

Expert group joint opinion

Evaluation Procedure: Assessment of Study Field

Higher Education Institution: Ventspils University College

Study field: Management, Administration and Management of Real Property

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

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This report covers the assessment of the study field (StF) “Management, Administration and Management of Real Estate Property” that contains five study programmes (StP) at various levels of higher education implemented at the Ventspils University of Applied Sciences (VeUAS):

- Professional Bachelor Study Programme “Business Management” (42345)
- Professional Bachelor Study Programme “Start-up Management” (42345)
- Academic Bachelor Study Programme “Business Administration” (43345)
- Professional Master Study Programme “Business Administration” (47345)
- Joint Doctoral Study Programme “Economics and Business” (51345) implemented by three consortium partners – VeUAS, Rezekne Academy of Technologies and Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences.

As part of the assessment procedure, the panel of experts consisting of five members visited VeUAS on February 6-7, 2023. Prior to, during and after the visit the experts have conducted an in-depth analysis of the VeUAS’ self-evaluation report (SER) of the study field and study programmes submitted to AIKA via its e-platform in accordance with the national regulations including those governing the assessment procedure. Prior to and after the visit the experts had requested and received some additional information from VeUAS to facilitate deeper analysis leading to well-justified conclusions and recommendations.

The assessment took place two years after the previous assessment based on which the StF under review was granted an accreditation period of two years. This implied serious shortcomings and deficiencies were identified during the assessment in 2020, followed by respective recommendations for improvement. The current assessment, among other evaluation aspects in this report, took a closer look at the implementation of the recommendations received during the previous assessment procedure (see section 1.6. of the StF assessment).

The detailed analysis and conclusions, including strengths, weaknesses, and recommendations are provided in this report. The panel of experts has identified several advantageous and disadvantageous aspects of the study field and its study programmes. The experts have also drawn recommendations for further improvement of the StF and its programmes.

Overall, the experts recognize significant positive changes of the study field and its study programmes’ management and implementation since the previous assessment. It is clearly evident that on the majority of evaluation aspects, VeUAS made significant improvements in the study field to implement the received recommendations. For instance, the course descriptions were improved by integrating the learning outcomes` mapping and their relation to professions` standards, better aligning the learning outcomes to the required standards, etc. The VeUAS strategy is strongly focused on studies and its process, including the engagement of leadership through quality assurance and research. The international and local cooperation dimensions are yet to be strategically strengthened, alongside the focus on science and research. Quality assurance has visibly transformed with the respective internal policy in place, including its operational mechanisms, such as collection and usage of the feedback data for improving the study process. VeUAS features well-established management and administration teams that work jointly by the means of institutionalized cooperation, engagement and decision-making mechanisms. This includes fostering students` engagement and the introduction of several excellent innovations, e.g. “mood checker”, “family time”, “1:1 time with students”, “mentor system”, “SCRUM experience in reflection”, “Blackbox protocol”, “net promoters score”, good practice of closed feedback loop (feedback of the feedback, demonstrating co-responsibility for students' motivation. Among other strengths, the experts noted strong reputation and embeddedness of VeUAS in the region, including connections with local enterprises. Furthermore, the dedicated teaching staff is motivated to support

students and generally satisfied with the institutional support for professional development as well as the opportunities offered. The online platform Moodle for the study process administration and content management is well-developed. Finally, there are notable grounds for further internationalization – VeUAS-US Buffalo cooperation, international online hackathon with six countries, start-up oriented StP based on Finnish educational innovations, students co-working with French companies (helping to enter the local market), students` team summer camp in Cambridge, UK. As one of the stable strengths of the StF, the experts noted a sound university-industry connections that provide wider employment opportunities, notable employers` engagement in the study process and other positive aspects.

Alongside the strengths and their potential added value, the experts identified several risk factors and deficiencies, which can be resolved in the short-term and in the long-term periods (in 2-6 years). For instance, the necessity of further improvement in communication and cooperation between VeUAS, StF and a newly established VeAUS Council, including, e.g., in science motivation policy; in the level of collaboration with social partners on joint research projects, in scaling and improving the link between scientific research and its implementation into the teaching process. Furthermore, there is a need for improvement in the quality assurance system in relation to the study process and the academic growth; of the academic integrity aspects and control mechanism for StP changes accumulation, i.e., there is a need for a systematic monitoring/track system for implementing the recommendations and changes. The high drop-out rates create the need for a clearer system of addressing the issues of the StF`s sustainability and competitiveness. Further improvements are also needed for the course descriptions, strengthening the scientific development grounds and incentives by VeUAS within the joint doctoral study programme implementation. The joint doctoral programme requires numerous actions by all three regional partners of the created consortium to make the programme competitive. This includes working on the strategic positioning of the programme for high level managers, strengthening the international scientific networking, developing a marketing plan, including strategic regional, national and international positioning and targeting, among other actions to address the shortcomings.

I - Assessment of the Study Field

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1.1 Management of the Study Field

Analysis

1.1.1. The major aim of the study field (StF) is well defined and largely set on the practical, professional value contribution (see VeUAS Self-Assessment Report (SAR), p.16) - The main goal of the study direction is to prepare high-ranking professionals, managers, and entrepreneurs in sectors important for the economy while significantly contributing to the development of entrepreneurship in Latvia. The defined aim also reflects in and corresponds to the mission and future vision of VeUAS as defined in its Development Strategy 2021-2027 (https://irp.cdn-website.com/9945ff8b/files/uploaded/VENTSPILS%20UNIVERSITY%20OF%20APPLIED%20SCIENCE_STRATEGY_2021-2027.pdf). The aim of the StF is supplemented by structured tasks, which includes the considerations of following market analysis, academic growth of faculty members, engagement of staff and students in the research, and collaboration with the labour market and other stakeholders, including, academic and public, municipal institutions. Such collaboration was well observed during the two days experts` visit to VeUAS, particularly during the meetings with employers, teaching staff, and also students and graduates. Given the comparatively broad, but surely justifiable and relevant scope of the StF which includes two professional and one academic bachelor study programmes, one professional master study program, and one joint doctoral study program, meaning that there is considerable scope, necessity and expectations of

research, the aim of the StF would benefit also from a strengthened aspect of research (scientific contribution), which would strengthen VeUAS's strategic engagement in national and municipal strategy and policy planning framework, which is well identified in SAR (see p.16). Such science-related aspect recognition in the StF aim would also strengthen several drawback of scientific activity and results identified further in this assessment report. The StF and its five all levels' study programmes (StP) comply well with VeUAS strategic development directions addressing the needs and development trends of regional and national society and economy. Such compliance can be observed also in the interconnection of the study programmes and their apportionment along education levels (bachelor, master, doctoral) and formats (professional, academic, 2, 3, 4 years in length accordingly), which shows formatively and to most extent substantively considerate thus clear and logical reference to practical education and labor market topicalities, national and regional economy necessities and also need of scientific engagement.

1.1.2. SWOT analysis (SAR, pp.18-20) of the StF and its study programmes is sound, appropriate and realistic, identifying major internal and external impact aspects towards the challenges and possibilities of the StF. The results of the SWOT analysis are implemented in VeUAS development, management and administration documents e.g. the StF Development Plan, as well as in VeUAS strategic development directions, structurally breaking down to practical improvements and changes of the study process and study programmes e.g. curriculum review and renewal, diversification of teaching process, adjusting study programs for the needs of the labor market and attractiveness for students, including offers of studies specialization, professional qualifications and practical applicability within business and real-time social environments. To follow-up on the changes and quality improvement, StF self-assessment report is reviewed and produced annually then undergoing hierarchical review and approval by the Study Program Council, Faculty Council and the VeUAS Senate. Such a hierarchical review and approval system is supplemented by the well-developed informal cooperation and communication culture between staff and students, who are also part of the quality management process able to raise issues, concerns or provide approval.

1.1.3. The management structure of the StF follows the conventionally applied good practice of structurally hierarchical and wide-engaging manner, involving all levels and stakeholders related to the implementation and development of the study and research processes (see SAR Appendix 2.2.). Responsibilities, tasks and functions are well divided and respectively subordinated from one respective management level and stakeholders to other, including vice-rector for studies, faculty dean, study programs directors, and administrative and technical general support (SAR, pp.21-22). Based on the information gathered during the visit and also on VEUAS self-assessment report (see p.32), within the management structure of the StF, there are both informal (All members of the faculty are invited to a coffee break in the dean's office once per week (during a lunch break). During this time, topical issues and problems can be identified and discussed, but if there are no news, it is a possibility to just have a cup of coffee together, tell jokes and listen to music (SAR, p.32) and formal weekly meetings (each Thursday) gathering VeUAS leadership/management and StF management participants. Overall, experts noticed a good and widely emphasized by various groups (StP directors, teaching staff, students) vibe of well managed relations between staff on different levels via formal and informal meetings which bring results, including those of administrative and content quality nature, e.g. implementation of survey feedback, technical aspects and material resources e.g. Miro software provision for study programs modern quality needs, and other. Thus, decision-making towards the development of the StF and its study programs can be considered efficient. At the same time during the visit experts detected several aspects signaling for the space of improvement, e.g. slight miscommunication between the leadership/administration of VeUAS, thus StF, study programs and the Council, e.g. in (lack of) joint view on the science motivation policy and VeUAS development strategy aspects. Experts take into account the reality of comparatively

new appointment of the Council and the time necessary to create sustainable joint communication culture. Also, despite the well-developed internal cooperation structure and system, including that of informal nature which is surely advantageous for smaller teams, which currently works very well in VeUAS and within the StF management, still there seems to be large trust on informal and routine meeting-wise people-relations, which in turn creates risks and thus space for improvement of the system, e.g. experts did not gather certainty and evidence that management system would detect a moment, when smaller changes in study programs accumulates up to 20% of StP volume, which is crucial point in the admissibility of the changes according to national regulation on higher education (see point 2.3.4. of the Republic of Latvia Cabinet Regulation No. 793, Adopted 11 December 2018, Regulations Regarding Opening and Accreditation of Study Fields, available at: <https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/303956>).

1.1.4. Students' admission system is in place and ensured according to the VeUAS Terms of Admission and the Matriculation Process, available both in Latvian and in English for international candidates (SAR, p.23). Admission requirements and the application system are also available online via VeUAS website in Latvian (<https://www.venta.lv/nac-studet/studentu-uznemsanas-noteikumi>), which is a good practice and supplementing element of the attraction of students, and also in English (<https://en.venta.lv/join-us>), however in English version it is less convenient, intuitive and visible (the website jumps to visible different page when EN language selected on the LV page), and at the time of try the EN section from the LV page did not work (<https://en.venta.lv/en/join-us/terms-of-admission>), while from the other starting point (<https://www.venta.lv/en/join-us/terms-of-admission>) one can find the Terms of Admission also in English. Admission requirements of a separate study program are, according to the Terms of Admission and the Matriculation Process, adjusted for each study program respective to their focuses and specifics (see analysis further in the report). Also, the recognition system of prior education and professional experience of students is in place, regulated by VeUAS Regulations on Recognizing Study Results from Prior Education or Professional Experience (https://irp.cdn-website.com/f6b5d556/files/uploaded/15_Par_profesionalas%20pieredzes%20atzisanu_nolikums.pdf) and Regulations on the Recognition of Competences Acquired in Non-formal Education or Professional Experience and Study Results Achieved in Previous Education (https://irp.cdn-website.com/f6b5d556/files/uploaded/15_Par_profesionalas%20pieredzes%20atzisanu_nolikums.pdf). Overall, the admission and recognition system and requirements are well in place, logical and effective, and the involved stakeholders are not only informed about the system, but also engaged in it, supervised by the Commission of Admissions, established by the Rector's order. The system also allows students to contact VeUAS and apply for studies remotely online via VeUAS website as well as via Latvian e-services gateway on www.latvija.lv, and for the admission of international students the application system DreamApply is used (SAR, p.23). Based on the information obtained during the experts' visit at VeUAS, experts would suggest for one program, one format – Professional master study programme “Business Administration” (47345, 1 year, 40 CP) – to consider adding to admission requirements also professional (working or management) experience similarly as to 2-year 80 CP programme's format. This would possibly ensure more coherent students' group in relation to their professional experience as currently it might sometimes be the case that the group is very diverse in their experience – some has lots of experience (adults) and some have none.

