, and Latvian Sustainable Development Strategy until 2030. The interviews with employers and graduates demonstrated that the study programme meets the needs of the labor market. The content of the study programme is aligned with the proposed learning outcomes.

The final thesis material is of satisfactory quality, but recently, as a consequence of a change in assessment methods, there is a challenge with grading of the final thesis as many students receive the lowest grade, as stated by the SAR. The Annex on course descriptions informs that course materials cover books, scientific journals, professional management magazines, websites etc. Nevertheless, some of the obligatory readings are 10-15 year old and could be updated and complemented with more accurate literature (e.g. conflict studies, fund-raising, political science, personnel management, logistics, international marketing, marketing, financial planning). Some courses offered in English also indicate compulsory learning materials only in Latvian language and should be complemented with literature in English (e.g. market of financial instruments, management of EU funds and European projects, social management).

2.The SAR mentions a variety of rather traditional teaching methods, like lectures, seminar

discussions independent work, group discussions, tests. However, when asked about more innovative methods, during the interviews both teaching staff and students mentioned only a few and this is an area of improvement. In relation to methodology, for instance virtual exchange or blended mobility could be used to reach SR9 and SR12. Furthermore, student-centered learning could be enhanced through more reflective assignments to ask students to evaluate their own learning styles and techniques.

3. Outcomes of the surveys to students/graduates/employers are at least partly used to improve the quality of the studies, e.g. through the introduction of new courses to enhance specific skills in demand by the labour market. Nevertheless, student survey questions seem rather teacher-centered and could focus more on asking students about the quality of the learning process, the methodology and their own learning: what they learned, what they did not understand, what they wanted to know more about, which were the best methods used. According to the SAR (section 2.6) only around 50% of graduates rated their different skills highly.

4. From 2013 to 2019, there has been an increase in outgoing students, which is positive (from 1 to 8-10 annually, according to the Annex on statistics of foreign students and staff). There is a wide range of mobility opportunities, during the reporting period there were 36 outgoing students and 22 incoming students studying under the ERASMUS programme in the study programme “European Economy and Business”. Normally, 100% of studies are recognized in the degree, in line with Erasmus+ requirements. The number of foreign lecturers has increased but is still very modest.

Conclusions by specifying the strengths and weaknesses

The criteria related to the content and implementation of the studies are fulfilled, with the exception of issues of outdated literature, innovative methodology and student-centered learning.

Strengths:

- 1 Clear and comprehensive course descriptions, as well as internship guidelines.
- 2 Course updates reflect trends in society, e.g. digitalization and sustainability.
- 3 Relevant content of courses, which is confirmed by students, employers, and graduates satisfaction.
- 4 Several opportunities for international mobility exist both for students and staff, and mobility activity has increased during the reporting period.

Weaknesses:

- 1 Materials used in several courses are outdated and only available in Latvian, even though the study programme is also offered to foreign degree students.
- 2 Teaching methodology and student-centered learning could be improved.
- 3 Student surveys could be less teacher-centered and focus on the quality of the learning process instead.

3. Resources and Provision of the Study Programme

Analysis

The main source of financing for the study process of the study programme “European Economy and Business” is the tuition fee. Based on the SAR, there are also budget places for students financed by the BIA. BIA also offers discounts for graduates to continue their studies. Overall the Academy has a stable financial position and there is no question of its short and long term financial viability.

BIA has the necessary infrastructure and material and technical support for the implementation of the study programme.

The study process within the study programme “European Economy and Business” takes place in the BIA premises in Riga (Lomonosova Street 4 and Lomonosova Street 1/4). Classrooms are well-equipped (multimedia projectors, whiteboards, TV screens).

BIA has a well-functioning e-teaching platform Moodle with an integrated Big Blue Button video-conferencing system. All study materials are available to students in Moodle, as well as course descriptions and course requirements. During the visit, students expressed their satisfaction with Moodle and stated that there were no problems during COVID times because BIA adapted very well.

There is also an internal information system NEXUS that allows to compile academic and financial data on the CAF staff, academic staff and students, as well as to prepare academic transcripts and diploma supplements. NEXUS is used also to inform BIA students about internal regulations, study programmes, BIA news and etc. The information about study programmes, courses and study regulations is also available on the BIA website in Latvian and English. During the visit, students confirmed that the BIA webpage is very informative and they are satisfied with the information flow. Informational support is also available from the Study Information Centre located in the BIA building. Students know where and whom to apply for assistance. Students confirmed that the lecturers and the programme director are very helpful and available at any time (via e-mail, phone calls, in Moodle). During the pandemic situation, it is possible to organize video consultations as well.

BIA has a library (in Riga and in the branches) with the possibility to find a book in an electronic catalogue. The library has reading rooms with computers and Internet access, printing and scanning facilities. In general, Library has all the basic necessary subscriptions to databases and its bibliographic database is appropriate. Although there are guidelines for the preparation of unified style and best practices of online courses, demonstration during visitation shows that not all provided online courses are adhering to them.

BIA provides an access to different databases (SCOPUS, ScienceDirect and others). Students confirm their awareness about the available databases.

Academy features thematic auditoriums with informational materials and items related to that particular theme – for example – Nordic, German, etc. All university staff, i.e. academic, general and students, can use both the study rooms and the computer class, as well as the library. All premises within Riga buildings are easily accessible – through the provision of elevators and ramps. Regarding internationalisation and exchange options - there are more than 400 cooperation contracts and 145 inter-university contracts.

In conclusion, BIA knows the needs of the students and has a well-functioning support system responding to the relevant needs.

Conclusions by specifying the strengths and weaknesses

The study provision, informative provision, material and technical provision, and financial provision ensure the qualitative implementation of the study programme “European Economy and Business” and the achievement of the learning outcomes. BIA has large premises to ensure the study process. BIA infrastructure is adapted to the needs of disabled people.

Students are satisfied with BIA resources (Moodle, library, website, classrooms).

Strengths:

- 1 Good physical infrastructure.
2. Informative and technological provision is appropriate.
- 3 Well-functioning e-teaching platform with integrated Big Blue Button video-conferencing system.
- 4 Infrastructure with the ensured access for disabled persons.

5 Ensured access to different databases (SCOPUS, ScienceDirect and others).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses have been identified.

4. Teaching Staff

Analysis

4.1 Based on the SAR, there were positive changes in the composition of the academic staff. The lecturers with practical and scientific experience in the field of economics, as well as persons with a doctoral degree were attracted. However, the figures in the SAR are not consistent with the information in the Study plan. SAR contains the information that from 2013 to 2019 academic year, the teaching staff has increased from 27 to 44 people. The authors also refer to the SAR, Description of the study direction, part 3.6., where the number of staff in the programme “European economics and business” is also 44 persons. Based on the information in the SAR (Description of the study programme, 4. Teaching staff), 47 teaching staff members are involved in the study process within the programme.

However, data extracted from the curriculum of the study programme indicates that the number of teaching staff members, involved in the implementation of the programme, is 34 persons. The assessment of the teaching staff quality will be based on the information in the curriculum.

Thus, the number of teaching staff members involved in the programme is 34 persons; 25 of them are elected staff members (4 Professors, 2 Associate Professors, 17 Assistant Professors, 2 leading researchers).

4.2 25 persons with a Doctor degree are teaching in the programme (approx. 74%). The composition of staff with the Doctor degree in terms of the field of science is 9 persons with Dr.oec. and Dr.sc.admin.; 5 persons with Dr.sc.ing.; 2 persons with Dr.sc.pol.; 2 persons with Dr.iur. Seven persons have a degree in other fields of science (biology, mathematics, psychology, sociology, philology, pedagogy and philosophy).

The degree of staff members is consistent with the study course taught (for instance, the person with the degree in sociology conducts the course “Sociology”, the person with Dr.iur. conducts the course “Basics of Law Science” and etc.).

Four staff members had the expert status of the Latvian Council of Science (LCS) in the reporting period; the expert rights of one of them terminated in 2017 (checked in sciencelatvia.lv on April 4, 2021).

Many staff members have 15-20 years of experience in academia; some of them have even more than 30 years of teaching experience. Some of the lecturers have also a professional experience beyond the academic environment.

The study programme “European Economics and Business” is implemented in Latvian and English. Based on the information from the SAR (Annex “Macibspeki_Ekonomika”) about the level of English knowledge, 6 persons have C1/C2 level, 9 persons have B2 level, 13 persons have B1 level, 2 persons have A1/A2 level. The level of English of 4 persons is defined neither in the Annex nor in the attached CVs.

BIA makes efforts to improve the English knowledge of staff members by providing English courses. During the visit, staff members confirmed that they took classes.

In general, the qualification of staff is appropriate and allow achieving the goals of the Bachelor study programme. However, considering the fact that the programme is realized in Latvian and English, the level of English knowledge of staff members is not sufficient.

4.3 not relevant

4.4 The information regarding staff involvement in scientific research is available in CVs, Annex "Conferences" (SAR, HEI other annexes) and Annex "List of scientific publications" SAR, Part II. Description of the Study Direction, 4. Scientific Research and Artistic Creation).

All staff members (except one) have scientific publications during the reporting period. The person with no scientific publications has more than 5-year experience outside the programme. All staff members participated in the international scientific conferences. However, limited numbers of lecturers have high-quality publications indexed in well-recognized databases. And it explains the relatively small number of persons with LCS expert rights among the staff (by 2019 only 3 of 25 persons with a Doctor degree). The conferences of participation mostly took place in Latvia, Lithuania, Russia and Belorussia. The participation of staff in the international projects is very low.

4.5 During the on-site visit, the academic staff members and programme directors provided examples about collaboration within the programme: joint papers, participation in events organized at BIA (for instance, Summer schools), round table discussions. Staff members also participate together in seminars organized by the Methodological Council. Based on the information from the Study plan (SAR, Description of the Study Programme, 2. The Content of Studies and Implementation Thereof, Annex), there are no study courses taught by two or more staff members. There is also no centralized mechanism for mutual collaboration between the teaching staff members.

Conclusions by specifying the strengths and weaknesses

The Bachelor study programme "European Economics and Business" is implemented by 34 staff members, 25 of them are employed on the permanent basis. Most of the staff members have a large (more than 20 years) working experience in the academic environment. The level of English of some staff members is not sufficient to implement the programme in English. The involvement of teaching staff in research is confirmed by scientific publications and participation in international scientific conferences. There is a low number of staff members participating in international projects. Collaboration between staff members does not take place on a regular basis; there is no centralized mechanism in place.

Strengths:

- 1 The academic/scientific degree of staff members is consistent with the study course taught.
- 2 Most teaching staff members have more than 15-20 years of teaching experience.

Weaknesses:

- 1 Level of English knowledge of staff members is not sufficient, considering the fact that the programme is implemented in Latvian and English.
- 2 Limited participation of staff members in international projects.
- 4 There is no centralized mechanism for mutual collaboration between the teaching staff members.

5. Assessment of the Compliance of the Study Programme "European Economics and Business"

Requirements

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

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

Justification: The sample of the diploma is attached to the SAR (section "Other mandatory attachments"). The degree to be obtained with the programme code 42311 according to Regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers No. 322 adopted on June 13, 2017 "Regulations on the classification of education in Latvia" shall be Professional Bachelor's degree in Economics.

- 2 2. Documents confirming that the higher education institution/ college will provide the students with the options to continue the acquisition of education in another study programme or at another higher education institution/ college (a contract with another accredited higher education institution/ college), in case the implementation of the study programme is discontinued.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Justification: The mutual agreement is signed on 4.12.2019 between BIA and Ekonomikas un kulturas augstskola (No.97) about the mutual acceptance of students from partner University.

- 3 3. Document confirming that the higher education institution/ college guarantees to the students a compensation for losses if the study programme is not accredited or the licence of the study programme is revoked due to the actions of the higher education institution/ college (actions or failure to act) and the student does not wish to continue the studies in another study programme.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Justification: The Performance of obligations No. 31/3593 and 31/3597 signed by the Board members on 10.12.2020 guarantees to the students compensation for losses if the study programme "European Economics and Business" is not accredited or the license of the study programme is revoked and the student does not wish to continue the studies in another study programme (attached to the SAR in Latvian and English).