1.1.5. Methods, principles, and procedures for assessing achievements of students and their learning outcomes are defined and developed and have been substantially improved after the previous assessment procedure of the StF. New forms of course descriptions have been implemented relating the study results also to professions' standards, where applicable. Very good and detailed cross-check mapping of the study course learning outcomes through Bloom's taxonomy to study

programme`s learning outcomes in the course descriptions, mapping also study course`s evaluation criteria against study course learning outcomes. The joint mapping of the study courses results against study programmes results have also brought together all teaching staff of each programme, ensure higher contents` supplemented interrelation between the study courses. Based on the review of the study courses descriptions, experts recommend few technical reviews of the course descriptions, e.g. compulsory literature lists, ensuring adequate amount of reading (e.g. 8 books for one course would require specific page numbers to be noted; Course Personal Development, 8 kp, 12 ects, 128 contact hours, while topics are mentioned for 96 hours resulting in 30 hours missing; review of the assignments for doctoral students of the joint doctoral study programme in the course descriptions). Overall, the significance of the clear structure of methods, principles, and procedures for assessing achievements of students and their learning outcomes is well analyzed and addressed, which is also well reflected in VeUAS self-assessment report (SAR, pp.25-26).

1.1.6. Academic integrity at the VeUAS is defined as one of its strategic values (SAR, p.6.; VeUAS Development Strategy 2021-2027 (https://irp.cdn-website.com/9945ff8b/files/uploaded/VENTSPILS%20UNIVERSITY%20OF%20APPLIED%20SCIENCE_STRATEGY_2021-2027.pdf, pp.32, 78), supplemented also institutionally by VeUAS Academic Integrity Commission (SAR, p.8), and several regulations to inform and assist students in respecting academic integrity (SAR, p.27), as well as being discussed and practiced during study process and assessments (SAR, p.140), and in case of joint doctoral study programme ensured also by an option of two supervisors of doctoral thesis (SAR, p.180). Student term and final study and research papers are processed in the Unified Computerized Plagiarism Control System for plagiarism control - during the visit experts noted that VeUAS mainly uses LAIS system. VeUAS has established the principles of academic integrity based also on VeUAS regulations, and staff and students are informed about them (SAR, p.27). Particularly detailed is the VeUAS Regulations on General Study Procedures (<https://irp.cdn-website.com/f6b5d556/files/uploaded/Nolikums%20par%20studiju%20k%C4%81rt%C4%ABbu%20Ventspils%20Augstskol%C4%81.pdf>) point 6, however published only in Latvian. Also, experts did not ascertain about clear and systemic usage of effective anti-plagiarism tools and would suggest considering using (also) other tools than LAIS, e.g. Turnitin. Also, given the growing scope of popularity and access to artificial intelligence tools (e.g. ChatGPT), experts would suggest to review current VeUAS academic integrity assurance policy, methods and instruments and strengthen the policy, particularly by identifying effective anti-plagiarism tools and providing a clear procedure for their use, including for academic integrity assurance and the plagiarism risks detection as well as for the follow-up procedure in case plagiarism risk is detected.

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

The aims of the StF are well structured, gradually cascaded through the respective StPs, strongly linked to VeUAS and national development strategies, shows clear awareness of the necessary linkage to labor market and entrepreneurial business environment and are to be attainable. Scientific research aspects and its promotion policy in its turn can be strengthened.

VeUAS has well developed SWOT analysis and integrated them into development planning documents.

The management structure and the management process is efficient allowing all administrative management and academic structures and personnel to be involved in operative discussion and efficient decision-taking through weekly meetings, however communication and information exchange with the Council to be slightly strengthened.

Students` admission and previous study/work results recognition system is well in place, efficient and logical.

Methods, principles and procedures for assessing achievements of students have been developed and are clearly defined. The relevance of assessment methods and procedures for achieving the aims of study programmes are very well cross-referenced mapped in study courses` descriptions. Academic integrity principles are established, while the effective academic integrity culture and systematic usage of anti-plagiarism tools are to be improved.

Strengths:

1. Collaboration with the labor market and other stakeholders, including, academic and public, municipal institutions.
2. Well-developed cooperation and communication culture between management, staff and students.
3. Well-developed internal cooperation structure and system, including that of informal nature which is surely advantageous for smaller teams, which currently works very well in VeUAS and within the StF management.
4. New forms of course descriptions have been implemented relating the study results also to professions` standards, where applicable. Very good and detailed cross-check mapping of the study course learning outcomes through Bloom`s taxonomy to study programme`s learning outcomes in the course descriptions, mapping also study course`s evaluation criteria against study course learning outcomes
5. Academic integrity in VeUAS is defined as one of its strategic values, and the principles of academic integrity based also on VeUAS regulations has been established and published in Latvian.

Weaknesses:

1. Partly insufficient management focus on research and scientific activity and results in the study field, including, weak link between scientific research and its implementation into the teaching process. Current VeUAS support for scientific growth is not used fully, especially among younger staff.
2. Large trust on informal and routine meeting-wise people-relations, which in turn creates risks and thus space for improvement of the system, e.g. experts did not gather certainty and evidence that management system would detect a moment, when smaller changes in study programs accumulates up to 20% of StP volume, which is crucial point in the admissibility of the changes according to national regulation on higher education.
3. Slight miscommunication between the leadership/administration of VeUAS, thus StF, study programs and the Council, e.g. in (lack of) joint view on the science motivation policy and VeUAS development strategy aspects. Experts take into account the reality of comparatively new appointment of the Council and the time necessary to create sustainable joint communication culture.
4. Admission requirements available online via VeUAS website in English version is less convenient, intuitive and visible (the website jumps to visible different page when EN language selected on the LV page); at the time of try the EN section from the LV page did not work (<https://en.venta.lv/en/join-us/terms-of-admission>), while from the other starting point (<https://www.venta.lv/en/join-us/terms-of-admission>) one can find the Terms of Admission also in English.
5. VeUAS principles of academic integrity (VeUAS Regulations on General Study Procedures, point 6) are developed and published only in Latvian language.
6. Experts did not ascertain about clear and systemic usage of effective anti-plagiarism tools.

1.2. Efficiency of the Internal Quality Assurance System

Analysis

1.2.1. The quality assurance policy and processes are defined. Related documentation was developed within the European Social Fund Project. The Quality Policy is available through this link and the Quality Management Handbook is available through this link, information about the data of elaboration or approval is not included in the documents. Both documents outline the main goals and principles of quality assurance, as well as risk management at VeUAS. Both of these documents are rather conceptual. VeUAS's quality management system processes, including the division responsibilities, as well as related VeA's internal regulations are available to VeUAS's internal community in VeA's internal network information content management system in the MOODLE environment. Thus, operational information about the quality assurance mechanisms and related division of responsibilities is not easily available to the public.

The most important source of information used to ensure and improve quality is student surveys which is a well established, regular, comprehensive instrument, widely used by students (it is mandatory for them) and teachers. The results are available to teachers and are practically used to improve teaching.

According to the interviews, monitoring of implementation of necessary improvements is done by the Faculty Council and a Strategy, Quality Management and Risk Monitoring Work Group (WG). This WG involves the Vice-Rector for Studies, the Executive Director, Faculty Deans, Directors of the Scientific Institutes and Heads of the units, and is responsible for ensuring monitoring of the strategy implementation, quality management and risk monitoring. Monitoring is done at least once a year. The WG reviews all improvements and reports to the rector. Study programme council is also involved in analysing and discussing the results of the surveys.

Although there is no centralized monitoring/control system for implementing recommendations from feedback surveys providing an overview of tasks to be implemented, responsible and deadline, apart from regular discussions of responsible working groups or councils, reviews and self-assessment, the internal stakeholders confirmed that the practical implementation of improvements takes place timely and they received feedback about improvements made.

1.2.2. The procedures for developing and reviewing study programmes are defined in the internal regulation "Regulation on the procedure for the development, licencing and improvement of study programmes at VeUAS" (approved by the Senate on 25.01.2023, available through this link). A study programme director is responsible for assessing the quality of the content and implementation of the programme, implementing changes to improve study programmes, and this process is supervised by the dean of the faculty.

The review panel gained confidence that the programme reviews were conducted regularly and the improvements were implemented in practice. The programmes were reviewed: after receiving the results of the student survey (once per semester), when preparing study plans for the new semester (once per year), when preparing and reviewing the self-assessment report (once per year), and when reviewing the performance of the State Examination Commission and the Final Examination Commission at a faculty council meeting (once per year). Notable improvements have also been implemented, taking into account the previous study field accreditation recommendations, demonstrating internal capacity to implement improvements. For example, the professional bachelor study programme "Business Management" was changed by implementing several specializations for professional qualifications: Finance Manager, Marketing Manager and International Relations Manager. Several new lecturers were involved in the development of the courses of study of the programme and proposed new course content in line with the content of the programme. The content of all study courses was substantially improved and changed by offering new specializations.

The feedback mechanisms are regulated by the internal regulation "Regulations on Surveys of Students, Graduates and Employers for Evaluation and Improvement of the Study Process" (available through this link, last amendments approved by the Senate on 20.08.2021). The most

important statistics are collected and compiled on the study administration information system www.lais.lv or manually, using Google Forms and data analysis tools.

The student survey is conducted once per semester for each study course, participation is mandatory for students. The results are reviewed and taken into consideration in developing the study plans for the next semester, in the elaboration of the self-assessment report and in monitoring the education quality of the study direction in general. In addition, the directors of the study programmes regularly meet with students to discuss and inform them about current issues. Student representatives are also involved in the Council of the faculty and Study programme council.

The review panel obtained confirmation during the interviews that teaching staff receive student feedback data reports and that this information is practically used to inform the teaching process.

The graduate survey is conducted once per year to evaluate the attained education, the results are analyzed and used in the same way as student survey results. Employer surveys are conducted once per 1-3 years, and it contributes to the planning of the content of study programmes. Graduates and employer representatives are also members of the Faculty Study Programme Council.

During the interviews, the review panel obtained confirmation from students, graduates and employers that the existing feedback collection mechanisms are well established, efficient, available and used by all stakeholder groups.

Analysis to evaluate the criterion 1.3 in the table below. The procedures for the evaluation of students' results and the types of assessments are determined by the "Regulation on the procedure for organizing examinations and assessment of student knowledge at VeUAS" (approved by the Senate on 15.01.2022, available through this link). At the beginning of the study course and no later than during the second lesson, the lecturer has to inform students about the tests and how the assessment of the study course is formed. The requirements for completing the study course and obtaining credit points may not be changed during the semester. A student who has received a failing grade in an exam has the right to retake this exam once during the relevant session without additional fees. During the interviews, the students confirmed that they feel the assessment system to be fair and that they receive sufficient feedback from the lecturers explaining about the assessment.

Analysis to evaluate the criterion 1.4 in the table below. The minimum requirements for academic staff, the procedure for selecting and electing candidates is determined by the internal regulation "VeUAS staff selection procedure" (approved by the Senate on 31.08.2021, available through this link), elaborated in accordance with the relevant laws and Cabinet Regulations. The assessment of the academic staff qualifications is carried out through the election of academic staff, the annual performance assessment, as well as through the analysis of student surveys and evaluations received during the student-organized "Award of the Year" event (SAR, 3.4.1).

Although the review panel observed general satisfaction with the election procedure of the academic staff members and the practice implemented so far, the review panel noticed one case when elected academic staff member, lecturer, didn't have any peer-reviewed publications (according to the information provided in the Appendix 2.13 to the SAR). According to the Regulations "VeAUS Academic Staff Selection Procedure" (adopted by the VeUAS Senate on 31 August, 2021), point 5.2.4, "A person who has a doctorate or master's degree, scientific publications relevant to the field of science, or learning materials approved by the relevant faculty council of Ventspils University of Applied Sciences and who is able to independently read lecture courses, conduct seminars, practical classes and laboratory works can apply for the position of lecturer." The Panel does not have information whether the lecturer concerned has learning materials approved by the relevant faculty council to conclude whether this requirement has been violated or not. Nevertheless, the Panel indicates that the lack of scientific publications relevant to the field of science for elected academic staff, especially low number of peer-reviewed publications in international journals for academic staff involved in doctoral programme, raises concerns regarding compliance to the criteria 1.4. and suggests to review internal procedures and incentives to facilitate

the research outputs of the elected academic staff.

Student and graduate surveys are the main instruments to monitor the quality of education. Surveys include the questions on the level of scientific and pedagogical qualification of the lecturers, on the quality of education, their evaluation of the teaching methods used and their evaluation of the study programme as a whole (SAR, p.2.2.4). It was evident from the interviews that teachers are using feedback surveys to improve their teaching. In addition, regular classroom visits are carried out to assess the professional qualifications of teachers in their daily work (SAR, p.118).

The procedure for evaluation and recording of the professional development of elected teaching staff at VeUAS is determined by the Regulations on the Professional Development of Ventspils University of Applied Sciences Teaching Staff and its Recording. It has been developed in accordance with the Cabinet Regulations No. 662 of 28 October 2014 on the Required Education and Professional Qualification for Teaching Staff and the Procedure for Professional Competence Development of Teaching Staff (SAR, 2.3.6). Professional development is encouraged by a set minimum limit for professional development hours (160 hours until the end of the election period). Each lecturer is responsible for their own professional development.

The VeUAS teaching staff receive regular offers to take various professional development courses on the VeUAS premises. As of February 2021, within the framework of the ESF project "Strengthening the Teaching Staff of Ventspils University of Applied Sciences in the fields of Strategic Specialization" (Project No. 8.2.2.0/18/A/009), the teaching staff could start internships with businesses in Latvia (SAR, 2.3.6).

The review panel observed that the teaching staff was generally satisfied with the institutional support for professional development and the opportunities offered.

Nevertheless, the review panel understood that the staff quality of work control mechanisms (e.g. observations) and staff professional development mechanisms (minimum hours for professional development) are established to primarily control the minimum standards, not to enhance continuous professional growth. Linking staff appraisal/evaluation system to professional development system more clearly should be considered by setting individual development goals and streamlining professional development towards achieving them. For new staff members or external teachers, it would be suggested to provide the initial, at least short, training on pedagogical methods and didactics. It wasn't completely clear to the review panel and the internal regulation doesn't state the clear reimbursement rules for professional development expenses. It would be suggested to clarify the reimbursement policy and funds available for professional development expenses to make the system more transparent and encouraging.

1.2.3. VeUAS has internal procedure "Procedure for the receipt and consideration of student proposals and complaints at VeUAS" (approved by the Senate on 20.12.2022, available through this link). Although formal procedure exist, it is published and available to students, the interviews confirmed that the internal cooperative culture of the university and the informal contact that exists between the administration of the university, teaching staff and students, gives the opportunity to discuss problematic issues immediately and informally. All involved parties confirmed their determination to solve problems, and also provided real examples.

1.2.4. The main feedback collection mechanisms are described under the criterion 1.2.2. During the interviews, the review panel obtained confirmation from students, graduates and employers that the existing feedback collection mechanisms are well established, efficient, available and used by all stakeholder groups. Teaching staff confirmed that they have plenty of data available that they can use in their work. However, the meetings and daily informal contact that exists in the university between the administration, lecturers and students was mentioned as an even more important tool for discussing issues, which is possible due to the small number of students and the favorable, cooperative internal culture. Examples of improvements made were provided.

In addition, the VeUAS monitors the deregistered students and the reasons for drop-out. The results are reviewed by the study programme director and the faculty dean. Usage activity of the e-learning platform Moodle is analyzed once per semester to assess availability of study materials to students. Student grades are evaluated mainly to distribute the state-funded study places and to allocate the state scholarships. It was also mentioned how these data are used to identify struggling students. The panel understood that data on student performance and attendance is not systematically used to analyze and proactively support students lagging behind in their studies. However, it was confirmed that teachers are able to follow the success and support each individual student, given the comparatively small teacher-student ratio.

1.2.5. The published information on the website of the VeUAS provides applicants and students with the most important information. The website is available in Latvian and English. English version of the website provides information about the study programmes, including study courses and the main topics included, terms of admission and applications for exchange students, scholarships and opportunities to receive tuition fees reductions, practical information and available support, links to relevant regulations and guides.

Information about the study programmes submitted for accreditation is also available in the public register on www.viis.gov.lv and AIKA e-platform <https://eplatforma.aika.lv/>. VeUAS website contains information about the same study programmes.

In addition to these study programmes, the public register and AIKA e-platform contains information about other two study programmes with an active license (issued on 15.07.2015. and 26.06.2006. respectively): joint master study programme “International business and export management” (45345) and doctoral study programme “Business management” (51345) that have not been submitted for accreditation.

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

The quality assurance policy, processes and responsibilities are defined and working in practice. Monitoring is carried out by a working group specially created for this purpose. Improvements are communicated to internal stakeholders. The procedures quality assurance processes contribute to continuous improvement, development and performance of the study field. The VeUAS has procedures in place to ensure review of study programmes, including feedback collection mechanisms from students, employers and graduates. The procedures are publicly available and well known to internal and external stakeholders, and they contribute to continuous improvement, development and efficient performance of the study field. There is a formal mechanism for submission of student complaints and suggestions, but students actively practice informal direct communication with academic and administrative staff. The existing feedback collection mechanisms are well established, efficient, available and used by all stakeholder groups. Teaching staff have plenty of data available that they can use in their work, however main issues are resolved during regular meetings and informal contacts. The published information on the website of the VeUAS provides applicants and students with the most important information in both Latvian and English. The criteria, conditions, and procedures for the evaluation of students’ results have been developed and published. Internal procedures and mechanisms for assuring the qualifications of the academic staff and the work quality are developed .

Strengths:

1. Feedback collection mechanisms from students, graduates and employers are well established. Considering the mandatory nature of student surveys, information collected is representative and lecturers have a lot of data to work with. Data obtained are used to inform the study process improvements.

2. In addition to feedback surveys, regular discussions and meetings with students are organized. In addition to formally established complaints procedures, students could express any issues or concerns to their mentors/teachers, faculty administration and even university leadership as the informal cooperation and communication culture is very well developed.
3. Programmes are regularly reviewed, the internal capacity seems to be sufficient and the internal procedures - flexible enough to quickly implement changes as needed.
4. Small teacher-student ratio allows for a personal approach to student learning and providing support to students.

Weaknesses:

1. Both documents, Quality Assurance Policy and Handbook are rather of conceptual nature and do not provide practical, operational information about the quality assurance mechanisms and related division of responsibilities to the public. This information is only available in Moodle.
2. The established staff quality of work and professional development mechanisms primarily control how the minimum standards are met, not facilitate the continuous professional growth and excellence. The reimbursement policy and funds available for professional development of teaching staff is not sufficiently transparent in internal regulations.
3. The internal regulation "VeUAS staff selection procedure" allows the situation that an elected academic staff member (lecturer) does not have a single scientific publication in a period of 6 years.

Assessment of the requirement [1]

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The VeUAS has procedures in place to ensure continuous improvement, development and efficient performance of the study field which are de facto being implemented and facilitate improvement of the study programmes. Although 1.4 is evaluated as "Partially compliant", the overall evaluation of P1 remains "Fully Compliant", since identified deficiency is rather limited as it concerns only doctoral study programme in relation to well-recognized and largely applied international scientific excellency but does not violate the minimum requirements specified in the national regulation.

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The policy and QA handbook is published, detailed QA procedures available on moodle.

- 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

There is internal regulation on the development and internal approval of study programmes that are being followed.

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

There is internal regulation on student evaluation allowing to achieve intended learning outcomes.

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

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

There is internal regulation and mechanisms to ensure minimum qualifications of the academic staff and the work quality. These, however, do not fully promote and support academic staff to continuously improve, especially with regards to research activity and publications of elected academic staff in international peer-reviewed journals.

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

There is internal regulation and mechanisms that ensure collection and analysis of student, employment and graduate feedback.

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The continuous improvement has been ensured by implementing recommendations from previous external quality review.

1.3. Resources and Provision of the Study Field

Analysis

1.3.1. VeUAS has established the system for determining and redistributing the financial support required for the implementation of the study field and the corresponding study programmes. There are several documents in place defining and regulating processes regarding redistribution of the financial resources required for scientific activities:

- Ventspils University of Applied Sciences Regulations on a Unified Remuneration System;
- Regulations on Additional Remuneration for Employees of Ventspils University of Applied Sciences;
- Regulations on Granting Funding for Business Trips for Participation in Conferences;
- Regulations on Granting Funding for Publication of Educational Materials, Scientific Monographs and Scientific Articles;
- Regulations on the Competition "Promotion of Scientific Activity at Ventspils University of Applied Sciences".

This indicates that processes regarding research activity financing are formally open, transparent and accessible for all involved stakeholders. Funding for research is mostly planned from science-based funding. It is mainly used for financing the participation in conferences, publications and purchase of data. VeUAS successfully works to attract project-based funding – there are currently ongoing projects funded within Horizon 2020 framework, projects funded by European Space Agency, Latvian Council of Science and similar. However it is not clear to what extent the particular study direction of Management, Administration and Management of Real Property is involved in

these projects. Another source for additional financial support is provided by Ventspils municipality - one of the activities within this framework are grants and scholarships for students, researchers and doctoral students.

Daily operational activities of the study field are funded by the state budget financing and tuition fees. As of September, 2022 the total number of students within the study field was 248. 35% of these – 89 – are self-financed students. The use of the financial resources planned for the study direction are supervised by the faculty dean, controlled by the Finance Department and the Vice-Rector for Finance and Administration.

Remuneration of staff is determined by VeUAS unified remuneration system and approval of budget by University Council. Proposal then is reviewed and approved by collegial decision making bodies as well – faculty Council and Senate. The remuneration amount is also linked to performance metrics – main one being the number of students in each study programme. Remuneration is generally distributed to study programmes in accordance with the proportionality of student number.

The system for funding scientific and/or applied research is defined and implemented and it is effective. This can be corroborated by the information obtained during the on-site visit, where staff members confirmed that resource availability is at acceptable levels and processes to claim these funds for research activities are clear.