- 4 4. 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

Justification: The teaching staff members involved in the implementation of the study programme are proficient in the official language. Official confirmation No. 22-7/27 was signed by the Head of the study direction "Economics" on 03.12.2020. (attached to the SAR, Other mandatory attachments).

- 5 5. 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.

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

Justification: The document about English knowledge of staff involved in the implementation of the programme "European Economics and Business" signed by the programme director on 03.12.2020 confirms that all staff members have at least B2-level knowledge of English (attached to the SAR). However, based on the information from the SAR (Annex "Macibspeki_Ekonomika") about the level of English knowledge, 6 person have C1/C2 level, 9 persons have B2 level, 13 persons have B1 level, 2 persons have A1/A2 level. Level of English of 4 persons is not defined neither in the Annex, nor in attached CVs.

- 6 6. 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.

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

Justification:

- 7 7. 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 Institutions of Higher Education.

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

Justification:

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Justification: The sample of the study agreement (attached to the SAR) complies with the mandatory provisions to be included in the study agreement, according to the requirements of the Regulation of the Cabinet of Ministers No 70 of January 23, 2007.

- 9 9. The descriptions of the study courses and the study materials have been prepared in all languages in which the study programme is implemented, and they comply with the requirements set forth in Section 56.1, Paragraph two and Section 56.2, Paragraph two of the Law on Institutions of Higher Education.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Justification: The descriptions of all the study courses and the study materials have been prepared in all languages in which the study programme is implemented, and they comply with the requirements set forth in Section 56.1, Paragraph two and Section 56.2, Paragraph two of the Law on Institutions of Higher Education. There are some improvements to be made in the program, regarding the old compulsory literature and absence of English textbooks.

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Justification: SAR appendix in Part III "Compliance of the obtained qualification.docx" confirms the study programme "European Economics and Business" fully complies with the professional standard "Economist" approved at the meeting of the Tripartite Cooperation Sub-Council for Vocational Education and Employment on September 18, 2019, Minutes Nr. 6.

- 11 11. 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 Institutions of Higher Education.

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

Justification:

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Justification: The study programme complies with the Cabinet Regulation No 512 adopted on August 28, 2014 "Regulations on the State Standard of the Second Level Professional Higher Education".

- 13 13. The joint study programmes comply with the requirements prescribed in Section 551, Paragraphs one, two, and seven of the Law on Institutions of Higher Education (if applicable).

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

Justification:

- 14 14. Each member of the academic staff has either publications published in reviewed editions within the last six years, including international editions (if they have worked for a shorter period of time, the number of publications shall be in proportion to the work period), or artistic creation achievements (for instance, exhibitions, films, theatre performances, and concert activity), or a five-year practical work experience (except for the experience in the implementation of the study programme) in accordance with the Law on Institutions of Higher Education.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Justification: The information about staff scientific publications is available in CVs and Annex "List of scientific publications" SAR, Part II. Description of the Study Direction, 4. Scientific Research and Artistic Creation). All staff members (except of one) have scientific publications during the reporting period. The person with no scientific publications has more than 5-year experience outside the programme.

15 R5 - Overall rating

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

Justification: Rating "partially compliant" in the criteria No. 1, No. 5 and No.12.

Requirements (R6-R8)

- 1 R6 - The compliance of the study provision, scientific support (if applicable), informative provision (including libraries), material and technical provision, and financial provision with the conditions for the implementation of the study programme and ensuring the achievement of the learning outcomes.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Justification: The BIA has necessary resources to implement the Bachelor study programme "European Economics and Business"

- 2 R7 - The compliance of the qualification of the academic staff members, visiting professors, visiting associate professors, visiting docents, visiting lecturers, and visiting assistants with the conditions for the implementation of the study programme and the provisions set out in the respective regulatory enactments.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Justification: The Bachelor study programme "European Economics and Business" is implemented by 34 staff members. 25 of them are elected staff members (4 Professors, 2 Associate Professors, 17 Assistant Professors, 2 leading researchers). 25 persons with the Doctor degree are teaching in the programme (approx. 74%).

- 3 R8 - The study programme leading to the master or doctoral degree is based on the advances and findings in the relevant field of science or artistic creation.

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

Justification:

Conclusions by specifying the strengths and weaknesses

The aims and objectives of the study programme are clearly defined and achievable, they comply with the general strategic development directions of BIA for the period 2016-2021. The study programme complies with the needs of the labour market in Europe and Latvia. The name, goals, tasks, admission requirements and the outcomes of the study programme are interrelated and correspond to the qualification to be obtained, however, the degree to be obtained shall be Professional degree in Economics, not in Entrepreneurship according to the legal enactments. The criteria related to the content and implementation of the studies are fulfilled, with the exception of issues of outdated literature, innovative methodology and student-centered learning.

The study provision, informative provision, material and technical provision, and financial provision ensure the qualitative implementation of the study programme "European Economy and Business" and the achievement of the learning outcomes.

The Bachelor study programme "European Economics and Business" is implemented by 34 staff members, 25 of them are employed on the permanent basis. Most of staff members have a large (more than 20 years) working experience in the academic environment. Level of English of some staff members is not sufficient to implement the programme in English. The involvement of teaching staff in research is confirmed by scientific publications and participation in international scientific conferences. There is a low number of staff members participating in international projects. Collaboration between staff members does not take place on a regular basis; there is no centralized mechanism in place.

Strengths:

- 1 The tasks and the aim of the study programme are clearly defined and correspond to the

qualification to be obtained.

2 The tasks of the study programme are interrelated to the results of the study programme and planned outcomes.

3 The goals and the tasks of the study programme are in line with "Baltic International Academy long-term strategy of activities and development for 2016-2021".

3 The study programme complies with the needs of labour market in Latvia and Europe.

4 Clear and comprehensive course descriptions, as well as internship guidelines.

5 Course updates reflect trends in society, e.g. digitalization and sustainability.

6 Relevant content of courses, which is confirmed by students, employers, and graduates satisfaction.

7 Several opportunities for international mobility exist both for students and staff, and mobility activity has increased during the reporting period.

8 Good physical infrastructure.

9 Informative and technological provision is appropriate.

10 Well-functioning e-teaching platform with integrated Big Blue Button video-conferencing system.

11 Infrastructure with the ensured access for disabled persons.

12 Ensured access to different databases (SCOPUS, ScienceDirect and others).

13 The academic/scientific degree of staff members is consistent with the study taught.

14 Most teaching staff members have more than 15-20 years of teaching experience.

Weaknesses:

1 The degree to be obtained - Professional Bachelor degree in Entrepreneurship does not comply with Regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers No. 322 adopted on June 13, 2017 "Regulations on the classification of education in Latvia". With the code 42311 and according to the content of the study programme the degree shall be Professional Bachelor degree in Economics.

2 The description of the study programme contains no entry requirements for the level of English language knowledge necessary for the study programme offered in English.

3 Materials used in several courses are outdated and only available in Latvian, even though the study programme is also offered to foreign degree students.

4 Teaching methodology and student-centered learning could be improved.

5 Student surveys could be less teacher-centered and focus on the quality of the learning process instead.

6 Level of English knowledge of staff members is not sufficient, considering the fact that the programme is implemented in Latvian and English.

7 Limited participation of staff members in international projects.

8 There is no centralized mechanism for mutual collaboration between the teaching staff members.

Evaluation of the study programme "European Economics and Business"

Evaluation of the study programme:

Good

6. Recommendations for the Study Programme "European Economics and Business"

Short-term recommendations

1 Review the name of the degree to be obtained (shall be Professional Bachelor's degree in Economics) in accordance with the content of the study programme, its code according to the Classification of the Latvian Education and Regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers No. 322 adopted on June 13, 2017 "Regulations on the classification of education in Latvia".

- 2 Supplement the description of the study programme with the entry requirements for the level of English language knowledge necessary for the study programme offered in English.
- 3 Ensure that each course of the study programme is supported by updated compulsory reading and literature, available also in English.
- 4 To support student-centered learning: elaborate student survey questions to evaluate the quality of the learning process (what was the most useful learning, what was missing, which methods were most efficient etc), currently the questions reflect mainly the teaching process.
- 5 Revise the list of teaching staff members involved in implementation of the programme in English and ensure that all staff members have at least B2 level.

Long-term recommendations

- 1 Offer staff training and introduce innovative teaching methods like project-based learning, assignments from employers, simulation, games, debates, more teamwork and peer learning/assessment among students. Use different models of mobility to support internationalization-related skills among students at different stages of life, e.g. virtual exchange, blended mobility, good practice and tools are found e.g. through the website Formats - Virtual Mobility (eadtu.eu) and Contact - Virtual Mobility (eadtu.eu). To support student-centered learning, students should regularly reflect on their own learning, e.g. by assignments like a "learning diary" after each lecture, or group reflections.
- 2 Continue providing regular free English courses for staff.
- 3 Introduce the mechanism for involvement of staff members in international projects.
- 4 Introduce a centralized mechanism for mutual collaboration between the teaching staff members (for instance, hospitation).

II. "Financial Management" ASSESSMENT

II. "Financial Management" ASSESSMENT

1. Indicators Describing the Study Programme

Analysis

The name of the study programme "Financial Management", the code of the study programme according to the Classification of the Latvian Education: 42343, type and level of the study programme - professional bachelor study programme, qualification level to be achieved according to LQF/EQF-6, amount of credits -160 CP. The degree to be obtained: Professional Bachelor's degree in financial management. The qualification to be obtained: Financier. The duration of studies 4 years for full-time studies; 4 years and 5 months for part-time studies. The Professional bachelor study programme complies with the Cabinet Regulation No 512 adopted on August 28, 2014 "Regulations on the State Standard of the Second Level Professional Higher Education".

Admission requirements: a secondary general or secondary vocational education or a recognized education corresponding to the study program requirements recognized in Latvia. The description of the study programme in SAR does not contain specific entry requirements - e.g. the level of English language knowledge for the study programme offered in English, however, the information on the official BIA website says: "An applicant who applies for a study programme with the English

language of instruction must submit to the Admission Committee the proof of English language proficiency to start his or her studies at the Academy”.

As it is stated in SAR the main aims of the study programme is to train highly qualified professionals in the field of finance who is able to carry out their activities in Latvia and in international companies in the business and financial sectors in the condition of an innovative economy. The tasks and the learning outcomes are logical, interrelated to the name of the study programme and its objectives and aim to the achievement of the goals of the study programme. The results of the study programme comprised of knowledge, skills and competencies in accordance with the Latvian Qualification Framework. The goals and tasks of the study programme are in line with the requirements of the modern labour market and correspond to the “Baltic International Academy long-term strategy of activities and development for 2016-2021” publicly available at <https://bsa.edu.lv/en/documents/>.

Conclusions by specifying the strengths and weaknesses

The tasks and the learning outcomes are logical, interrelated to the name of the study programme and its objectives, directed to the achievement of the goals of the study programme. The goals and tasks of the study programme are in line with the requirements of the modern labour market and correspond to the “Baltic International Academy long-term strategy of activities and development for 2016-2021” publicly available at <https://bsa.edu.lv/en/documents/>.

Strengths:

- 1 The indicators and the aim of the study programme are clearly defined, relevant and achievable.
- 2 The goals and tasks of the study programme correspond to the “Baltic International Academy long-term strategy of activities and development for 2016-2021”.
- 3 The study programme complies with the needs of the labour market.

Weaknesses:

- 1 The description of the study programme contains no entry requirements for the level of English language knowledge necessary for the study programme offered in English.

2. The Content of Studies and Implementation Thereof

Analysis

1 The content of study courses has been recently assessed and updated, taking account of changes in the needs of the labor market (SAR, III - DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDY PROGRAMME (2. The Content of Studies and Implementation Thereof); point 2.1). They based their prognostics for the employment of their graduates on the labor market demand assessment for finance professionals (conducted on 07/11/2020) - www.ss.com, www.cv.lv, www.workingday.lv, www.nva.gov.lv. The competencies sought by modern employers based on research (<https://vegestore.ru/lv/chto-delaet-finansist-chto-dolzhen-umet-finansist-komu-podhodit.html>) were also identified. Students praised the traineeship and competencies they obtained or strengthened. A sample of final theses has been reviewed and they appeared to be of satisfactory quality. A minor problem was observed in the descriptions of the courses, as in a considerable number of courses the compulsory literature is rather outdated (e.g., Philosophy 1984-2001; Economics 2003-2009; Business communication professional ethics 1995-2011; Logic and rhetoric 1979-2011, etc.). A similar situation is with English prescribed compulsory literature, as courses are offered in Latvian and English language (Marketing 1989, Financial system 1983-2003, Banks and monetary system 1999, International finance and financial institutions 1998, Risk management and insurance 1993,

etc.). Another problem was the absence of English literature, despite the fact that all the courses are declared to be available for students in Latvian and English language (e.g., Economics, Civil protection, and environmental protection, Electronic document management).

2 In the SAR it's written that while implementing the study program, various study methods are used: informative, practical activities, creative (SAR, III - DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDY PROGRAMME (2. The Content of Studies and Implementation Thereof); point 2.3). However, at the interviews both teachers and students struggled to explain which innovative, creative methods are being used for teaching. It appears that (maybe it's also due to the Covid situation and online teaching) mostly traditional teaching method is being adopted - teacher lectures and students take notes. Such an approach could hardly be described as student-centred. Regarding the assessment methods, there were only a few testimonies about the continuous verification of what has been learned, during or after the class. And it is very strange, that for most of the courses students obtain part of the final grade only by attending the lecture (5-10%). But there are also courses, where this proportion goes up to 25-40% (e.g., Financial system, International economic relations, Advanced mathematics for economists, Psychology, etc.).

3 Surveys are organized at the end of each semester, the results are processed by the BIA computer centre and the BIA analytical centre (SAR, III - DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDY PROGRAMME (2. The Content of Studies and Implementation Thereof); point 2.6). The students' opinions from surveys are considered in the process of election of the lecturer and in the selection of the lecturers to be invited for implementation of the study course. Students' proposals have been implemented such as timely informing of the students, efficient use of the premises, etc. When students were asked about the changes that were made upon the surveys' results to improve the quality of studies, they could not remember anything. If such changes have been made, the feedback to students is missing.

4 Academy has a considerable number of agreements with the institutions for mobility exchange. Students are informed about the mobility opportunities, but most of them do not consider taking part in such an exchange program. Reasons are diverse, from the language barrier, financial issues, job obligations, or family reasons. Those students that decided to go for a mobility period abroad, didn't have problems with recognizing the obtained learning outcomes.

Conclusions by specifying the strengths and weaknesses

Study courses are well described, traineeship organized, final theses comply with the provisions and regulatory enactments. It is hard to understand, however, why the compulsory literature is outdated and English literature missing if the program and courses are regularly updated and teachers had no complaints about acquiring the new literature if they asked for it. There rose some doubts about the actual use of innovative, creative methods of teaching. Also, the practise of grading students just for their attendance at lectures is not really a modern approach. It seems like a sort of disciplining students. Surveys are regularly implemented, feedback to students about the changes made upon the surveys' results could not be confirmed. Students are informed and seem knowledgeable about the mobility opportunities, but most do not avail of them.

Strengths:

1 Students and graduates are very satisfied with the program studies.

Weaknesses:

1 Course descriptions contain outdated compulsory literature.

2 There is a lack of English literature in course descriptions.

3 Outdated English literature in course descriptions has been evidenced.

4 Students receive a substantial part of the final grade only for attending lectures.

5 Feedback to students about changes taken based on the results of survey analysis is missing.

6 Lack of motivation for students to decide for a mobility period.

3. Resources and Provision of the Study Programme

Analysis

The main source of financing for the study process of the study programme “Financial Management” is the tuition fee. Based on the SAR, there are also budget places for students financed by the BIA. BIA also offers discounts for graduates to continue their studies. Overall the Academy has a stable financial position and there is no question of its short and long term financial viability.

The study process within the study programme “Financial management” takes place in the BIA premises in Riga (Lomonosova Street 4 and Lomonosova Street 1/4). Classrooms are well-equipped (multimedia projectors, whiteboards, TV screens).

BIA has a well-functioning e-teaching platform Moodle with an integrated Big Blue Button video-conferencing system. All study materials are available to students in Moodle, as well as course descriptions and course requirements. During the visit, students expressed their satisfaction with Moodle and stated that there were no problems during COVID times because BIA adapted very well.

There is also an internal information system NEXUS that allows to compile academic and financial data on the CAF staff, academic staff and students, as well as to prepare academic transcripts and diploma supplements. NEXUS is used also to inform BIA students about internal regulations, study programmes, BIA news and etc. The information about study programmes, courses and study regulations is also available on the BIA website in Latvian and English. During the visit, students confirmed that the BIA webpage is very informative and they are satisfied with the information flow. Informational support is also available from the Study Information Centre located in the BIA building. Students know where and whom to apply for assistance. Students confirmed that the lecturers and the programme director are very helpful and available at any time (via e-mail, phone calls, in Moodle). During the pandemic situation, it is possible to organize video consultations as well.

BIA has a library with the possibility to find a book in an electronic catalogue. The library has reading rooms with computers and Internet access, printing and scanning facilities.

BIA provides an access to different databases (SCOPUS, ScienceDirect and others). Students confirm their awareness about the available databases.

The students of the programme “Financial management” has the possibility to train their professional skills, using a specific accounting software: Tilde Jumis and 1C. The negotiation process for Lursoft training is taking place now.

Academy features thematic auditoriums with informational materials and items related to that particular theme – for example – Nordic, German, etc. All university staff, i.e. academic, general and students, can use both the study rooms and the computer class, as well as the library. All premises within Riga buildings are easily accessible – through the provision of elevators and ramps.

Regarding internationalisation and exchange options - there are more than 400 cooperation contracts and 145 inter-university contracts.

In conclusion, BIA knows the needs of the students and has a well-functioning support system responding to the relevant needs.

Conclusions by specifying the strengths and weaknesses

The study provision, informative provision, material and technical provision, and financial provision ensure the qualitative implementation of the study programme “Financial management” and the achievement of the learning outcomes. BIA has large premises to ensure the study process. BIA infrastructure is adapted to the needs of disabled people.

Students are satisfied with BIA resources (Moodle, library, website, classrooms).

Strengths:

- 1 Good physical infrastructure.
2. Informative and technological provision is appropriate.
- 3 Well-functioning e-teaching platform with integrated Big Blue Button video-conferencing system.
- 4 Infrastructure with the ensured access for disabled persons.
- 5 Ensured access to different databases (SCOPUS, ScienceDirect and others).
- 6 Professional accounting software available for students.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses have been identified.

4. Teaching Staff

Analysis

4.1 Based on the information in the SAR (Description of the study programme, 4. Teaching staff), 40 teaching staff members are involved in study process within the programme.

Based on information of the curriculum, 39 persons are involved in the study process within the programme. 24 of them are elected staff members (6 Professors, 2 Associate Professors, 13 Assistant Professors, 3 leading researchers). The assessment of the teaching staff quality will be based on the information in the curriculum.

Based on the SAR, in 2013/2014 the programme was implemented by 4 Professors, 4 Associate Professors and 11 Assistant Professors). Thus, the composition of teaching staff and its quality slightly increased due to the changes in positions of several staff members (for instance, from Associate Professors to Professors).

The fact that BIA graduates are involved in the study process (SAR, Description of the study programme, 4. Teaching staff) is positively evaluated.

4.2. 24 persons with the Doctor degree are teaching in the programme (approx. 62%). The composition of staff with the Doctor degree in terms of the field of science is: 10 persons with Dr.oec. and Dr.sc.admin.; 4 persons with Dr.sc.ing.; 2 persons with Dr.psych.; 2 persons with Dr.iur.; 2 persons with Dr.phil. Four persons have degree in other fields of science (mathematics, psychology, sociology, and pedagogy).

The degree of staff members is consistent with the study course taught (for instance, the person with the degree in mathematics conducts the course "Advanced Mathematics for Economists", the person with Dr.iur. conducts the course "Fundamentals of Law" and etc.).

Seven staff members had the expert status of the Latvian Council of Science (LCS) in the reporting period; expert rights of two of them terminated in 2017 and 2018 (checked in sciencelatvia.lv on April 4, 2021).

Many staff members have 15-20 years of experience in the academia; some of them have even more than 30 years teaching experience. Some of lecturers have also professional experience beyond the academic environment.

The study programme "Financial Management" is implemented in Latvian and English. Based on the information from the SAR (Annex "Macibspeki_Ekonomika") about the level of English knowledge, 11 persons have C1/C2 level, 13 persons have B2 level, 11 persons have B1 level, 1 person has A1/A2 level. Level of English of 3 persons is not defined neither in the Annex, nor in attached CVs.

BIA makes efforts to improve English knowledge of staff members by providing English courses. During the visit, staff members confirmed that they took classes. Based on the information from Study plan and Annex "List of teaching staff involved in study direction "Economics"", the persons who involved in implementation of study programme "Financial management" in English, have an appropriate level of English knowledge (B2 or higher).

The qualification of staff is appropriate and allow achieving the goals of the study programme.

4.3. not relevant

4.4 The information regarding staff involvement in scientific research is available in CVs, Annex "Conferences" (SAR, HEI other annexes) and Annex "List of scientific publications" SAR, Part II. Description of the Study Direction, 4. Scientific Research and Artistic Creation).

Almost all staff members have scientific publications during the reporting period. Those without publications have a 5 -year professional experience outside the programme. Almost all staff members participated in the international scientific conferences. However, a limited numbers of lecturers have high-quality publications indexed in well-recognized databases. And it explains the relatively small number of persons with LCS expert rights among the staff (by 2019 only 5 of 24 persons with a Doctor degree). The conferences of participation mostly took place in Latvia, Lithuania, Russia and Belorussia. The participation of staff in the international projects is very low.

4.5 During the on-site visit, the academic staff members and programme directors provided examples about collaboration within the programme: joint papers, participation in events organized at BIA (for instance, Summer schools), round table discussions. Staff members also participate together in seminars organized by the Methodological Council. Based on the information from the Study plan (SAR, Description of the Study Programme, 2. The Content of Studies and Implementation Thereof, Annex), there are many study courses taught by two staff members (in Latvian and English). However, there is no centralized mechanism for mutual collaboration between the teaching staff members.

Conclusions by specifying the strengths and weaknesses

The Bachelor study programme "Financial management" is implemented by 39 staff members, 24 of them are employed on the permanent basis. Most of staff members have a large (more than 20 years) working experience in the academic environment. The involvement of teaching staff in research is confirmed by scientific publications and participation in international scientific conferences. The geographical diversity of the conferences is limited, but it cannot be considered as a significant weakness. There is a low number of staff members participating in international projects. Collaboration between staff members does not take place on a regular basis; there is no centralized mechanism in place.

Strengths:

- 1 The academic/scientific degree of staff members is consistent with the study course taught.
- 2 Most teaching staff members have more than 15-20 years of teaching experience.

Weaknesses:

- 1 Limited participation of staff members in international projects.
- 2 There is no centralized mechanism for mutual collaboration between the teaching staff members.

5. Assessment of the Compliance of the Study Programme "Financial Management"

Requirements

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Justification: The sample of the diploma is attached to the SAR (section "Other mandatory attachments"). The sample of the diploma to be issued for the acquisition of the study programme complies with the regulation of the Cabinet of Ministers No.202, adopted on 16.04.2013 (available in Latvian <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/256157-kartiba-kada-izsniedz-valsts-atzitus-augstako-izglitiba-apliecinoss-dokumentus>).

- 2 2. Documents confirming that the higher education institution/ college will provide the students with the options to continue the acquisition of education in another study programme or at another higher education institution/ college (a contract with another accredited higher education institution/ college), in case the implementation of the study programme is discontinued.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Justification: The mutual agreement is signed on 4.12.2019 between BIA and Ekonomikas un kulturas augstskola (No.97) about the mutual acceptance of students from partner University.