1.3.2. All lectures and daily study activities are confined within the main VeUAS building in Ventspils, Inženieru iela 101a. Main building contains auditoriums, administrative offices, library, student leisure spaces and dormitories. The premises are in good order and are fairly modern. Auditoriums feature projectors, interactive whiteboards, video conferencing and other equipment. As of today there are 5 computer rooms with 30-32 computers each and auditoriums with 16-24 workspaces available for students and staff. Wireless network is also available in the whole building. Modernization and renewal of equipment and premises are result of the relatively recently implemented project “Modernization of Ventspils University of Applied Sciences STEM Study Programmes”. Additionally, within this project the accessibility of the university’s building was improved. Whole VeUAS building have been made fully accessible for persons with reduced mobility. Matlab, SPSS and other relevant software licenses for employees and computer classes are obtained as well. Material-and-technical maintenance at Ventspils University of Applied Sciences is performed by the Department of Informatics and Technical Study Materials (ITSM). In addition to maintaining computers, servers, networks, audio-visual equipment and other hardware.

As of now VeUAS has a good track record of continuous improvement of infrastructure resources. All the necessary technical support is easily available to both staff members and students. Resource needs for study field and maintenance expenses of the faculty is approved by the faculty dean in accordance with the approved VeUAS budget. Available funds are usually calculated following the proportionality principle based on student number.

1.3.3. VeUAS library is accredited library and fully accessible by students and staff. Located in the main VeUAS building, the library features two floors with sections of academic literature, periodicals and fiction. The VeUAS Library has a collection of books with around 32 600 volumes. Library is subscribed to various printed publications relevant to the study field - Bilance, Dienas Bizness, IR, Forbes, Bloomberg Businessweek, Harvard Business Review USA, The Economist. The industry literature and fiction collections of the VeUAS library are regularly updated with new books. VeUAS provides the necessary books for the study field, while the Ventspils library supplements the fiction collection. An interlibrary loan is available both locally between structural units of the Ventspils library and with other academic libraries of major universities and the National Library of Latvia.

In 2022 faculty budget included 2000 EUR position for purchase of textbooks and other informative materials needed for study direction. Annually staff members are surveyed for requests of new textbooks and other material purchases.

The following databases are available free of charge for VeUAS computer network users: LETA; Letonika; Lursoft – newspaper library, business database; EBSCO; Britannica Online Academic Edition; LNB Digital Library; Scopus; Science Direct; Web of Science.

Data on database usage are collected by the library. The library is also open for offers from other databases. Initially, the offered free version of the database is tested and, based on the conclusions, it is assessed whether the specific database should be subscribed to. Then the Ventspils library will be contacted with a recommendation and the necessary funds for the subscription will be provided in the next year's budget.

Informational resources and databases are available to students and meet the needs of the study field. There is a procedure in place for purchase of informative materials - the library annually requests the departments and staff members for regarding procurement of new library materials. There is separate budget allocation for this activity.

1.3.4. VeUAS uses various digital tools and solutions for the study process. These are as follows:

Moodle – used as main e-learning platform, Google Workspaces – used for file sharing, calendar and email, Message Board – internal communication system including information on studies, student council, events etc., BigBlueButton – online conferencing solution; LAIS – study process administration system, VeApp – mobile application currently under development, will act as a custom class planner and scheduling tool for VeUAS.

Each FEM study course has its own course on the Ventspils University of Applied Sciences Moodle, where all general information on the course requirements, process and content is available. Study material availability is left to lecturers discretion, however VeUAS requires that the materials are available on the respective Moodle course as uploaded files or hyperlinks.

As a main mode of communication between staff and students Google Workspace based email system is used. If necessary, a WhatsApp group can be created for a very fast information exchange for specific study courses and its organized by lecturers and students.

The information and communication technology solutions used to ensure the study process are appropriate and effective.

1.3.5. The institution carries out the recruitment and employment of teaching staff by following to the local law requirements, e.g. "Procedure for the Evaluation of the Scientific and Pedagogical Qualifications or Results of Artistic Creativity of a Candidate for the Position of Professor or Associate Professor and of an Acting Professor or Associate Professor" (The Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No.129), and internal regulations of the institution, e.g. Elections to Academic Positions at Ventspils University of Applied Sciences" (the Senate-approved), that are transparent for the stakeholders involved.

VeUAS considers the need to develop a competitive European-level university that, in turn, supports the local economy while contributing to education and science at an international level. Foreign academic staff are also sometimes attracted to the study process to support the competence development of the local staff, strengthen cooperation with external partners, and increase the teaching quality. Increasing the share of foreign teaching staff should be set as one of the priorities. At the moment, as noted in section 1.5, the number of foreign teaching staff, on the contrary, shows the downward trend.

As far as the procedures for attracting qualified teaching staff are in general concerned, they are defined, including the balanced pre-conditions for attracting professional human capital, e.g. through the unified remuneration system, employing guest staff (on the basis of employment contracts) and experts in relevant study fields (under royalty agreements). However, three aspects of implementing these procedures deserve special attention: 1) retention of the qualified foreign academic staff; 2) ensuring the development of younger generation of professors (according to the Ministry of Education 2022 data, the average age of a professor at VeUAS is 68.5 years, of an

associate professor - 49.5 years); last but not least 3) ensuring that the academic staff involved in the doctoral-level programmes has sufficient merits in terms of peer-reviewed publications in reputable outlets as implied by the Law on Higher Education Institutions (<https://likumi.lv/ta/id/37967-augstskolu-likums>).

1.3.6. The self-assessment reports refers to three pathways of professional development of academic staff:

- 1) professional development programmes
- 2) experience exchange
- 3) participation in conferences and seminars.

The core of professional development of academic staff consists of the teaching/pedagogical part and the research/scientific part. Experience exchange and participation in conferences tap onto both, depending on the needs and goals of a staff member.

During the meetings with the teaching staff on 6 & 7 February, the team of experts recognised that pedagogical training is largely initiative-based. This aligns with the self-assessment report highlighting that each lecturer is responsible for their own professional development. There are formal requirements in place, e.g. VeUAS teaching staff must complete a total of 160 hours of further professional training. In addition, academic staff are entitled to six calendar months of paid academic leave every six years for carrying out scientific work outside their workplace. The general impression of the experts was that the university supports teachers in their professional development and the staff is quite dedicated, motivated to develop themselves and serve the students' needs. At the same time, if such development is only individual initiative-based, the question of evaluation of results or monitoring of progress becomes very relevant to address. The self-assessment report mentions (p.46) that 'the pedagogical, scientific and organizational work of the academic staff is assessed by reviewing the self-assessment report of the study direction at a faculty council meeting and by reviewing the reports on professional development'. This approach is feasible provided it is strictly adhered to, especially when it comes to individual achievements of the PhD holding academic staff. VeUAS does provide various professional development courses on the premises, e.g. on leadership, creation and management, Moodle guide. Yet, as a result of the meeting, it did appear that some teachers, mostly junior and external staff, would benefit from the offers on pedagogical training such as use of various teaching methods. The teachers did not tend to mention regular reports on their own professional development during the meeting, while from the self-assessment report it is evident that the reviews of individual achievements of academic staff with doctoral degrees are carried out annually.

When it comes to research development, specifically the use of six calendar months, the outcomes of this measure could be better highlighted in the self-assessment report to make them clearer (how many staff members used this measure, how many journal publications or international projects it resulted in, etc.). Within the joint doctoral study programme, according to the information the programme directors shared, some form of training for scientific staff exists as well as other activities such as knowledge cafe. It would be beneficial to see more detailed information about research-related training for the academic staff at VeUAS.

The experience exchange direction is covered within the European Social Fund project ('Strengthening the Teaching Staff of Ventspils University of Applied Sciences in the fields of Strategic Specialization'), whereby the teaching staff can start internships with businesses in Latvia. Since the objectives of this project are very relevant for the VeUAS staff development, it would be useful to specify how exactly the internship results are measured or what results in terms of professional development of staff this brought about since the start in 2021.

1.3.7. 44 teaching staff members, including 9 elected by FEM, 14 PhD degree holders and 6 staff members-doctoral students in social sciences are involved in the implementation of the study field.

According to the self-assessment report, most of the pedagogical workload rests with lecturers (66%) followed by professors (14%), then docents (11%), and associate professors (9%). The elected academic staff (in the professor, associate professor, docent and lecturer positions) perform research duties. The total number of full time working hours per week is adequate. It is, however, not entirely clear how (if at all) the administrative work fits into these hours.

1.3.8. VeUAS does provide students multiple sources of support that form both a well-accepted practice and more specialized forms of support like consultations with a psychologist. The standardized elements of the system include: advisory services from the Study department specialists, Student Council, External Relations Service. The institution implements quite well (also according to the students) career support and helps to build connections with employers' representatives. The study programme directors and guest lecturers from companies play a crucial mediating role in establishing these relationships.

International students also receive support by the external relations specialists. Since this is a crucial target group that the institution aims to attract as part of the current strategy implementation, it might be beneficial to specify/organize the support services for this group of students specifically (e.g. pre-admission and post-graduation guidance).

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

VeUAS possesses sufficient resources for implementing the study field with an established system for determining and redistributing financial support. The informational resources and infrastructure are in good standing. Local students receive sufficient support, yet international students might require more attention as one of the key target groups. The recruitment of teaching staff is formally compliant with the law and internal regulations. The workload of the staff is adequate. However, the recruitment of academic staff involved in the doctoral-level programme should be more geared towards internationally recognized publishing outputs. While the institution generally supports professional development of the academic staff, it should pay more attention to the training provision in scientific research as well as in pedagogy for the academic staff. There is also a relatively low number of qualified foreign academic staff that keeps decreasing and the aged senior academic staff.

Strengths:

1. An established system for determining and redistributing the financial support required for the implementation of the study field and the corresponding study programme.
2. Good track record of a continuous improvement of the infrastructure resources.
3. Well-maintained library; the informational resources and databases are available to students and generally meet the study field's needs.
4. The recruitment and employment of teaching staff are compliant with the internal regulations of the institution approved by the Senate, which are clear for the stakeholders involved.
5. The institution is supportive of the professional development of academic staff. Formal requirement of the minimum hours devoted to is present.
6. Adequate teaching and research load of the academic staff.
7. Well-functioning system of support for local students.

Weaknesses:

1. Relatively low number of qualified foreign academic staff that keeps decreasing (retention challenge).
2. Aged senior academic staff.
3. The institution could also pay more attention to the training development opportunities in

scientific research for PhD holding academic staff and in pedagogy (i.e. use of teaching methods) for junior and guest teachers. This means taking a step forward from complying with the minimum standards that are controlled towards enhancing continuous professional development of the staff members.

4. It is not entirely clear whether some measures used for professional development are effective, such as the six-month period for scientific research.

5. The academic staff teaching at a doctoral-level lacks publications in peer-reviewed reputable outlets (as required by the international science assessment procedures to which the Law on Higher Education Institutions refers).

1.4. Scientific Research and Artistic Creation

Analysis

1.4.1. The mission of the VeUAS is “to carry out research activities that are vital for society, ensuring the integration of science in the study process and the use of knowledge to benefit the national economy”. In accordance with this mission Ventspils University of Applied Sciences Development Strategy 2021-2027 defines the main goals of scientific development outlining the ones related to the research area. The University has a clear strategy to increase and intensify the scientific research activity. The achievement of these goals are supported by the activities of the teaching staff by taking an active part in various research projects like NORDPLUS and INTERFRAME-LV relevant for the study field and corresponding to the labour market. Members of the teaching staff are developing their PhD thesis contributing to the economy of the region, in 2022, VeUAS Lecturer Dace Štefenberga defended her doctoral thesis “Innovative Entrepreneurship in the Economic of Region” at the Latvia University of Life Sciences and Technologies and was awarded a Doctoral degree (PhD) in Economics and Business.