- 3 3. Document confirming that the higher education institution/ college guarantees to the students a compensation for losses if the study programme is not accredited or the licence of the study programme is revoked due to the actions of the higher education institution/ college (actions or failure to act) and the student does not wish to continue the studies in another study programme.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Justification: The Performance of obligations No. 31/3592 and 31/3596 signed by the Board members on 10.12.2020 guarantees to the students compensation for losses if the study programme "Financial Management" is not accredited or the license of the study programme is revoked and the student does not wish to continue the studies in another study programme (attached to the SAR in Latvian and English).

- 4 4. 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

Justification: The teaching staff members involved in the implementation of the study programme are proficient in the official language. Official confirmation No. 22-7/27 was signed by the Head of the study direction "Economics" on 03.12.2020. (attached to the SAR, Other mandatory attachments).

- 5 5. 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.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Justification: The document containing the self-assessment of English knowledge of staff involved in the implementation of the study programme "Financial Management" is attached to the SAR. Not all the staff members have B2 or higher level of English. However, based on the information from Study plan and Annex "List of teaching staff involved in study direction "Economics"", the persons who involved in implementation of study programme "Financial management" in English, have an appropriate level of English knowledge (B2 or higher).

- 6 6. 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.

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

Justification:

- 7 7. 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 Institutions of Higher Education.

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

Justification:

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Justification: The sample of the study agreement (attached to the SAR) complies with the mandatory provisions to be included in the study agreement, according to the requirements of the Regulation of the Cabinet of Ministers No 70 of January 23, 2007.

- 9 9. The descriptions of the study courses and the study materials have been prepared in all languages in which the study programme is implemented, and they comply with the requirements set forth in Section 56.1, Paragraph two and Section 56.2, Paragraph two of the Law on Institutions of Higher Education.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Justification: The descriptions of all the study courses and the study materials have been prepared in all languages in which the study programme is implemented, and they comply with the requirements set forth in Section 56.1, Paragraph two and Section 56.2, Paragraph two of the Law on Institutions of Higher Education. Some improvements could be done regarding the old compulsory literature and absence of English textbooks in some course descriptions.

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Justification: SAR appendix in Part III "Compliance FM BcSP with the state profesional standard.docx" provides the compliance of Professional Bachelor study programme "Financial management" with the professional standard "Financier" approved at the meeting of the Tripartite Cooperation Sub-Council for Vocational Education and Employment on October 16, 2019, Minutes Nr. 7 .

- 11 11. 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 Institutions of Higher Education.

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

Justification:

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Justification: The study programme complies with the Cabinet Regulation No 512 adopted on August 28, 2014 "Regulations on the State Standard of the Second Level Professional Higher Education".

- 13 13. The joint study programmes comply with the requirements prescribed in Section 551, Paragraphs one, two, and seven of the Law on Institutions of Higher Education (if applicable).

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

Justification:

- 14 14. Each member of the academic staff has either publications published in reviewed editions within the last six years, including international editions (if they have worked for a shorter period of time, the number of publications shall be in proportion to the work period), or artistic creation achievements (for instance, exhibitions, films, theatre performances, and concert activity), or a five-year practical work experience (except for the experience in the implementation of the study programme) in accordance with the Law on Institutions of Higher Education.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Justification: The information about staff scientific publications is available in CVs and Annex "List of scientific publications" SAR, Part II. Description of the Study Direction, 4. Scientific Research and Artistic Creation). Almost all staff members have scientific publications during the reporting period. Those without publications have a 5 -year professional experience outside the programme.

15 R5 - Overall rating

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Justification: Fully compliant in all relevant criteria.

Requirements (R6-R8)

- 1 R6 - The compliance of the study provision, scientific support (if applicable), informative provision (including libraries), material and technical provision, and financial provision with the conditions for the implementation of the study programme and ensuring the achievement of the learning outcomes.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Justification: The BIA has necessary resources to implement the Bachelor study programme "Financial Management"

- 2 R7 - The compliance of the qualification of the academic staff members, visiting professors, visiting associate professors, visiting docents, visiting lecturers, and visiting assistants with the conditions for the implementation of the study programme and the provisions set out in the respective regulatory enactments.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Justification: 39 persons are involved in the study process within the programme. 24 of them are elected staff members (6 Professors, 2 Associate Professors, 13 Assistant Professors, 3 leading researchers). 24 persons with the Doctor degree are teaching in the programme (approx. 62%).

- 3 R8 - The study programme leading to the master or doctoral degree is based on the advances and findings in the relevant field of science or artistic creation.

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

Justification:

Conclusions by specifying the strengths and weaknesses

The tasks and the learning outcomes are logical, interrelated to the name of the study programme and its objectives, directed to the achievement of the goals of the study programme. The goals and tasks of the study programme are in line with the requirements of modern labour market and correspond to the "Baltic International Academy long-term strategy of activities and development for 2016-2021".

Study courses are well described, traineeship organized, final theses comply with the provisions and regulatory enactments. It is hard to understand, however, why the compulsory literature is outdated and English literature missing if the program and courses are regularly updated and teachers had no complaints about acquiring the new literature if they asked for it. There rose some doubts about the actual use of innovative, creative methods of teaching. Also, the practice of grading students just for their attendance at lectures is not really a modern approach. It seems like a sort of disciplining students. Surveys are regularly implemented, feedback to students about the changes made upon the surveys' results could not be confirmed. Students are informed and seem knowledgeable about the mobility opportunities, but most do not avail of them.

The study provision, informative provision, material and technical provision, and financial provision

ensure the qualitative implementation of the study programme “Financial management” and the achievement of the learning outcomes.

The Bachelor study programme “Financial management” is implemented by 39 staff members, 24 of them are employed on the permanent basis. Most of staff members have a large (more than 20 years) working experience in the academic environment. The involvement of teaching staff in research is confirmed by scientific publications and participation in international scientific conferences. The geographical diversity of the conferences is limited, but it cannot be considered as a significant weakness. There is a low number of staff members participating in international projects. Collaboration between staff members does not take place on a regular basis; there is no centralized mechanism in place.

Strengths:

- 1 The indicators and the aim of the study programme are clearly defined, relevant and achievable.
- 2 The goals and tasks of the study programme correspond to the “Baltic International Academy long-term strategy of activities and development for 2016-2021”.
- 3 The study programme complies with the needs of the labour market.
- 4 Students and graduates are very satisfied with the program studies.
- 5 Good physical infrastructure.
- 6 Informative and technological provision is appropriate.
- 7 Well-functioning e-teaching platform with integrated Big Blue Button video-conferencing system.
- 8 Infrastructure with the ensured access for disabled persons.
- 9 Ensured access to different databases (SCOPUS, ScienceDirect and others).
- 10 Professional accounting software available for students.
- 11 The academic/scientific degree of staff members is consistent with the study taught.
- 12 Most teaching staff members have more than 15-20 years of teaching experience.

Weaknesses:

- 1 The description of the study programme contains no entry requirements for the level of English language knowledge necessary for the study programme offered in English.
- 2 Course descriptions contain outdated compulsory literature.
- 3 There is a lack of English literature in course descriptions.
- 4 Students receive a substantial part of the final grade only for attending lectures.
- 5 Feedback to students about changes taken based on the results of survey analysis is missing.
- 6 Lack of motivation for students to decide for a mobility period.
- 7 Limited participation of staff members in international projects.
- 8 There is no centralized mechanism for mutual collaboration between the teaching staff members.

Evaluation of the study programme "Financial Management"

Evaluation of the study programme:

Good

6. Recommendations for the Study Programme "Financial Management"

Short-term recommendations

- 1 Supplement the description of the study programme with the entry requirements for the level of English language knowledge necessary for the study programme offered in English.

Long-term recommendations

1 Establish regular /yearly updating of course descriptions with instructions and motivate teachers to include up-to-date literature sources.
2 Since the program is offered in Latvian and English, compulsory literature in courses' syllabuses should capture also English literature.
3 Revise the evaluation system for the courses to avoid the situation when attending lectures constitutes a part of the final grade.
4 Plan and organize sustainable feedback to students based on the result of surveys' analysis.
5 Motivate students to engage in mobility opportunities, there is also the possibility of virtual mobility.
6 Introduce the mechanism for involvement of staff members in international projects.
7 Introduce a centralized mechanism for mutual collaboration between the teaching staff members (for instance, hospitation).

II. "International finance and economics" ASSESSMENT

II. "International finance and economics" ASSESSMENT

1. Indicators Describing the Study Programme

Analysis

In order to create a more compatible entity of study programmes at BIA, the previous professional Master's degree has been redesigned into an academic Master degree, hereby offering Bachelor-level graduates a more suitable pathway into the PhD programme. The newly developed study programme called "International Finance and Economics" is an academic Master-level degree, giving access to doctoral studies. Upon successful completion the is Master's degree in social sciences in finance, banking and insurance (45 343) is granted, equivalent to a qualification of the 7th level of the LQF and the EQF.

The programme is implemented, based on a new 4+1 years model that allows providing the at least 5 years of the total duration of full-time studies.

The admission requirements are higher education in social sciences (economy and business sectors). Applicants who have obtained higher education in other fields may be enrolled in the International Finance and Economics Academic Master Programme after the completion of a preparatory semester.

International applicants must submit a proof of English language proficiency equivalent to BS within the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), certified by TOEFL, IELTS, Cambridge etc. International applicants who have no International English proficiency certificates can pass an Internal English language test carried out by BSA (<https://bsa.edu.lv/noteikumi-un-pazinojumi/>). According to the BIA website, the Internal English proficiency test is developed based on English language proficiency testing methodology for foreign entrants approved by the Cabinet of Ministers of Latvia.

The degree can be completed in 1 year of full-time studies (40 credit points and 60 ECTS). Those applicants passing the preparatory semester complete the Master degree in 1,5 years (60 credit points, 90 ECTS). The languages of instruction are Latvian and English.

The new academic Master's programme has been developed based on the Regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Latvia No. 240 "Regulations on the National Academic Education Standard" (13.05.2014); Regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Latvia No. 322 "Regulations on the Classification of Education in Latvia" (13.06.2017); The European Qualifications Framework.

As compared to the previously offered professional Master, changes in the academic master study programme have been made mainly with internship (-6 CP), theoretical courses (-3 CP), elective courses (-1 CP), research and design work (-3 CP), management courses (-7 CP) reduction. As stated in the SAR, the goal of the study programme is to train qualified professionals with in-depth theoretical knowledge, analytical skills and research skills in the field of International Finance and Economics, who apply innovative technologies and analytical skills in the work of a modern financial expert.

The tasks of the study programme are logical, interrelated to the name and the goals of the study programmes and contributes to the achievement of the planned outcomes of the study programme.

The study programme aims, objectives and learning outcomes are in line with the admission requirements, presenting a stronger focus on developing research skills and experience of scientific work among the graduates. The course offering corresponds to the learning outcomes; knowledge, skills and competences to be achieved. The objectives are also aligned with the 7th level of the LQF.

Conclusions by specifying the strengths and weaknesses

The name of the study programme, the degree, the qualification level, the aims, objectives, learning outcomes, and admission requirements are inter-related and aligned with regulatory requirements.

Strengths:

- 1 The change from professional to academic Master's programme contributes to a stronger investment on research capacity at BIA and offers a suitable learning path from the Bachelor to the PhD level.
- 2 Goals and tasks of the study programme are relevant to the achievement of the planned results.
- 3 BIA provides the students with the necessary skills, knowledge and competences in accordance with the planned results of the study programme.

Weaknesses:

There are no weaknesses.

2. The Content of Studies and Implementation Thereof

Analysis

1.The content of the new International Finance and Economics Academic Master's programme was evaluated and appropriately updated in accordance with employer surveys highlighting the needs of the sector and research trends. New dimensions such as sustainable finance, big data analysis, and a focus on global challenges were introduced. The programme was developed in accordance with national strategies like The National Concept for the Development of Higher Education and Institutions of Higher Education of Latvia for 2013-2020, Sustainable Development Strategy of Latvia until 2030, National Development Plan of Latvia for 2021-2027 (NAP2027). The SAR Annex "Course descriptions" clearly outlines the aims, tasks, content, required previous knowledge, assessment methods and readings for each course. As the programme is new, there is no information yet about

labour market relevance or level of thesis quality. There is no traineeship included.

The Annex on course descriptions informs that course materials cover books, periodicals, scientific journals, professional magazines, databases, websites etc. Nevertheless, some of the obligatory readings are 10-15 years old and should be updated and complemented with more accurate literature (e.g. Basics of Accounting/1987, Money Theory and policy/1988, Global Economy and International Finance/1998, Business Psychology and Communication/1997). Some courses offered in English also indicate compulsory learning materials only in the Latvian language and should be complemented with literature in English (e.g. Microeconomics, Global Economy and International Finance). Courses "Financial Analysis" and "Corporate Finance" indicate exactly similar books in English for both courses.

2.The SAR section 2.3 outlines a convincing methodological structure of lectures, seminars and independent work. Teachers integrate discussions, group work and problem analysis to create a free atmosphere in the learning process and promote the development of critical thinking skills. Seminars are to provide an in-depth understanding of the course content through scientific monographs and/or research papers, in the form of discussions and student presentations, as well as through group work, case studies or role-play techniques, thus developing problem-solving skills. The independent works cover reports, essays, project development, analysis of scientific articles, preparation of presentations. In practical classes, the focus is on training the student's practical and analytical skills, as well as developing of personal, social, interpersonal and intercultural competencies. Students are involved in scientific projects implemented by the teaching staff of the study field "Economics" and there is mandatory participation at conferences for students. Student-centred principles are visible, as teachers are to act as mentors, who support students when they receive, select, analyze and critically evaluate scientific information from various sources, to use it independently.

3.The Master-level study programme conducts surveys among students, graduates and employers. According to the SAR, the results of the surveys shall be processed by the BIA Computer centre and the BIA Analytical centre and submitted to the appropriate programme or rector's office or submitted to the Senate secretary. The students' opinion expressed in the survey is considered in the process of election of the lecturer and in the selection of the lecturers to be invited for implementation of the study course. Results of the surveys are recorded and considered in the organization of the next academic year. Many of the students' previous proposals have been implemented such as timely informing of the students, efficient use of the premises, etc.

4. From 2013-14 to spring 2018-19 there was neither incoming nor outgoing mobility. Master-level students busy at work and regular studies. There are, however, opportunities for some internationalization interaction as the share of full-time foreign degree students is 27% - 40% (the majority from Azerbaijan, Tajikistan and Russia, as stated in the SAR Annex on student statistics).

Conclusions by specifying the strengths and weaknesses

The criteria related to the content and implementation of the new academic Master's in International Finance and Economics are mainly fulfilled, with the exception of outdated compulsory literature and reading materials, as well as lack of materials in English.

Strengths:

1 Relevant changes in the new academic Master's programme have been made based on national strategies, trends and employer surveys

- 2 Clearly designed and comprehensive course descriptions with a convincing methodological structure of lectures, seminars and independent work.
- 3 The outcomes of the surveys conducted among the students, employers, and graduates are used to improve the quality of studies.

Weaknesses:

- 1 Materials used in several courses is outdated and only available in Latvian, even though the study programme is also implemented in English.

3. Resources and Provision of the Study Programme

Analysis

The financial resources of the study programme are based on the revenues from tuition fees. Overall the Academy has a stable financial position and there is no question of its short and long term financial viability.

BIA has the necessary infrastructure and material and technical support for the implementation of the study programme. The students and staff of the Master programme “International Finance and Economics” have an access to all the resources provided by BIA.

BIA has well-functioning e-teaching platform Moodle with integrated Big Blue Button video-conferencing system. All study materials are available to students in Moodle, as well as course descriptions and course requirements.

There is also an internal information system NEXUS that allows to compile academic and financial data on the CAF staff, academic staff and students, as well as to prepare academic transcripts and diploma supplements. NEXUS is used also to inform BIA students about internal regulations, study programmes, BIA news and etc. The information about study programmes, courses and study regulations is also available on the BIA website in Latvian and English. Informational support is also available from the Study Information Centre located in the BIA building.

BIA has a library with the possibility to find a book in an electronic catalogue. Library has reading rooms with computers and Internet access, printing and scanning facilities. The library has all basic necessary subscriptions to databases and its bibliographic database is appropriate. BIA provides an access to different databases (SCOPUS, ScienceDirect and others).

Students have access to computer classes, library fund, reading rooms, study auditoriums, bookshop and cafeteria.

Students have access to spacious auditoriums that are equipped not only with basics, but in general also with multimedia and presentation equipment. Academy features thematic auditoriums with informational materials and items related to that particular theme – for example – Nordic, German, etc. All university staff, i.e. academic, general and students, can use both the study rooms and the computer class, as well as the library. All premises within Riga buildings are easy accessible – through the provision of elevators and ramps. Thus, infrastructure is suitable for people with disabilities (reduced mobility).

Regarding internationalisation and exchange options - there are more than 400 cooperation contracts and 145 inter-university contracts. BIA participates in various funded projects, yet there is a certain lack of research projects conducted within BIA therefore there is limited options for students to participate in in-house research projects apart from conferencing and publishing.

In conclusion, BIA knows the needs of the students and has a well-functioning support system responding to the relevant needs.

Conclusions by specifying the strengths and weaknesses

The study provision, informative provision, material and technical provision, and financial provision

ensure the qualitative implementation of the study programme “International Finance and Economics” and the achievement of the learning outcomes. BIA has large premises to ensure the study process. BIA infrastructure is adapted to the needs of disabled people.

Overall, as with the rest of the study programmes within study direction, the level of resources provided is quite strong and oriented towards successful implementation of study programme. Given that this is Master programme, it is important to provide students with variety of research options - it seems that there is lacking number of research projects conducted by institution therefore limiting options for students and staff.

Strengths:

- 1 Good physical infrastructure.
- 2 Informative, technical and provision is appropriate.
- 3 Well-functioning e-teaching platform with integrated Big Blue Button video-conferencing system.
- 4 Infrastructure with the ensured access for disabled persons.
- 5 Ensured access to different databases (SCOPUS, ScienceDirect and others).

No weaknesses.

4. Teaching Staff

Analysis

4.1 Now, 14 teaching staff members are involved in the programme “International Finance and Economics”. The data in the SAR is consistent with the data in the curriculum. 10 of them are elected staff members (4 Professors, 1 Associate Professor, 4 Assistant Professors, 1 leading researcher).

The number of professors and associate professors is sufficient to implement the academic study programme (according to the Law on Higher Education Institutions, Section 55, part (1)3, e.g. “Not less than five professors and associate professors altogether, who are elected to academic positions in the relevant higher education institution, shall take part in the implementation of the compulsory part and the limited elective part of academic study programmes...”).

4.2. 10 persons with the Doctor degree are teaching in the programme (approx. 71%); seven of them have a degree in economics or management.

Four staff members had the expert status of the Latvian Council of Science (LCS) in the reporting period (checked in sciencelatvia.lv on April 4, 2021).

Most of staff members have more than 15 years of teaching experience.

The Master programme “International Finance and Economics” is implemented in Latvian and English. Based on the information from the SAR (Annex “Macibspeki_Ekonomika”) about the level of English knowledge, 3 persons have C1/C2 level, 6 persons have B2 level, 4 persons have B1 level, 1 person has A1/A2 level.

BIA makes efforts to improve English knowledge of staff members by providing English courses. During the visit, staff members confirmed that they took classes. Based on the information from Study plan and Annex “List of teaching staff involved in study direction “Economics””, the persons who involved in implementation of study programme “Financial management” in English, have an appropriate level of English knowledge (B2 or higher), except of one staff member.

In general, the qualification of staff is appropriate and allow achieving the goals of the study programme.

4.3. not relevant

4.4 Academic staff members are involved in research that is confirmed by the published scientific publications. The evidence has received from the SAR (Annex "List of scientific publications"). Based on the SAR, 2 of staff members do not have publications, but for 1 of them the information was found in CV. One staff member does not have scientific publications, but has 5 years professional experience. Based on the information in CVs, not all the staff members have publications indexed in SCOPUS, Web of Science, ERIH+ databases; mainly those with LSC expert rights. However, based on the information from SAR (Annex "Conferences") all staff members representing the programme "International Finance and Economics" participated in the scientific conferences in the reporting period. A half of the staff had an experience in projects, however, the participation in research-related projects during the reporting period is low.

4.5 During the on-site visit, the academic staff members and programme directors provided examples about collaboration within the programme: joint papers, participation in events organized at BIA (for instance, Summer schools), round table discussions. Staff members also participate together in seminars organized by the Methodological Council. Based on the information from the Study plan (SAR, Description of the Study Programme, 2. The Content of Studies and Implementation Thereof, Annex), there are several study courses taught by two staff members. However, there is no centralized mechanism for mutual collaboration between the teaching staff members.

Conclusions by specifying the strengths and weaknesses

The Master study programme "International Finance and Economics" is implemented by 14 staff members, 10 of them are employed on a permanent basis. Five Professors and associate Professors involved in the programme that complies with the law requirements for academic study programmes. Most of the staff members have a large (more than 15 years) working experience in the academic environment. The involvement of teaching staff in research is confirmed by scientific publications and participation in international scientific conferences. Collaboration between staff members does not take place on a regular basis; there is no centralized mechanism in place.

Strengths:

1 Most of teaching staff members are involved in research.

Weaknesses:

1 Level of English knowledge of one staff member involved in the implementation of the programme in English is not sufficient.

2 Low participation of staff in research-related projects.

3 There is no centralized mechanism for mutual collaboration between the teaching staff members.

5. Assessment of the Compliance of the Study Programme "International finance and economics"

Requirements

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Justification: The sample of the diploma is attached to the SAR (section "Other mandatory attachments"). The sample of the diploma to be issued for the acquisition of the study programme complies with the regulation of the Cabinet of Ministers No.202, adopted on 16.04.2013 (available in Latvian

<https://likumi.lv/ta/id/256157-kartiba-kada-izsniedz-valsts-atzitus-augstako-izglitiba-apliecinosus-dokumentus>)

- 2 2. Documents confirming that the higher education institution/ college will provide the students with the options to continue the acquisition of education in another study programme or at another higher education institution/ college (a contract with another accredited higher education institution/ college), in case the implementation of the study programme is discontinued.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Justification: The Annex No.2 signed electronically was added to the mutual agreement is signed on 4.12.2019 between BIA and Ekonomikas un kultūras augstskola (No.97) about the mutual acceptance of students from partner University.

- 3 3. Document confirming that the higher education institution/ college guarantees to the students a compensation for losses if the study programme is not accredited or the licence of the study programme is revoked due to the actions of the higher education institution/ college (actions or failure to act) and the student does not wish to continue the studies in another study programme.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Justification: The Performance of obligations No. 31-3617 and 31-3618 signed by the Board members on 17.02.2021 guarantees to the students compensation for losses if the study programme "International Finance and Economics" is not accredited or the license of the study programme is revoked and the student does not wish to continue the studies in another study programme (attached to the SAR in Latvian and English).

- 4 4. 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

Justification: The teaching staff members involved in the implementation of the study programme are proficient in the official language. Official confirmation No. 22-7/27 was signed by the Head of the study direction "Economics" on 03.12.2020. (attached to the SAR, Other mandatory attachments).

- 5 5. 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.

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

Justification: The document containing the self-assessment of English knowledge of staff involved in the implementation of the study programme "International Finance and Economics" is attached to the SAR. Not all the staff members have B2 or higher level of English. Based on the information from Study plan and Annex "List of teaching staff involved in study direction "Economics"", the persons who involved in implementation of study programme "Financial management" in English, have an appropriate level of English knowledge (B2 or higher), except of one staff member (A1 level).

- 6 6. 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.

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

Justification:

- 7 7. 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 Institutions of Higher Education.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Justification: Five Professors and associate Professors involved in the programme that complies with the law requirements for academic study programmes (Section 55, Paragraph one, Clause 3 of the Law on Institutions of Higher Education).

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Justification: The sample of the study agreement (attached to the SAR) complies with the mandatory provisions to be included in the study agreement, according to the requirements of the Regulation of the Cabinet of Ministers No 70 of January 23, 2007.