1.4.2. The results of scientific research are used by the teaching staff during the study process and are embedded into the course materials. During the visit it was also noted that students' topics of the final thesis are often interrelated with the scientific research carried out by the teaching staff. However, during the visit the expert panel did not find valid evidence that the course materials contain the latest scientific achievements. Therefore it would be recommended to make these results more visible.

1.4.3. It should be outlined that one of the strategic research goals of the University is also to “improve cooperation with regional, national and EU institutions, ensuring transfer of competences and research results for the development of the economy via joint research activities”. However, during the visit it was noted that the importance of international cooperation in the field of scientific networking should be emphasized as presently little is done to achieve this goal. Therefore, active cooperation with foreign HEIs in terms of research and teaching activities is recommended.

1.4.4. Various research seminars and conferences are organized by the University on a regular basis attracting academic staff from Latvia, inviting participants and speakers from Latvia and abroad, including teaching staff and students of the University. During the visit it was revealed that there is a budget allocated to research activities, internal grants for all staff and students of the region in regard to preparing publications, submitting research proposals and obtaining the necessary data. At the end of the year extra money is paid for research for high-quality publications. However, an expert panel noted that the publication activity of the teaching staff remains low and with quite a low decreasing number of articles published in international scientific journals with a high impact factor. The data of latest years shows that most publications represent conference proceedings, and the number of the ones in Scopus or WOS databases was 8 in 2022, 14 in 2021 and 17 in 2020

respectively (appendix to SAR nr.2-13). The expert panel believes that the University needs to review the balance between teaching and academic workload and increase cooperation with foreign HEIs in order to arrange joint publications in highly rated academic journals. Research incentives are supported by the University also by funding publication related expenses, attending seminars and conferences, which are a part of annual workload of the academic staff. During the meeting the representatives of the teaching staff confirmed that they are aware of various opportunities and are regularly offered to attend conferences and seminars as well as participate in the Erasmus program, which are funded by the University. Research activities are carried out in numerous research groups and funds were allocated to these projects during the analyzed period. A good example is the project developed by faculty lecturers in collaboration with the Latvian Academy of Sciences, the Norwegian Institute of Bioeconomy Research, Estonian University of Life Sciences, Vytautas Magnus University in Kaunas developed an interdisciplinary research project on enhancing IT and remote work opportunities for building an innovation ecosystem in the region. However, more initiatives should have originated from the University side involving both HEIs and social partners and students in the development of various joint research projects. The expert panel noted that there is a clear mechanism and well-developed motivation policy to ensure participation of the members of teaching staff in research activities, which is supported by the University and gives a good opportunity to share ideas, skills and best practices. However, little is done in regard to cooperation with social partners and potential employers in the field of joint research projects and scientific research activities. The expert panel would recommend extending cooperation with companies and business organizations involving both students and teaching staff in order to promote cooperation and add value to the study process.

1.4.5. Mechanisms to promote the involvement of students in scientific research include the involvement of students in participating in various projects, conferences, solving real life cases during internship, choosing company-related final diploma topics, research projects in which students are associated with the business environment and aim to have a practical approach upon completion. In case of Doctoral students there is also a requirement to have three publications during the study period, of which one should be provided in the Scopus listed journal. During the visit students mentioned that this is a reasonable requirement, and they get support from supervisors in having it fulfilled. The research activities and participation in various projects also include researching macroeconomic processes of the country in a group formed by the University professor together with Master's and Doctoral students.

1.4.6. Teaching staff of the University is contributing to the successful implementation of innovative solutions into the study process; several members have become specialists in "learning by doing" method, obtaining "Special Qualification in Coaching Team Entrepreneurship & Developing Team_Entrepreneurial Ecosystems". There was also developed and implemented the VeApp information system which makes students' lives easier and the study process more convenient. The video studio will be ready shortly and make it possible to effectively arrange online classes and video streaming.

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

In general, it can be concluded that the University has a support system in place for scientific and research activities, and participation in various projects and conferences for the teaching staff, however, there is a lack of visible outcome of the results in both teaching and study process. Also, there seems to be a gap between research activities and their implementation into the teaching process and more work should be done in this field.

Strengths:

1. Support from HEI for the academic staff to participate in conferences, trainings and seminars.
2. Science and research motivation policy is developed and implemented.

Weaknesses:

1. Low number of publications in international academic journals with high impact factor.
2. Low level of collaboration with social partners in regard to joint research projects and publications.
3. Incorporation of the latest scientific research results in the teaching and study process is not visible.
4. Rather low cooperation of academic staff with other universities in terms of research and scientific projects.
5. Low level of international scientific networking.

Assessment of the requirement [2]

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

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

Low level of international scientific networking and collaboration with other HEIs and social partners, low level of publications in academic journals with high impact factors,

1.5. Cooperation and Internationalisation

Analysis

This sub-section of the report analyzes cooperation of Ventspils University of Applied Sciences (VeUAS) with the institutions from Latvia and from abroad within the study field "Management, Administration and Management of Real Property" (cooperation and internationalization criteria). The analysis specifically evaluates the extent to which VeUAS has a system and procedures for the attraction of teaching staff and students from abroad within the study field, and the effectiveness of this system.

1.5.1. The study field features a relatively close-knit local network of partners, both private and state-owned, particularly with companies, employers, municipality and professional organisations (Ventspils Municipality Council, Employers' Confederation of Latvia, Ventspils High Technology Park, Business Support Centre, Bucher Municipal Ltd., IDAL Ventspils Business Incubator, Freeport of Ventspils Authority, Swedbank AS, Ventspils nafta termināls Ltd, Balta joint stock insurance company, the municipality-owned "Ventspils siltums", Ventspils Digital Center, Ventspils City Council, and others, as stated in the self-assessment report). Some employers provide financial support, e.g. the Bucher Municipal Ltd. scholarship, the scholarship of Professor Andris Klauss created by the FEM graduate Martinš Lauva, and the HansaMatrix Ltd. scholarship. The perceived importance of such support was confirmed in a meeting with students on 7 February.

Employers' representatives take part in the Bachelor and Master theses' supervision and examinations. The self-assessment report also suggests that some employers 'conduct individual classes within study courses, become guest lecturers and teach study courses, provide opportunities to visit companies/institutions and get acquainted with their activities, offer internships to students' (p.58). However, from the meeting with the group of employers on 7 February, the experts' team concluded that it is not fully clear to what extent each of these activities take place. In addition to the supervisions and examinations of theses, employers mentioned participation in regular

‘entrepreneurial association meetings’ (together with approximately 15 representatives). During these meetings, the university presents information about the quality of education and discusses pertinent issues with the involved industry representatives. The employers also highlighted that the ‘communication and feedback system works well’, while suggesting to widen the network of companies involved.

When it comes to cooperation with higher education institutions, VeUAS primary partners are Rezekne Academy of Technologies and Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences within the joint PhD programme ‘Economics and Business’. The universities also cooperate on supervision and examination of theses, as well as in research (events, conferences, joint projects). Cooperation with other Latvian universities is mentioned in the list of agreements provided in Annex 2.14, e.g. the University of Latvia on student exchange, but some of this information might need to be further updated, e.g. collaboration within the framework of RISEBA and BA joint doctoral study program “Business Management” (Nr.107 on the list) which was terminated.

The self-assessment report also mentions that lecturers of the study field ‘carry out traineeships in companies of the industry, which promotes both professional development and expands the circle’ (p.59). The experts’ team did not obtain the explicit evidence confirming this, but it became clear that the professional programmes are closely connected to the industry demands and that internships for students are integral to these programmes.

1.5.2. VeUAS has several international partners, most of which are higher education institutions within Erasmus+ programme (over 100 such partners for the cooperation period 2022-2027 from various European countries, e.g. Germany, Poland, Turkey, Sweden, Spain, Italy, etc., according to Annex 2.14). Apart from Erasmus+, a few other partnerships important for the study field are active, such as the international PhD summer school with the Vytautas Magnus University (Lithuania) and University of Sussex (United Kingdom). The undergraduate study programmes ‘Business Management’ and ‘Business Administration’ have invited a guest lecturer from Poland since 2020/2021. The ‘Start-up Management’ programme also has attracted one international coach, mentor and expert. Finally, up until 2022/2023 a joint Master’s study programme has been implemented together with the Austrian University of Applied Sciences Krems. In view of the experts’ team, the university would benefit from more partnerships and joint programmes of a similar kind. The number of meaningful partnerships outside of Erasmus+ are encouraged to be developed. Please note that the list of international partners on the VeUAS website <https://www.venta.lv/studijas/starptautiska-mobilitate/starptautiska-sadarbiba> should be updated or matched with the list of cooperation agreements in Annex 2.14 (for example, Chinese universities visible on the website do not appear in the annex).

The self-assessment report mentions various opportunities for staff and student mobility as well as the cooperation within international organizations/partner networks like CEEMAN, cooperation with foreign companies, municipalities and NGOs. As a result of the meetings with students and graduates, the experts concluded that Erasmus+ indeed offers a lot of useful exchange opportunities. Statistical data in Annex 2.16 shows that the total number of students contributing to the outgoing mobility in three consecutive academic years (starting from 2019/2020) remained relatively stable, revolving around 50 students per year. However, the year 2021/2022 saw a decline specifically at the Faculty of Economics and Management – only 6 students in comparison to 11 and 24 students in previous years. The incoming mobility numbers reflected a similar trend with only 1 student in 2021/2022. The number of full-time international students remained relatively stable, according to Annex 2.15, revolving around 30 students per year. When it comes to the academic personnel from abroad involved in the study programmes offered in English within the analyzed study field, the number of foreign staff also declined in 2021/2022 to 9 professors (as compared to 15 in the year before).

During the meeting with the teaching staff of Bachelor, Master and Doctoral study programmes on 6

February 2023, the experts confirmed that some teaching staff mobility also takes place (e.g. one local lecturer connected while visiting the University of Buffalo, USA) and the university tends to encourage such initiatives. Each teacher had something to share in that regard. Several activities relevant for international cooperation take place in the undergraduate professional programme 'Start-up Management'. The programme adopted the Tiimiakatemia methodology and some mentors from Finland guide local students. In addition, Latvian students participate in a real-life project with a French company, while French students work with a Latvian company. Teaching staff also tended to develop their own international network in the longer-term (focused whether on the Baltics or beyond) and use contacts from this network for teaching and inviting guest professors.

1.5.3. The self-assessment report mentions various activities aimed at attracting international students such as education fairs, information posting on educational platforms, reaching out to potential students through social networks, agents and webinar organization. The key mechanisms highlighted are 'personal contact of VeUAS academic staff, participation in conferences, cooperation within projects, research, events and job postings'. While the experts had a positive impression about the state of the individual-level initiatives directed towards international cooperation during the meeting with the teaching staff on 6 February, as well as from 5 February meeting with the management it was clear the internationalization is part of the university strategy, there was no complete clarity established on the system and procedures in place that would help implementing such a strategy. The attraction of international students was identified as a challenge and there is an evident need to build a clearer system for internationalization and education export.

Overall, the local and international cooperation is most likely contributing to the study field's goal achievement – 'to prepare high-ranking professionals, managers and entrepreneurs in sectors important for the economy, while significantly contributing to the development of entrepreneurship in Latvia' (p.16). However, it is not yet possible to establish to what extent the goal is being achieved owing to cooperation and internationalization (e.g. through a given number of start-ups established, company performance or alike). What is evident from the conversations with students, graduates and teaching staff as well as employers is that the study direction develops employability of students, mainly on the regional level.

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

Based on the above analysis, the experts conclude that the university and the study direction generally meet the criteria related to cooperation and internationalization. However, there is room for improvements in creating a clearer system and procedures for attracting international students and staff, building fruitful partnerships with foreign universities within and beyond Erasmus+, including joint study programme creation. In addition, it might be important to ensure that the goals of the study field are indeed achieved by establishing more entrepreneurship-related metrics (since it is one of the key priorities set up in the goal).