- 9 9. The descriptions of the study courses and the study materials have been prepared in all languages in which the study programme is implemented, and they comply with the requirements set forth in Section 56.1, Paragraph two and Section 56.2, Paragraph two of the Law on Institutions of Higher Education.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Justification: The descriptions of all the study courses and the study materials have been prepared in all languages in which the study programme is implemented, and they comply with the requirements set forth in Section 56.1, Paragraph two and Section 56.2, Paragraph two of the Law on Institutions of Higher Education. There are some improvements to be made in the program, regarding the old compulsory literature and absence of English textbooks.

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

Justification:

- 11 11. 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 Institutions of Higher Education.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Justification: The Council of Higher Education supported the request of the Baltic International Academy to offer academic master level study programme "International Finance and Economics" to less than 250 full time students (letter No. 1.10/14 electronically signed 24.02.2020, attached to the SAR).

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Justification: The new academic Master's programme has been developed based on the Regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Latvia No. 240 "Regulations on the National Academic Education Standard" (13.05.2014); Regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Latvia No. 322 "Regulations on the Classification of Education in Latvia" (13.06.2017.)

- 13 13. The joint study programmes comply with the requirements prescribed in Section 551, Paragraphs one, two, and seven of the Law on Institutions of Higher Education (if applicable).

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

Justification:

- 14 14. Each member of the academic staff has either publications published in reviewed editions within the last six years, including international editions (if they have worked for a shorter period of time, the number of publications shall be in proportion to the work period), or artistic creation achievements (for instance, exhibitions, films, theatre performances, and concert activity), or a five-year practical work experience (except for the experience in the implementation of the study programme) in accordance with the Law on Institutions of Higher Education.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Justification: The evidence has received from the SAR (Annex “List of scientific publications”). Based on the SAR, 2 of staff members do not have publications, but for 1 of them the information was found in CV. One staff member does not have scientific publications, but has 5 years professional experience outside the programme.

15 R5 - Overall rating

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

Justification: "Partially compliant" in criterion No. 5.

Requirements (R6-R8)

- 1 R6 - The compliance of the study provision, scientific support (if applicable), informative provision (including libraries), material and technical provision, and financial provision with the conditions for the implementation of the study programme and ensuring the achievement of the learning outcomes.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Justification: The BIA has necessary resources to implement the Bachelor study programme “International Finance and Economics”

- 2 R7 - The compliance of the qualification of the academic staff members, visiting professors, visiting associate professors, visiting docents, visiting lecturers, and visiting assistants with the conditions for the implementation of the study programme and the provisions set out in the respective regulatory enactments.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Justification: 14 teaching staff members are involved in the programme “International Finance and Economics”. 10 of them are elected staff members (4 Professors, 1 Associate Professor, 4 Assistant Professors, 1 leading researcher). 10 persons with the Doctor degree are teaching in the programme (approx. 71%)

- 3 R8 - The study programme leading to the master or doctoral degree is based on the advances and findings in the relevant field of science or artistic creation.

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

Justification: Relevant changes in the new academic Master’s programme have been made based on national strategies, trends and employer surveys.

Not all the teachers are active in research activities, applying for international projects and publishing their work in scientific journals. It would allow them to integrate the newest findings in the study program content.

Conclusions by specifying the strengths and weaknesses

The name of the study programme, the degree, the qualification level, the aims, objectives, learning outcomes, and admission requirements are inter-related and aligned with regulatory requirements.

The criteria related to the content and implementation of the new academic Master’s in International Finance and Economics are mainly fulfilled, with the exception of outdated compulsory literature and reading materials, as well as lack of materials in English.

The study provision, informative provision, material and technical provision, and financial provision ensure the qualitative implementation of the study programme “International Finance and Economics” and the achievement of the learning outcomes. Overall, as with the rest of the study programmes within study direction, the level of resources provided is quite strong and oriented towards successful implementation of study programme. Given that this is Master programme, it is important to provide students with variety of research options - it seems that there is lacking number of research projects conducted by institution therefore limiting options for students and staff.

The Master study programme “International Finance and Economics” is implemented by 14 staff

members, 10 of them are employed on a permanent basis. Five Professors and associate Professors involved in the programme that complies with the law requirements for academic study programmes. Most of the staff members have a large (more than 15 years) working experience in the academic environment. The involvement of teaching staff in research is confirmed by scientific publications and participation in international scientific conferences. Collaboration between staff members does not take place on a regular basis; there is no centralized mechanism in place.

Strengths:

- 1 The change from professional to academic Master's programme contributes to a stronger investment on research capacity at BIA and offers a suitable learning path from the Bachelor to the PhD level.
- 2 Goals and tasks of the study programme are relevant to the achievement of the planned results.
- 3 BIA provides the students with the necessary skills, knowledge and competences in accordance with the planned results of the study programme.
- 4 Relevant changes in the new academic Master's programme have been made based on national strategies, trends and employer surveys
- 5 Clearly designed and comprehensive course descriptions with a convincing methodological structure of lectures, seminars and independent work.
- 6 The outcomes of the surveys conducted among the students, employers, and graduates are used to improve the quality of studies.
- 7 Good physical infrastructure.
- 8 Informative, technical and material provision is appropriate.
- 9 Well-functioning e-teaching platform with integrated Big Blue Button video-conferencing system.
- 10 Infrastructure with the ensured access for disabled persons.
- 11 Ensured access to different databases (SCOPUS, ScienceDirect and others).
- 12 Most teaching staff members are involved in research.

Weaknesses:

- 1 Materials used in several courses is outdated and only available in Latvian, even though the study programme is also implemented in English.
- 2 Level of English knowledge of one staff member involved in the implementation of the programme in English is not sufficient.
- 3 Low participation of staff in research-related projects.
- 4 There is no centralized mechanism for mutual collaboration between the teaching staff members.

Evaluation of the study programme "International finance and economics"

Evaluation of the study programme:

Good

6. Recommendations for the Study Programme "International finance and economics"

Short-term recommendations

- | |
|--|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none">1 Revise the list of teaching staff members involved in implementation of the programme in English and ensure that all staff members have at least B2 level. |
|--|

Long-term recommendations

- | |
|--|
| 1 Ensure that each course of the study programme is supported by updated compulsory reading and literature, available also in English. |
| 2 To ensure the involvement of the academic staff in research-related and other international projects. |
| 3 Introduce a centralized mechanism for mutual collaboration between the teaching staff members (for instance, hospitation). |

II. "Regional Economics and Economic policy" ASSESSMENT

II. "Regional Economics and Economic policy" ASSESSMENT

1. Indicators Describing the Study Programme

Analysis

The PhD programme called "Regional Economics and Economic policy " is coded 51311 according to the Latvian Education Classification. Upon successful completion of 3 years of full-time study (4 years part-time), 120 CP (180 ECTS), the degree Doctor of Science (PhD) in Economics and Business is granted, equivalent to a qualification of the 8th level of the LQF and the EQF. The languages of instruction are Latvian and English.

According to the SAR, the study programme offers doctoral students in economics to acquire the highest level of study methods and research work organization, principles of management, to prepare qualified specialists for independent scientific and pedagogical work, to acquire internationally comparable competence in economics and internationally comparable doctoral degree in economics and business.

The uniqueness of the doctoral program "Regional Economy and Economic Policy" is based on interdisciplinary research: the sub-field "regional economy" and "macroeconomics". The main components of the subject of the regional economy are: the economy of a particular region; economic links between regions; regional economic systems; distribution of productive forces; regional aspects of economic life, including finance, investment process, employment, living standards, etc. regional aspects.

The admission requirement is a master's degree in economics or management, or exceptionally, a master's degree in social sciences and experience in a field relevant to the doctoral thesis or a scientific publication in a selected sub-branch of economic science, and it is evaluated by the doctoral matriculation commission. Applicants for doctoral studies are discussed in the BIA doctoral program matriculation commission, the composition of which is approved by the BIA rector. The commission consists of the director of the doctoral study program and its two members. The adequacy of foreign diplomas is determined by the expertise of the Latvian Academic Information Centre. Scores to support admission to the PhD are granted from Master's degree and thesis grades, the number of publications, conference presentations, research project participation, work experience and internships.

The BIA website mentions that international applicants must submit proof of the English language proficiency equivalent to B2 within the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), certified by TOEFL, IELTS, Cambridge etc. International applicants who have no International English proficiency certificates can pass an Internal English language test carried out

by BIA (<https://bsa.edu.lv/noteikumi-un-pazinojumi/>). According to the BIA website, the Internal English proficiency test is developed based on English language proficiency testing methodology for foreign entrants approved by the Cabinet of Ministers of Latvia.

The PhD programme is being implemented in accordance with the Law on Higher Education Institutions of the Republic of Latvia, the Law on Scientific Activity of the Republic of Latvia and the regulations No 1001 of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Latvia from December 27, 2005 "Procedure and Criteria for Awarding of Doctoral Scientific Degree".

In 2015, the BIA Promotion Council of the field "Economics" was approved by the decision of the Cabinet of Ministers of Latvia, conferring degrees within the sub-sectors of regional economy and marketing. The Promotion Council includes not only experts of the REEP doctoral program, but also representatives of other Latvian universities.

The tasks of the study programme are logical, interrelated to the name and the goals of the study programmes and contribute to the achievement of the planned outcomes of the study programme. The aims and tasks of the program correspond to the long-term strategy of the Baltic International Academy for activity and development for the years 2016-2021. Program parameters like the aim, tasks and learning outcomes were specified and updated according to the EQF. Program adjustments have been made based on previous expert recommendations (SAR Annex "Fulfilment of recommendations of experts in the accreditation of study directions").

The study programme aims, objectives and learning outcomes are in line with the admission requirements, presenting a stronger focus on developing analytical research skills, as well as presenting content linked to the specialization are of the regional economy. The course offering corresponds to the learning outcomes; knowledge, skills and competencies to be achieved. The objectives are also aligned with the 8th level of the LQF.

Conclusions by specifying the strengths and weaknesses

The name of the study programme, the degree, the qualification level, the aims, objectives, learning outcomes, and admission requirements are interrelated and aligned with regulatory requirements.

Strengths:

1 The name of the study programme, the degree, the aims, learning outcomes, and admission requirements are interrelated. The niche of the PhD programme has been identified as the regional economy.

No weaknesses

2. The Content of Studies and Implementation Thereof

Analysis

1 The descriptions of the study courses are of high quality; they offer a good basis for students to achieve the program aims. The composition of courses in the program is adequate for this level of education. Study program's content is relevant and complementary, aims of the program are met and also the achievement of the learning outcomes is ensured. Program meets the needs of the relevant regional and national industry, scientific trends are included. It is also provided with a course on pedagogy, which allows educating potential teachers for the academy and other Latvian education institutions. Course descriptions and final dissertations comply with the provisions set in regulatory enactments. The content is developed in line with current advances and findings in this

field which are appropriate for doctoral level.

2 Study implementation methods seem appropriate (e.g., lectures and tutorials, doctoral students' seminars, analysis, expertise, research), students praised the individual approach during the interviews with experts, as much as the responsiveness and availability of teachers. The method of doctoral students' seminars is used for the implementation of the study program in the second and third academic years (SAR, Study Program "Regional Economics and Economic policy" (51311) III - DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDY PROGRAMME (2. The Content of Studies and Implementation Thereof), point 2.3). Doctoral students report on research results at conferences, present them in scientific reports and publications. Student-centred learning and teaching principles are being noticed in the availability of teachers and mentors, in the international connections that are being offered and arranged for students, in the individualized approach in preparing the courses content etc. However, the scientific activities could be more diverse and comprehensive. These activities are taken into account in the evaluation of the implementation of the plan. If an unpassed examination happens to the student, it is not considered an academic debt if he/she has obtained credit points by completing a doctoral thesis. It permits the student to self-evaluate him/herself and scientific activity is implemented, which motivates the acquisition of independent research skills.

3 Academy regularly surveys students, graduates, and employers. An example was given of how a recommendation of students was taken into account. As a proposal to improve the study work, it was recommended in students survey to increase the number of lectures in the course "Econometrics and Statistics" (SAR, Study Program "Regional Economics and Economic policy" (51311) III - DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDY PROGRAMME (2. The Content of Studies and Implementation Thereof), point 2.6).