Strengths:

1. Strong local embeddedness (e.g. municipality, employers).
2. Connectedness of professional programmes with the industrial cooperation opportunities (e.g. internships); openness of employers to cooperate.
3. Wide Erasmus+ network.
4. Teaching staff taking initiative in their own mobility and network enactment.
5. Some cooperation with institutions from abroad taking place (more targeted cooperation of this kind encouraged).
6. Valuable international teaching experience transferred and implemented (e.g. Tiimiakatemia and mentorship model within the Start-up Management programme).

Weaknesses:

1. Declining number of foreign staff.
2. Declining incoming student mobility within Erasmus+.
3. The list of cooperation partners on the website does not match the list provided in the annex.
4. Absence of a clear system that would support internationalization.
5. Not exactly clear to what extent cooperation and internationalization contribute in a measurable way to the goal of the study field.

Assessment of the requirement [3]

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Generally compliant since the institution cooperates with both local and foreign institutions, especially in the realm of teaching; the third criterion on the system and procedures for attracting foreign teaching staff and students still needs considerable attention and consecutive actions.

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

Analysis

Recommendations of experts (short-term and long-term) given in the previous accreditation of the study field and procedure of inclusion of the study programme in the study direction accreditation during the reference period can be summarized and elaborated upon as follows.

1.6.1.1. Accreditation of the study field

Short-term recommendations:

1. "Institutional Strategy should be published in English and should be available on the website" - the Ventspils University of Applied Sciences strategy for 2021-2027 is now available in English and published on the website venta.lv in both Latvian and English languages.

2. "Ensure fair and transparent selection of academic staff"- the fairness and transparency of the academic staff selection is part of the internal quality assurance system, namely, of the internal procedures and mechanisms for assuring the qualifications of the academic staff and the work quality. The self-assessment report refers to the key course of action entitled 'Human Resources Development' that is carried out in accordance with the VeUAS Human Resource Management Policy and Development Plan 2021-2027. This course of action is closely linked with the VeUAS Gender Equality Policy. In addition, 'Human Resources Development' emphasizes the attraction of young academic and general staff, as well as ensuring continuity.

The academic staff selection procedure is organized through the Personnel Department. From the meeting with the academic staff on 6 February, the expert team got an impression that the selection is generally fair and transparent. The current pool of staff within the study field seems to be balanced in terms of age and gender. The younger staff tends to work together with the experienced staff. Certain level of competition is present, depending on the position advertised (for example, in one of the recruitment calls, four applications per mentor position were reviewed).

3. "VeUAS must revise its organogram: more precise positioning and clarification of certain functions (marketing, recruitment, alumni management, registrars office, international relations) could improve the quality of these functions, services" - appendix 1.2 of the self-assessment report

contains the organogram, where marketing & PR and HRM departments subordinate to the executive director, registrars office and alumni management presumably encompassed in the Department of Studies subordinate to the vice rector of studies, are represented. The position of international relations in the organogram is not specified or cannot be easily depicted. On the institution's website, however, under the link <https://www.venta.lv/augstskola/struktura> (Structure, available only in Latvian), the International Advisory Council is visible as part of the institutional structure. This structural division is approved by the Senate, according to the information published on the website.

4. "VeUAS must revise the course syllabi approval process and should make all course syllabi available on-line" - from the conversations with the study programme directors, it did seem like the syllabi approval process was revised. They also noted that updating the syllabi was one of the top priorities since the previous accreditation period. According to the VeUAS practices, the programme directors check the course syllabi every year, while the mandatory updates are required once in five years. Regarding the syllabi's online availability, they are not available on the university website, but on Moodle (to the best of our understanding).

5. "VeUAS should check the role of Coursera courses in the curriculum and must revise the Coursera points proportion in the final grades. Now it is varying between 20-30% for some study courses of the joint 'International Business and Export Management' academic Master's programme" - the role of the Coursera courses have been re-assessed - their weight was significantly reduced, while keeping them as a teaching method.

6. "FEM should empower the programme directors by authorizing them to make decisions and also by providing for them the necessary financial support" - the renewed quality assurance system grants the programme directors a clearer authority to make decisions and responsibilities for the study programme design. During the visit to VeUAS, the expert panel also learned that the remuneration system for the programme directors has been revised: the system based on solely on the number of students has been changed to the one based on a more diverse set of criteria, including fee paying students, international students, field coefficient, level coefficient. The changes have been positively received by the staff.

7. "Prepare a list of cooperation agreements with other institutions" - the list of cooperation agreements with other institutions was provided as an Annex 2.14 to the self-assessment report. 106 institutions in the list relate to the Erasmus+ project. Institutions numbered 107-110 are local partners. It might be beneficial to specify the international and local partners (group the list accordingly) and it is necessary to inspect the list aligning it with the information on international partners published on the website or updating the website data (it appears that some institutions, e.g. on Chinese universities, do not match).

8. "The institution should immediately update its international partner list on the website. The current list does not show all the partners based on the information from the students when they mentioned their study abroad destinations" - see the comment above. The international partner list on the website and in the Annex 2.14 should be aligned.

9. "Individuals responsible for quality assurance policy should clarify the roles of the quality assurance governing bodies (councils, senate) in how they complement one another" - the quality assurance system was significantly transformed and integrated into the Moodle system. Now all the personnel and students have access to it. Respective policy is in place, mechanisms are established and working, data obtained are used to inform the study process improvements. The roles of the governing bodies became clearer.

10. "The quality assurance policy should stipulate how students and other stakeholders are involved in the study programme design" - The role of students is stipulated in the internal quality assurance documents "Procedure for the receipt and consideration of student proposals and complaints at VeUAS" and "Regulations on Surveys of Students, Graduates and Employers for Evaluation and Improvement of the Study Process" (see section 1.2.2. of this report). The students' involvement is

mainly enacted through mandatory course feedback surveys.

The quality assurance system also contains the document "Regulation on the procedure for the development, licencing and improvement of study programmes at VeUAS", where the key role in the study programme design is given to the programme director. Other stakeholders, e.g. Vice-Rector of Studies, Faculty Dean, contribute to the study design through a specialised working group (see section 1.2.1 of the report).

11. "Each programme director should double-check how the programme aims, tasks, learning outcomes and assessment methods are written out - ensuring the necessary alignment and clarity of the students' learning assessment criteria" - since the previous accreditation period, the programme directors purposefully worked on the course syllabi, aligning the teaching methods with learning outcomes. It does still appear that the bibliography sources listed in the syllabi need further revision: the amount of sources - is it realistic for the students to read all the sources, the proportion of scientific articles could be greater.

Long-term recommendations:

1. "In the strategy of the study field, to envisage actions for the reduction of the part of the state budget, ensuring sustainable development of the study field" - the state budget part of the study field financing, as evidenced by the self-assessment report figures remains substantial - over 60% in the programmes. The analysis did not reveal intentions to reduce the state budget part. On the contrary, the report states on p.85 'VeUAS does not dare to raise tuition fees, and instead allocates significant resources on activities aimed at attracting students, and communicates the urgent need to increase state funding for studies.

2. "To supplement the library collections with the latest literature in the field of economics both in English, but mainly in Latvian" - current library collection does feature materials in English and Latvian. During the on-site visit representatives noted that there is a procurement system in place. Annually departments and staff members are asked to provide requests to the library for purchasing new materials. There is also a dedicated annual budget for this purpose.

3. "Doctoral Thesis Works should also be available in the Library, even if they were defended at other institutions" - this long-term recommendation to be considered by the new joint doctoral study programme, since the programme had no graduates yet.

4. "Institutional Strategy should be published in English and should be available on the website" - The institutional strategy 2021-2027 is available on the website https://irp.cdn-website.com/f6b5d556/files/uploaded/VeA_Strategija_2021_2027.gadam.pdf but it seems that only in Latvian.

5. "FEM should define the uniqueness of the institution. Heads Departments and Programme Directors should agree on a unique selling point" - this recommendation needs further attention. This point was purposefully discussed during the meeting with the university management as well as with the teaching staff of bachelor, master and doctor study programmes. Apart from the stable reputation of a regional higher education centre with sufficient resources and facilities, the unique selling point for international students must be defined. Given that internationalization is considered to be a central tenet of the VeUAS strategy to tackle the decreasing number of students in the local market, FEM should still define the uniqueness of their selling proposition.

6. "FEM should define a new recruitment policy because of the declining number of the newly enrolled students. They should pay particular attention to the international students' recruitment" - same considerations as above apply. The number of students is likely to continue to decline, according to the Latvian Ministry of Education data (as of February 2022).

7. "FEM should have initiated a more active alumni management built on the alumni association which is currently not known among the graduates" - The recommendation still holds. During the meeting with graduates from all the study programmes, graduates acknowledged that they would

like to have an alumni association.

8. "The research activity should be increased, especially by publishing more in leading international journals" -the research activity and producing more outputs in leading international journals beyond conference proceedings indexed in WoS or Scopus are still required at a higher level.

9. "VeUAS should revise its programme portfolio and consider closing its "micro programmes" attracting very few students and creating losses" - the current programme portfolio of the study direction is better optimized due to the creation of a new joint doctoral programme.

10. "VeUAS should attract more foreign teaching staff by putting together an internationally acceptable offer for potential candidates" - the recommendation still holds, since the study direction features a relatively small number of foreign teaching staff (including those with a strong research background).

11. "VeUAS should increase the English language proficiency of its lecturers who teach in English" - the English language proficiency of all the VeUAS lecturers who teach in English is difficult to assess objectively based on a sample of teaching staff invited to the meetings. Based on these meetings, however, it seemed like the overall English language proficiency was acceptable. Annex 2.11 certifies that the English language proficiency level of the academic staff is at least B2.

12. "The institution (e.g. Vice-Rector for Studies) should introduce plagiarism checks for all the written coursework, beyond the term papers and theses" - this recommendation still holds. While the institution uses the LAIS system (similar to the University of Latvia), the Unified Computerized Plagiarism Control Systems, not all the coursework goes through the anti-plagiarism checks, only major coursework, like theses does. Furthermore, the system is not yet fully automated, e.g. the study departments upload theses for the checks. The most recent pathways of plagiarism like ChatGPT are not yet addressed.

13. "Respective programme directors should preferably set out clear requirements and assessment criteria of Bachelor and Master theses (at the moment, this information is not included into the self-assessment report and course descriptions attached to it)" - the theses' syllabi outline the evaluation components comprising: the evaluation by the supervisor, the thesis reviewer, and by the National Examination Board, leading to the final evaluation. The learning outcomes are set out quite clearly but the evaluation criteria of the study results do not appear in the syllabi.

14. "All the managers in place responsible for the study direction design and implementation should revise the internal quality assurance system, enabling more efficient use of the student, graduate and employer feedback collected; special attention should be devoted to the voices of the students currently studying in all the Bachelor programmes except Start-up Management" - as highlighted in section 1.2.1 of the report, the internal quality assurance system was substantially revised. Student feedback is now systematically considered. Employers' opinions are also mentioned in the current QA policy.