4 Students are aware and avail themselves of the outgoing mobility opportunities, especially to deepen their research or to develop collaboration with a foreign mentor. During the reporting period, the PhD program reported 4 incoming and 2 outgoing mobility periods. It should be noted that the PhD studies take place during the weekend and students are normally professionals already working, which makes international mobility more challenging.

Conclusions by specifying the strengths and weaknesses

The program is well designed; course descriptions comply with regulatory enactments. Dissertations are of high quality and contribute to Latvian society and economy. Study implementation methods appropriate; evaluation methods are individualized; students can self-evaluate and follow their progress. Surveys' results are used to improve the quality of studies. Students use the opportunities to conduct part of their study abroad.

Strengths:

- 1 Students also acquire knowledge of pedagogy.
- 2 They prepared a well-designed study program.
- 3 There are good opportunities for students' mobility.
- 4 The implementation model during evenings and Saturdays makes the PhD program is particularly suitable for lifelong learning and adult education.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses.

3. Resources and Provision of the Study Programme

Analysis

- 1 The financial resources of the study programme are based on the revenues from tuition fees.

Overall the Academy has a stable financial position and there is no question of its short and long term financial viability.

BIA has the necessary infrastructure and material and technical support for the implementation of the study programme. The students and staff of the Doctoral programme "Regional Economics and Economic Policy" have an access to all the resources provided by BIA.

Students have access to spacious auditoriums that are equipped not only with basics but in general also with multimedia and presentation equipment. Academy features thematic auditoriums with informational materials and items related to that particular theme – for example – Nordic, German, etc. All university staff, i.e. academic, general and students, can use both the study rooms and the computer class, as well as the library. BIA has a library with the possibility to find a book in an electronic catalogue. The library has reading rooms with computers and Internet access, printing and scanning facilities. In general, Library has all the basic necessary subscriptions to databases and its bibliographic database is appropriate. BIA provides an access to different databases (SCOPUS, ScienceDirect and others). Students confirm their awareness about the available databases. They know about the free access provided by BIA and use databases for PhD work.

All premises within Riga buildings are easily accessible – through the provision of elevators and ramps. Academy also provides access to three types of internal information system: Nexus – system of management of students and staff; Moodle – general-purpose e-learning platform and BigBlueButton – video conferencing and recording tool. All study materials are available to students in Moodle, as well as course descriptions and course requirements. NEXUS allows to compile academic and financial data on the CAF staff, academic staff and students, as well as to prepare academic transcripts and diploma supplements. NEXUS is used also to inform BIA students about internal regulations, study programmes, BIA news and etc. The information about study programmes, courses and study regulations is also available on the BIA website in Latvian and English.

Informational support is ensured by the programme director and Doctoral Council. Consultations are available from all Professors, including specific consultations about research. Student Information Centre is also a source of information and provides assistance if needed.

Regarding internationalisation and exchange options - there are more than 400 cooperation contracts and 145 inter-university contracts.

In conclusion, Academy knows the needs of the students and has a well-functioning support system responding to the relevant needs.

2 Based on the discussion with the director of the Doctoral programme, support for Doctoral students includes: 1) specific seminars to prepare students for defence, 2) supervisor assistance (contacts at least once per week), 3) meeting hours with the programme directors to discuss the issues, 4) free of charge publications at BIA, 5) financial support for SCOPUS/Web of Science publications (50%). During the visit, doctoral students confirm that they have support from supervisors. There is also language support and specific consultations to improve research competencies. Doctoral students appreciate courses related to research methodology. Doctoral students know about the study requirements and confirm that information and step-by-step explanations were provided by Professors.

The budget for research in the study field "Economics" takes approximately 7% of the total BIA research budget (as per 2017-2019). During the additional meeting with management, the representatives of BIA Management explained that this money is being spent to support Doctoral students, as well as to provide support for scientific publications and participation in scientific conferences. However, doctoral students are not fully informed about the financial support for research available at BIA.

Every year BIA organizes an international scientific-practical conference "Transformation Process in Law, Regional Economy and Economic Policy: Current Problems of Economic-Political and Legal

Relations” in cooperation with Daugavpils University. During the conference, doctoral students and university research staff have the opportunity to exchange views and problems in the field of the regional economy.

BIA participates in various funded projects, yet there is a certain lack of research projects conducted within BIA therefore there are limited options for students to participate in in-house research projects apart from conferencing and publishing.

Conclusions by specifying the strengths and weaknesses

The study provision, informative provision, material and technical provision, and financial provision ensure the qualitative implementation of the study programme “Regional Economics and Economic Policy”. Overall, as with the rest of the study programmes within the study direction, the level of resources provided is quite strong and oriented towards the successful implementation of the study programme. Given that this is the doctoral programme, it is important to provide students with a variety of research options - it seems that there is lacking the number of research projects conducted by the institution, therefore, limiting options for students and staff. Besides, Students are not fully informed on research funding options and support provided by BIA.

Strengths:

- 1 Good physical infrastructure.
- 2 Informative, technical and provision is appropriate.
- 3 Well-functioning e-teaching platform with integrated Big Blue Button video-conferencing system.
- 4 Infrastructure with the ensured access for disabled persons.
- 5 Ensured access to different databases (SCOPUS, ScienceDirect and others).

Weaknesses

- 1 Not sufficiently is communicated financial options to PhD students regarding research funding.
- 2 Limited amount of research projects conducted by BIA.

4. Teaching Staff

Analysis

1 Based on the SAR (Description of the study programme, 4.1), there were no significant changes in the composition of the teaching staff. The only lecturer of the course “Problems of Economic Integration and Globalization” was replaced by another person. The authors of the SAR refer to the Table that contains 13 persons. However, the curriculum of the study programme contains information regarding 11 staff members. Thus, the evaluation of staff is based on information about 11 persons. Two of them does not represent BIA any more and their CV were not available for experts, considering General Data Protection Regulation requirements. During the visit, the director of the programme provided information about another two persons, who will take over the courses in the future. These new staff members representing the programme both have a Doctoral degree in Economics; one of them has the expert rights of the Latvian Council of Science (LCS). There are no measurable targets regarding the number and quality of staff in the BIA strategic documents. The changes in the composition are made by necessity.

2 Considering the above-mentioned facts, 11 persons are involved in the study process within the programme “Regional Economics and Economic Policy”; all 11 persons have a Doctor degree; 7 of them are permanent staff members. 4 Professors, 2 Associate Professors and 1 Assistant Professor are among the permanent staff members. 3 persons had expert rights of the Latvian Council of Science (LCS) during the reporting period (field: Economics and Business); the expert status of 1 person was terminated in 2018.

Thus, the qualification of teaching staff involved in the implementation of the Doctoral programme partially complies with the requirements of the regulatory enactments (The Law on Higher Education Institutions, paragraph 55(1)3). According to the Law, “Not less than five persons with a doctoral degree shall participate in the implementation of an academic doctoral study programme of which at least three persons are experts approved by the Latvian Council of Science in the relevant sector” (the only 2 persons with LSC rights are involved in the implementation of the programme).

Based on the SAR (Description of the study programme, 4.2), “All lecturers have knowledge of Latvian (C level) and English in B category (B1 or B2).” Checking the information from the SAR (Annex “Macibspeki_Ekonomika”), 1 person has C2 level, 1 person has C1 level, 4 persons have B2 level, and 3 persons have a B1 level of English. Considering the level of the programme and the fact that the programme is realized in Latvian and English, the level of English knowledge is not sufficient to implement the Doctoral study programme.

3 Based on the Annex “List of scientific publications” (SAR, Part II, 4. Scientific Research and Artistic Creation) and information from CVs, all the staff members involved in the implementation of the doctoral study programme “Regional Economics and Economics Policy” had scientific publications in the reporting period. In-deep analysis was made, also based on the information from the Annex “List of scientific publications” (SAR, part II. Description of the Study Direction - 4. Scientific Research and Artistic Creation) and checking SCOPUS and Web of Science databases (checked last time on 15.05.2021). Only two persons (those who have LSC expert rights) have a satisfactory number of SCOPUS/WoS publications during 6 years. Five persons had only 1-2 SCOPUS/WoS/ERIH+ publications; four persons do not have SCOPUS/WoS/ERIH+ publications during the reporting period. Based on the information from CVs, only 3 staff members had any experience in research-related projects during the reporting period.

4 Based on the Annex “List of scientific publications” (SAR, Part II, 4. Scientific Research and Artistic Creation) and information from CVs, all the staff members involved in the implementation of the doctoral study programme “Regional Economics and Economics Policy” had scientific publications in the reporting period. All staff members participated in the international conferences during the reporting period. However, the conferences mostly took place in Latvia, Lithuania, Russia and Ukraine. The diversity of the conferences is also limited (the same conference year-by-year). The participation of staff in the international projects is very low.

During the interviews with staff members, they confirmed that the research is integrated into the study process. The Doctoral students confirmed that Professors introduce the research results in lectures. Students know about the research conducted by their Professors and use some results in PhD work.

5 During the on-site visit, the academic staff members provided examples about collaboration within the programme: joint papers, participation in events organized at BIA (for instance, Summer schools), round table discussions. The director of the programme mentioned the Doctoral council and joint participation in the conferences. At the meetings of the Doctoral Council, staff members involved in the implementation of the Doctoral programme discuss questions for promotional exams, syllabus, literature offered to students, results of the surveys.

Conclusions by specifying the strengths and weaknesses

The Doctoral study programme “Regional Economics and Economic Policy” is implemented by 11 staff members, 7 of them are employed on a permanent basis. Six Professors and associate Professors involved in the programme. 11 persons have a Doctor degree, but only 2 persons with LSC expert rights are involved in the implementation of the programme, indicating partial compliance with the requirements of the regulatory enactments. The level of English knowledge of the staff is not sufficient to implement the Doctoral study programme. There is a low number of high-quality indexed publications and limited participation of staff in research-related and other

international projects.

Strengths:

- 1 Professors integrate the research results in the study process that is confirmed by students.
- 2 Collaboration between staff members through participation in a Doctoral Council is in place.

Weaknesses:

- 1 The qualification of teaching staff involved in the implementation of the Doctoral programme partially complies with the requirements of the regulatory enactments (the only 2 persons with LSC rights are involved in the implementation of the programme).
- 2 The level of staff English knowledge is not sufficient to implement the Doctoral study programme.
- 3 The quality of scientific publications of some academic staff members is not sufficient to implement a high-quality doctoral study programme.
- 4 The involvement of the academic staff in research-related and other international projects is not sufficient; it could represent more opportunities for PhD students as they could participate and receive even more international and research experiences.

5. Assessment of the Compliance of the Study Programme "Regional Economics and Economic policy"

Requirements

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Justification: The sample of the diploma is attached to the SAR (section "Other mandatory attachments"). The sample of the diploma to be issued for the acquisition of the study programme complies with the regulation of the Cabinet of Ministers No.202, adopted on 16.04.2013 (available in Latvian <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/256157-kartiba-kada-izsniedz-valsts-atzitus-augstako-izglitiba-apliecinosh-dokumentus>).

- 2 2. Documents confirming that the higher education institution/ college will provide the students with the options to continue the acquisition of education in another study programme or at another higher education institution/ college (a contract with another accredited higher education institution/ college), in case the implementation of the study programme is discontinued.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Justification: The mutual agreement is signed on 12.02.2020 between BIA and Daugavpils University (No.RE-153/1202) about the mutual acceptance of students from partner University.

- 3 3. Document confirming that the higher education institution/ college guarantees to the students a compensation for losses if the study programme is not accredited or the licence of the study programme is revoked due to the actions of the higher education institution/ college (actions or failure to act) and the student does not wish to continue the studies in another study programme.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Justification: The Performance of obligations No. 31-3590 and 31-3594 signed by the Board members on 10.12.2020 guarantees to the students compensation for losses if the study programme "Financial Management" is not accredited or the license of the study programme is revoked and the student does not wish to continue the studies in another study programme (attached to the SAR in Latvian and English).