1.6.1.2. Accreditation of the corresponding study programmes

For the Academic Bachelor's study programme "Business Administration" 15 short-term recommendations and 1 long-term recommendation were prepared:

Short-term recommendations:

1. "Revise the title of the study programme and the degree awarded in Latvian and English languages. Take into consideration that the study programme is positioned as academic. Keep in mind Article 12 of Cabinet Regulation No. 240 "Regulations on the National Standard for Academic Education". Bachelor's degree – ... Bachelor of Social Sciences, ... – shall be awarded to the relevant sciences of the group of related science fields, in accordance with the thematic groups defined in the Latvian Education Classification. (till the accreditation committee meeting)" - Awarded degree is

"Bachelor's degree of Business Administration in Social Sciences" ("Sociālo zinātņu bakalaura grāds vadībā un administrēšanā"). Title does comply with regulatory enactments as study ISCED code 345 corresponds to "Management and administration" ("Vadība un administrēšana"). Recommendation can be considered completed.

2. "Synchronize the content and structure of the current full-time programme in English version consisting of 120 CP (3 years) and the newly designed part-time version in Latvian (120 CP, 4 years) as the same degree for all graduates is awarded. (till the accreditation committee meeting)" - VeUAS notes, that study plan has been updated for part-time study version. There is no indications that achievable learning outcomes differ. Recommendation is completed.

3. "Specify the minimum admission requirements for mathematics. Clarify whether and how English language proficiency is ensured for the students studying in Latvian language but using core literature in English. (till the accreditation committee meeting)" - VeUAS points out that for the programme in Latvian, the admission requirements also include English language proficiency and there are plans of more in-depth English learning in the programme, and literature sources in Latvian have been included in the study courses. However, study programmes should not waste credit points for English language instruction to students, as it is impossible to properly learn language in a few credit point amounts. It should be assumed that English language skills are a de facto requirement for any research activity including advanced higher education studies. Therefore more important is to communicate actual requirements to potential students than to teach the language when they are studying in the programme. Recommendation can be considered completed.

4. "Reconsider relevance of the goal of the English version of the study program for visiting students: to prepare specialists "for the region and for Latvia" (till the accreditation committee meeting)" - VeUAS highlights the difference between study versions in its intended audience - the target audience of the programme in Latvian are students who already have work experience, live and work in the region, whereas the target audience for the programme in English are mostly foreign full-time students who can both work in foreign companies in Latvia and its regions and continue their professional careers abroad. Recommendation can be considered completed.

5. "Study course descriptions should be reviewed, the identified inconsistencies should be eliminated. (till the accreditation committee meeting)" - the study course descriptions have been revised and approved in the Senate. There is no indication that course descriptions as of now have any issues. Recommendation is fulfilled.

6. "Apply a unified standard term/ definition in the course descriptions, identifying the academic workload. (till the accreditation committee meeting)" - study course descriptions include a number of lectures and other practical classes. Number and amount corresponds to academic hours indicated. Course descriptions have been updated and approved by the Senate. Recommendation is completed.

7. "Revise affiliation of the study courses to mandatory courses or limited elective courses group. Introduce options for real choice of the (limited) elective courses. (till the accreditation committee meeting)" - limited elective courses are de facto mandatory courses. In the study plan all available credit points are accounted for with specific study courses. Only available choices for students are 6 CP as C part. Recommendation is not fulfilled and still stands.

8. "Literature list for some courses should be carefully revised, the outdated literature should be replaced, and the extensive list of literature should be adjusted to the real reading capability of students. (till the accreditation committee meeting)" - some study courses still feature quite a large amount of literature and there is still room for improvement regarding adjusting course descriptions to fully reflect actual workload and reading in the course. Recommendation is partially completed.

9. "The mechanism for mutual collaboration between the teaching staff members should be strengthened to contribute to the improvement of the study courses and their correlation (1 - 2 years)" - formal and informal meetings are organized for teaching staff to facilitate cooperation and

mutual coordination of content and teaching. Recommendation can be considered completed.

10. "Encourage more faculty members (including visiting faculty) to contribute more to scientific achievements. (1 – 2 years)" - current research activities are analyzed in Joint Opinion chapter 1.4. "Scientific Research and Artistic Creation". Recommendation still stands.

11. "Get statistical data regarding students and graduates in order, analyze the data. Perform comprehensive analysis of the drop out statistics (1 – 2 years)" - given the low student number it is pointless to gather statistical data. Nevertheless, causes for dropout should be analyzed and given a low number of students, solutions should be sought out. Recommendation can be considered partially completed.

12. "Synchronize and clarify information about faculty members in different documents. Supply the missing CV-s of the faculty (1 – 2 years)" - CVs are updated and provided. Recommendation is fulfilled.

13. "Reliable surveys of the program graduates must be introduced. The result of the surveys should be taken into consideration for further development of the study program (1 – 2 years)" - VeUAS claims that a mechanism is being developed for motivating graduates to participate in the evaluation of the programme by providing feedback. Recommendation still stands.

14. "Introduce English language proficiency testing of the faculty by external evaluator. If necessary, support language skills development (1 – 2 years)" - VeUAS points out that it is planned to introduce an English language proficiency test and it is planned to increase the English language proficiency of the teaching staff within the SAM project framework. Recommendation still stands regarding supporting the language skills development.

15. "Eliminate the disbalance in the workload distributed among semesters (English version of the programme) (1 – 2 years)" - study courses are spaced out evenly over the semesters. Recommendation is fulfilled.

Long-term recommendations:

1. "The core textbook/ literature (electronically or in the paper form) should be made available to every student" - some of the core literature units featured in some of course descriptions cannot be found in the electronic catalog of VeUAS library. However, during the on-site meeting with students, there were no indications that material availability is an issue suggesting that necessary materials can also be provided in a non-centralized way by discretion of an instructor. Recommendation is completed.

For the Professional Master's study programme "Business Administration" 13 short-term recommendations and 2 long-term recommendations were prepared.

Short-term recommendations:

1. "The title of the qualification in the diploma supplement must be adjusted (point 2.1, both language versions) (till the accreditation committee meeting)" - VeUAS claims that adjustments have been made, currently there are no identifiable problems with diploma supplement and title of qualification. Recommendation is fulfilled.

2. "Study course descriptions should be reviewed, the identified inconsistencies should be eliminated (till the accreditation committee meeting)" - provided study course descriptions are consistent. However, the review of descriptions should be carried out on a consistent basis. Nevertheless, the recommendation can be considered fulfilled.

3. "Apply a unified standard term/ definition in the course descriptions, identifying the academic workload (till the accreditation committee meeting)" - as for course descriptions there are no significant issues regarding potential discrepancies in academic workload however in the practice

actual workload and requirements for fulfillment of study course can differ given the same credit point amounts. This can be solved by collecting student feedback information regarding how they see and compare necessary workload with other study courses. Recommendation is completed.

4. "Prerequisites for some study courses should be revised, only relevant and realistically achievable prerequisites should be left (till the accreditation committee meeting)" - in general, skills and knowledge necessary in order to start a study course are justified and reasonable. There are no identifiable issues regarding this criteria. Recommendation is completed.

5. "Literature list for some courses should be carefully revised, the outdated literature should be replaced, and the extensive list of literature should be adjusted to the real reading capability of students (till the accreditation committee meeting)" - some study courses still feature quite a large amount of literature and there is still room for improvement regarding adjusting course descriptions to fully reflect actual workload and reading in the course. Review of course material - literature and sources should be conducted on a consistent basis. Recommendation is partially completed.

6. "Consider whether the "investment" part of the study course "Financial and Investment Management" corresponds to the core competence development of managers. (till the accreditation committee meeting) Short-term recommendation (1 – 2 years)" - VeUAS indicates that course content has been updated in accordance with overall programme study results. In general, as of now the study course is coherent with achievable aims. Recommendation is completed.

7. "As the new 40CP program has just been launched, carefully analyze whether the 45 items of professional knowledge required by the legislation are fully acquired by the students of the 40CP study program version. Analyze correlation with the different previous education degrees. In case of necessity consider the possibility to increase the number of the study courses" - requirements for 40 CP programme have been specified. In experts' opinion there are no issues regarding requirements for mentioned study mode. Recommendation is completed.

8. "The mechanism for mutual collaboration between the teaching staff members should be strengthened to contribute to the improvement of the study courses and their correlation" - cooperation between the teaching staff is promoted through both formal and informal events, examples of which were mentioned in the SAR and during the interviews, e.g., meetings to coordinate thematic areas and evaluation criteria, discussion of the quality of final theses at meetings organized by the faculty, joint research projects and publications involving both teachers and students, both internal and in co-operation with external institutions. Recommendation can be considered fulfilled.

9. "Encourage participation in the scientific projects which are fully relevant to the study direction; avoid spending time and efforts in participation in the projects which doesn't contribute to the scientific achievements of the Faculty of Economics and Management" - research and research-related activities are fully analyzed in Chapter 1.4. of the Joint Opinion. Therefore, the recommendation in the context of criteria 1.6 can be considered completed.

10. "Increase the role of group activities in studies" - teaching methods are analyzed in Chapter 2.2.3. of the respective study programme. There are no misalignments of methods used in implementation of the study programme and its defined outcomes. Recommendation can be considered completed.

11. "Get statistical data regarding students and graduates in order. Perform deeper analysis of the drop out statistics"- VeUAS provides statistics and analysis regarding dropout rates in SAR (Appendix 6.1.), however rather high current dropout rates that some further action is needed by the institution to address the issue. Recommendation is partially completed.

12. "More comprehensive analysis of the graduate' survey results should be done; the result of the survey should be taken into consideration for further development of the study program" - graduate surveys were updated in the 2018/2019 academic year and are carried out annually. Recommendation is completed.

13. "Consider the possibility to enrich the scientific activities by involving visiting instructors in joint

research projects" - there are indications that visiting lecturers have participated in implementation of the study programme. Recommendation is completed.

Long-term recommendations:

14. "The core textbook/ literature (electronically or in the paper form) should be made available to every student" - some of the core literature units featured in some of course descriptions cannot be found in the electronic catalog of VeUAS library. However, during the on-site meeting with students, there were no indications that material availability is an issue suggesting that necessary materials can also be provided in a non-centralized way by discretion of an instructor. Recommendation is completed.

15. "Consider the possibility of attracting more students paying tuition" - the decreasing number of students is a pertinent issue (as for the entire Latvian market). VeUAS acknowledges this and works in the direction of creating a marketing plan to popularize the offered study programmes. The recommendation holds.

For the Bachelor's study programme "Business Management" 6 short-term recommendations and 2 long-term recommendations were prepared.

Short-term recommendations:

1. "Reconsider feasibility of the combined specialization in Marketing and Logistics" - fundamental changes have been made to study programme specializations. Introducing Marketing Manager, International Relations Manager and Finance Manager specializations. Recommendation is completed.

2. "Reconsider rationality of the high share of Mathematics and English language studies. Study course descriptions should be reviewed, the identified inconsistencies should be eliminated" - the amount of English language studies and Mathematics have been reduced. Recommendation is completed.

3. "Literature list for some courses should be carefully revised, the outdated literature should be replaced, and the extensive list of literature should be adjusted to the real reading capability of students" - some study courses still feature quite a large amount of literature and there is still room for improvement regarding adjusting course descriptions to fully reflect actual workload and reading in the course. Recommendation is partially completed.

4. "The mechanism for mutual collaboration between the teaching staff members should be strengthened to contribute to the improvement of the study courses and their correlation" - formal and informal are organized for teaching staff to facilitate cooperation and mutual coordination of content and teaching. The involvement and participation of the teaching staff takes place in the study programme assessment and possible improvement discussions in the study programme council meetings and in the framework of the Faculty discussions, where students, employers' and entrepreneurs' representatives participate. It was confirmed during the interviews that cooperation among teaching staff takes place. Recommendation can be considered fulfilled.

5. "Integrate study courses into the study program, which would ensure students to acquire skills required by the relevant professional standard" - there have been significant changes to the study programme in order to stay compliant with the qualification requirements. Recommendation is completed.