- 4 4. 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
Justification: The teaching staff members involved in the implementation of the study programme are proficient in the official language. Official confirmation No. 22-7/27 was signed by the Head of the study direction "Economics" on 03.12.2020. (attached to the SAR, Other mandatory attachments).
- 5 5. 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.
Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant
Justification: The document containing the information of English knowledge of staff involved in the implementation of the study programme "Regional Economics and Economic policy" is attached to the SAR. It is not signed. Not all the staff members have B2 or higher level of English.
- 6 6. 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.
Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant
Justification: 11 persons have a Doctor degree, but the only 2 persons with LSC expert rights are involved in the implementation of the programme "Regional Economics and Economic Policy".
- 7 7. 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 Institutions of Higher Education.
Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant
Justification: 4 Professors and 2 Associate Professors are among the staff members employed on the permanent basis (elected at the BIA). It complies with the requirements set forth in Section 55, Paragraph one, Clause 3 of the Law on Institutions of Higher Education.
- 8 8. The sample of the study agreement complies with the mandatory provisions to be included in the study agreement.
Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant
Justification: The sample of the study agreement (attached to the SAR) complies with the mandatory provisions to be included in the study agreement, according to the requirements of the Regulation of the Cabinet of Ministers No 70 of January 23, 2007.
- 9 9. The descriptions of the study courses and the study materials have been prepared in all languages in which the study programme is implemented, and they comply with the requirements set forth in Section 56.1, Paragraph two and Section 56.2, Paragraph two of the Law on Institutions of Higher Education.
Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant
Justification: The descriptions of all the study courses and the study materials have been prepared in all languages in which the study programme is implemented, and they comply with the requirements set forth in Section 56.1, Paragraph two and Section 56.2, Paragraph two of the Law on Institutions of Higher Education.
- 10 10. The study programme complies with the valid professional standard or the requirements for the professional qualification (if there is no professional standard required for the relevant occupation) provided that the completion of the study programme leads to a professional qualification.
Assessment of compliance: Not relevant
Justification:

- 11 11. 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 Institutions of Higher Education.
Assessment of compliance: Non-compliant
Justification: The programme "Regional Economics and Economic Policy" is implemented for less than 250 full-time students, but the relevant opinion of the Council for Higher Education has not been received.
- 12 12. The study programme complies with the State Academic Education Standard or the Professional Higher Education Standard.
Assessment of compliance: Not relevant
Justification:
- 13 13. The joint study programmes comply with the requirements prescribed in Section 551, Paragraphs one, two, and seven of the Law on Institutions of Higher Education (if applicable).
Assessment of compliance: Not relevant
Justification:
- 14 14. Each member of the academic staff has either publications published in reviewed editions within the last six years, including international editions (if they have worked for a shorter period of time, the number of publications shall be in proportion to the work period), or artistic creation achievements (for instance, exhibitions, films, theatre performances, and concert activity), or a five-year practical work experience (except for the experience in the implementation of the study programme) in accordance with the Law on Institutions of Higher Education.
Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant
Justification: Based on the Annex "List of scientific publications" (SAR, Part II, 4. Scientific Research and Artistic Creation) and information from CVs, all the staff members involved in the implementation of the doctoral study programme "Regional Economics and Economics Policy" had scientific publications in the reporting period.
- 15 R5 - Overall rating
Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant
Justification: "Partially compliant" in criteria No. 5 and No.6, and "non-compliant" in criterion No.11.

Requirements (R6-R8)

- 1 R6 - The compliance of the study provision, scientific support (if applicable), informative provision (including libraries), material and technical provision, and financial provision with the conditions for the implementation of the study programme and ensuring the achievement of the learning outcomes.
Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant
Justification: The BIA has necessary resources to implement the Doctoral study programme "Regional Economics and Economic policy".
- 2 R7 - The compliance of the qualification of the academic staff members, visiting professors, visiting associate professors, visiting docents, visiting lecturers, and visiting assistants with the conditions for the implementation of the study programme and the provisions set out in the respective regulatory enactments.
Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

Justification: 11 persons are involved in study process within the programme “Regional Economics and Economic Policy”; all 11 persons have a Doctor degree; 7 of them are permanent staff members. 4 Professors, 2 Associate Professors and 1 Assistant Professor are among the permanent staff members. 3 persons had expert rights of the Latvian Council of Science (LCS) during the reporting period (field: Economics and Business); the expert status of 1 person was terminated in 2018.

- 3 R8 - The study programme leading to the master or doctoral degree is based on the advances and findings in the relevant field of science or artistic creation.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Justification: The content of the study programme is developed in line with current advances and findings in this field which are appropriate for doctoral level.

Conclusions by specifying the strengths and weaknesses

The name of the study programme, the degree, the qualification level, the aims, objectives, learning outcomes, and admission requirements are inter-related and aligned with regulatory requirements. The program is well designed; course descriptions comply with regulatory enactments. Dissertations are of high quality and contribute to Latvian society and economy. Study implementation methods appropriate; evaluation methods are individualized; students can self-evaluate and follow their progress. Surveys’ results are used to improve the quality of studies. Students use the opportunities to conduct part of their study abroad.

The study provision, informative provision, material and technical provision, and financial provision ensure the qualitative implementation of the study programme “Regional Economics and Economic Policy”. Overall, as with the rest of the study programmes within study direction, the level of resources provided is quite strong and oriented towards successful implementation of study programme. Given that this is doctoral programme, it is important to provide students with variety of research options - it seems that there is lacking number of research projects conducted by institution therefore limiting options for students and staff. Besides, Students are not fully informed on research funding options and support provided by BIA.

The Doctoral study programme “Regional Economics and Economic Policy” is implemented by 11 staff members, 7 of them are employed on the permanent basis. Six Professors and associate Professors involved in the programme. 11 persons have a Doctor degree, but the only 2 persons with LSC expert rights are involved in the implementation of the programme, indicating a partial compliance with the requirements of the regulatory enactments. The level of English knowledge of staff is not sufficient to implement the Doctoral study programme. There is a low number of high-quality indexed publications and limited participation of staff in research-related and other international projects.

Strengths:

- 1 The name of the study programme, the degree, the aims, learning outcomes, and admission requirements are interrelated. The niche of the PhD programme has been identified as regional economy.
- 2 Students also acquire knowledge of pedagogy.
- 3 They prepared a well-designed study program.
- 4 There are good opportunities for students’ mobility.
- 5 The implementation model during evenings and Saturdays makes the Ph.D. program is particularly suitable for lifelong learning and adult education.
- 6 Good physical infrastructure.
- 7 Informative, technical and provision is appropriate.
- 8 Well-functioning e-teaching platform with integrated Big Blue Button video-conferencing system.

- 9 Infrastructure with the ensured access for disabled persons.
- 10 Ensured access to different databases (SCOPUS, ScienceDirect and others).
- 11 Professors integrate the research results in study process that is confirmed by students.
- 12 Collaboration between staff members through participation in a Doctoral Council is in place.

Weaknesses

- 1 Not sufficiently is communicated financials options to PhD students regarding research funding.
- 2 Limited amount of research projects conducted by BIA.
- 3 The qualification of teaching staff involved in the implementation of the Doctoral programme partially complies with the requirements of the regulatory enactments (the only 2 persons with LSC rights are involved in the implementation of the programme).
- 4 The level of staff English knowledge is not sufficient to implement the Doctoral study programme.
- 5 The quality of scientific publications of some academic staff members is not sufficient to implement a high-quality doctoral study programme.
- 6 The involvement of the academic staff in research-related and other international projects is not sufficient; it could represent more opportunities for PhD students as they could participate and receive even more international and research experiences.

Evaluation of the study programme "Regional Economics and Economic policy"

Evaluation of the study programme:

Good

6. Recommendations for the Study Programme "Regional Economics and Economic policy"

Short-term recommendations

- 1 Increase the awareness of Doctoral students about available financial support provided by BIA for research activities.
- 2 Ensure the compliance to the regulatory enactments regarding the number of persons with LSC expert rights involved in the implementation of the Doctoral programme.
- 3 Revise the list of teaching staff members involved in implementation of the programme in English and ensure that all staff members have at least B2 level.
- 4 Receive the opinion of the Council for Higher Education about the implementation of the programme for less than 250 students.

Long-term recommendations

- 1 Investigate the opportunities to apply for research projects or to participate in research projects coordinated by other Universities.
- 2 To increase the number of high-quality scientific papers published by the staff involved in the implementation of the Doctoral programme. This could be done by defining clear and strict requirements for the staff.
- 3 To ensure the involvement of the academic staff in research-related and other international projects. In connection with the recommendation for greater involvement of teachers in national and international projects, such activities would also offer better possibilities for students' research opportunities and networking.

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
R1 - Pursuant to Section 5, Paragraph 21 of the Law on Institutions of Higher Education, the higher education institution/ college shall ensure continuous improvement, development, and efficient performance of the study direction whilst implementing their internal quality assurance systems:		Partially compliant	The internal quality assurance system is developed and implemented, however, some processes are not being performed systematically. There is a lack of clear responsibilities regarding the continuous improvement of the study direction. Strategic documents contain different statements regarding BIA development. There are no clearly defined performance indicators and no regular performance measurement; so, it is not possible to guarantee the continuous improvement of the study direction. There is still limited involvement of teaching staff in scientific work, despite the previous expert recommendations.
R2 - The cooperation with different organisations from Latvia and abroad implemented within the study direction ensures the achievement of the aims of the study direction.	Fully compliant		The criteria related to cooperation and internationalization have been met. BIA has a wide range of bilateral agreements for mobility and internships abroad, good collaboration with colleges and schools for attracting students. There is a well-functioning internship scheme at the BIA.

Requirements	Requirement Evaluation	Comment
R3 - Compliance of scientific research and artistic creation with the development level thereof (if applicable).	Partially compliant	<p>There is visible progress in the number of SCOPUS publications during the reporting period that is highly appreciated. According to the information provided in the SAR Annex "List of scientific publications", 47 of 60 staff members have publications in the reporting period. There is limited participation in research-related and other international projects.</p> <p>The level of involvement of the teaching staff in research is evaluated as satisfactory in Bachelor programmes. However, based on the information in CVs, not all staff members involved in the implementation of the Master and Doctoral programmes have scientific publications indexed in SCOPUS, Web of Science, or ERIH+, as well as participation in research-related and other international projects (analysis is provided separately for the programmes).</p>
R4 - Elimination of the shortcomings and deficiencies identified during the previous assessment of the study direction, if it has been conducted, or the implementation of the provided recommendations.	Partially compliant	<p>The development of the English language skills of students and academic staff has also been appropriately supported. Efforts were made towards improving the scientific work of teaching staff and students. Cooperation with international partner HEIs is intensifying. Most recommendations have been implemented fully, except the improvement of the scope of scientific activities, both in terms of conference participation, research project participation and number/quality of publications, which could still be improved.</p>

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	European Economics and Business (42311)	Partially compliant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Not relevant	Good
2	Financial Management (42343)	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Not relevant	Good
3	International finance and economics (45343)	Partially compliant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Partially compliant	Good
4	Regional Economics and Economic policy (51311)	Partially compliant	Fully compliant	Partially compliant	Fully compliant	Good

The Dissenting Opinions of the Experts

Comments from J.Titko.

In my point of view, the evaluation for the programme "Regional Economics and Economic Policy" should be "average".

Now, the programme has 2 "partially compliant" criteria and 1 "non-compliant" criterion. Partially compliant criteria and also main weaknesses are related to the quality of teaching staff. The level of English is not sufficient (not all staff members have B2 or higher). Staff members have a low number of publications, indexed in Scopus/Web of Science/ERIH+. This is confirmed by the fact that there are only 2 persons with the expert rights of the Latvian Council of Science (legal requirement has not been met). Some of staff members did not have relevant publications in the reporting period at all. The additional details about the staff are provided in the text of the analysis.

My subjective opinion is that all teaching staff members in a Doctoral programme should be outstanding researchers because their job is to prepare future scientists and future Professors. If they do not write scientific publications for highly-ranked journals, it is not possible to teach Doctoral students the skill of academic writing. If they do not have a high level of English, they cannot speak with foreign students about serious scientific problems. I think that the qualification of teaching staff for a Doctoral programme is the most important criterion.