6. "Balance the workload of some highly employed instructors of the programme" - the workload of staff has been assessed and in general is balanced. Recommendation is completed.

Long-term recommendations:

1. "Gradually increase the share of non- state funded students in the financing of the study program, which will ensure the sustainable development of the study program" - there have been significant changes to the study programme in order to make it more competitive. VeUAS indicates that there is also a unified marketing plan developed. Recommendation is completed.
2. "Consider the possibility of increasing remuneration of the director of the study program, that would motivate director's involvement in the implementation and further development of the study program" - in October 2022 Senate approved a new procedure for remuneration of study directors including new calculation principles. Recommendation is completed.

For the Bachelor's study programme "Start-up Management" 9 short-term recommendations and 6 long-term recommendations were prepared.

Short-term recommendations:

1. "From the self-report, it is possible to understand though on a subtler level that a start-up is rather an organisation/company that is innovation-focused, knowledge-intensive and uses technologies on a day-to-day basis, but it may not be a necessarily very young company in the process of foundation. The programme director should make the definition more precise by possibly adopting one of the well-known definitions like Eric Ries (an innovative company operating in conditions of extreme uncertainty) or Steve Blank offered (an organisation formed to search for a repeatable and scalable business model). Please see - <https://www.interregeurope.eu/oss/news/newsarticle/4539/what-a-startup-is/> (until the accreditation decision is taken)" -

In summary, the recommendation suggests reconsideration of start-up definition. VeUAS has provided ("2-18_appendix_Overview of the implem of the study direction recommend_ENG.pdf") sufficient reasoning why current approach is justified. Recommendation is completed.

2. "The programme director should improve the quality of writing the learning outcomes - relating them more to the start-up context (at the moment there is no single mention of the term 'start-up' in the learning outcome, so it is only in the name). (until the accreditation decision is taken)" - study programme content and learning outcome analysis can be found in the Joint Report Chapter 2.2. of the respective study programme. The programme has address the recommendation clearly, however, the experts found that start-up programme study results are too scattered in technical aspects and would recommend to group them to ~15 (which is the average used practice in Latvia).
3. "The different admission rules indicated in the SAR and the Admission Requirements must be aligned. (until the accreditation decision is taken)" - there are no discrepancies identified. Recommendation is completed.
4. "Each study course leader on the programme should work on improving the course syllabi so that the learning outcomes are written out in the SMART format (the outcomes should be specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, time-bound), and the match among outcomes, teaching and evaluation is preferably clearer (until the accreditation decision is taken)" - study programme content and learning outcome analysis can be found in the Joint Report Chapter 2.2. of the respective study programme. The recommendation implementation needs revisiting.
5. "Study course leaders where this issue is in place should find a way of replacing a large share of Coursera assignments in the final course grade or make one specific (most relevant) Coursera course compulsory and outline how it is assessed in detail (until the accreditation decision is taken)" - study courses have been updated. There is no longer a large share of Coursera assignments in the final course grade. The recommendation is completed.
6. "Along the same lines of improving the syllabi, the course leaders should work on the list of literature that students have to read by giving most relevant sources that are indeed used in the teaching process; or, if everything is used, to indicate page numbers so that it is possible to assess the reading load (until the accreditation decision is taken)." - the study course descriptions have

been updated. The feedback from the student is collected on a continuous basis and taken into account. There were no indications that the reading volume was an issue during the on-site meeting with students. The recommendation can be considered completed.

7. "Bachelor thesis requirements and assessment information is missing from the programme package - a person in charge, presumably the study programme director, should add this for evaluators to see (until the accreditation decision is taken)" - VeUAS notes that there are methodological guidelines for the development, execution and defense of the Master's and Bachelor's theses and term papers, however, it cannot be found on public webpage or annexes of SAR. The recommendation is completed.

8. "A staff member in charge (e.g. the programme director or their deputy) should double check and ensure that all the literature sources listed in the syllabi are indeed available to students using electronic resources of the library or on-site (until the accreditation decision is taken)" - some of the core literature units featured in some of course descriptions cannot be found in the electronic catalog of VeUAS library. However, during the on-site meeting with students, there were no indications that material availability is an issue suggesting that necessary materials can also be provided in a non-centralized way by discretion of an instructor. Recommendation is completed.

9. "To ensure balanced expertise in entrepreneurship and pedagogy, experts recommend connecting the teaching staff member with a Bachelor degree who is involved in implementation of several study courses with at least one teacher who holds a higher-level academic degree and is knowledgeable in pedagogy. Co-teaching is the solution for situations when one teacher has extensive industry or entrepreneurial experience and another teacher is knowledgeable in pedagogy (until the accreditation decision is taken)" - teaching staff is analyzed in Joint Opinion Chapter 2.4. of the respective study programme. In the context of criteria 1.6., recommendation can be considered completed.

Long-term recommendations:

1. "Either to rephrase the aim of the programme 'Start-up Management' making it milder, e.g. 'students developing from novices towards more expert' or 'students augmenting expertise in entrepreneurship practice', or include a section on indicative evaluation mechanisms" - the study programme aims are analyzed in Joint Opinion Chapter 2.1. of respective study programme. In the context of criteria 1.6., the recommendation can be considered completed.

2. "It might be beneficial to add a terminological clarification on how business administration relates to business management and whether it is the same as 'uzņēmējdarbības vadība" - VeUAS points out that in documentation Business management and Business administration are used as synonyms. Recommendation is prepared for PBStP "Start-Up Management", however VeUAS are implementing study programmes that feature similar title where terminological clarification could be useful - PBStP "Business Management" and ABStP "Business Administration" Recommendation can be considered completed, however it is softly recommendable that VeUAS reconsiders titles.

3. "Study course leaders in entrepreneurship-related courses of the programme should work on the syllabi vocabulary, because it should be clear what theories or main theoretical concepts students have knowledge about, and what parts of theory they apply" - VeUAS indicates that the study course descriptions have been updated. The recommendation is completed.

4. "It is also recommended to specify the share between theory and practice, and explain how student centeredness expresses in the teaching methodology" - teaching methods and implementation of Student-centered learning principles are analyzed in Joint Opinion Chapter 2.2 of respective study programme. Recommendation can be considered completed.

5. "Study course leaders should also provide more details on how the evaluation methods listed in syllabi serve the purpose of assessing the learning outcomes achievement (following the principles of constructive alignment)" - the study course descriptions have been updated, and the

recommendation seems to be completed, but the crucial element of the constructive alignment – what exact evaluation methods are used and whether they match the learning outcomes – is not fully possible to identify from the current programme syllabus.

6. "The theoretical aspect of sharing practical knowledge by practitioners needs to be justified by the link to research; in terms of teaching staff, the programme director should make sure that the industry representatives are always teamed up with the staff member proficient in pedagogy" - teaching staff is analyzed in Joint Opinion Chapter 2.4. of respective study programme.

5 short-term recommendations and 7 long-term recommendations were made during the process of including the joint doctoral study programme "Economics and Business" on the accreditation form of the study direction.

Short-term recommendations:

1. "Supplement the admission rules for the programme with the requirement to provide a document confirming knowledge of English at least level B2 " - study admission requirement is to provide certification or other proof of at least B2 English language level. Requirements are available in the public website

(https://irp.cdn-website.com/f6b5d556/files/uploaded/Uznemsanas%20_noteikumi_2023_2024.pdf).

Recommendation is completed.

2. "Improve the description of study courses in accordance with the requirements of regulatory enactments. It is recommended to use uniform form for study courses for a joint doctoral programme. Please refer to the AIKA recommendations of the study course description development (https://www.aika.lv/wpcontent/uploads/2020/01/leteikumi_studiju_kursu_aprakstu_veidosanai.pdf)" - study course descriptions have been changed and approved by VeUAS Senate in 31.08.2022.

Recommendation is completed.

3. "Improve the provision of software needed for educational purposes, for example, SPSS" - software provisions are in good standing. VeUAS notes that for data analysis it is planned to use PivotTable, PivotChart, PBI, RapidMiner, JASP and Microsoft Azure. Recommendation is completed.

4. "Try to unify the three different Moodle systems of the participating institutions" - VeUAS is currently discussing this issue with partner institutions. Currently they are using Google Drive solutions to provide a platform for material and document sharing regardless of the institution of origin. Streamlining of the study process should be continued, however, the recommendation can be considered completed, as students during the on-site meeting indicated that progress has been made in cross-institutional integration.

5. "Discuss and agree with the partner universities the translation of the course title – Economics and Entrepreneurship or Economics and Business" - there are no discrepancies identified regarding the title. The recommendation is completed.

Long-term recommendations:

1. "Increase the number of students in the programme" - the number of students has decreased. VeUAS should seek out more ways to attract possible students to the programme. The recommendation is partially completed.

2. "More publicity for the study programme is needed to increase the number of doctoral students" - VeUAS indicates that a unified marketing plan for popularizing the study programme and attracting doctoral students will be developed. The recommendation is acknowledged by VeUAS and is in the process of implementation. Given the analysis provided further in the report including those of the necessity for strategic marketing, this recommendation by previous assessment should still be addressed further.

3. "Supplement the library with more modern literature in accordance with the specifics of the programmes" - materials available in the library and the online sources associated with the library are in good standing. There is a procedure in place for the procurement of new literature. The recommendation is completed.

4. "Develop an internal regulation regulating the number of doctoral students per doctoral supervisor" - VeUAS notes that the joint doctoral programme council will discuss and set the maximum number of doctoral theses to be supervised per supervisor. The recommendation is in the process of completion.

5. "Improve collaboration between teachers from different universities who teach the same course" - the mechanisms for cooperation between teaching staff members within one university and among involved universities are in place and operational:

- Cooperation of teaching staff in the development and implementation of the content of study courses to coordinate the interconnection, sequence of topics, assignments and evaluation (lecturers meet before the beginning of each study semester and also at the end of the study course);

- Cooperation of teaching staff in developing the content of the study program and its implementation (the joint program council examines the results of the doctoral students' surveys and approves the study plans - before each study semester);

- Cooperation of teaching staff in the supervision of doctoral theses (one doctoral thesis can have two scientific supervisors, participation of teaching staff at the research seminars);

- Joint scientific activity and publications of teaching staff.

Recommendation can be considered fulfilled.

6. "Increase the number of scientific publications by publishing articles in high-impact journals" - research output is analyzed in Join Opinion Chapter 1.4. The recommendation is not yet completed.

7. "Increase the number of invited foreign lecturers" - VeUAS notes that there are plans to recruit foreign academic staff to teach certain topics in study courses. Recommendation is not yet completed.

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

Based on the above analysis, the experts identify the following strengths and weaknesses related to the implementation of the recommendations received during the previous assessment procedure.

Strengths:

1. The institution made considerable progress in setting up an improved quality assurance system.

2. The role and funding system for programme managers has been improved.

3. The course descriptions have been improved with the new forms integrating also learning outcomes` mapping and their relation to professions` standards better aligning LO`s to the requirements of the professional standards.

4. Improvements in the content and planning of the study programmes were implemented, based on recommendations. For example, the professional bachelor study programme "Business Management" was changed by implementing several specializations for professional qualifications: Finance Manager, Marketing Manager and International Relations Manager. Uneven workload for teaching staff of bachelor study programmes "Startup management" and "Business Management" has been addressed.

5. Cooperation among teaching staff members has been improved and is strong.

Weaknesses:

1. The institution still has weak structures in place for promotion and support of the research activities of staff as well as of students (through the study programme content).

2. The research output of staff is at a minimum level required for the election of academic staff members into respective academic positions but at a relatively low level given the type of output (conference papers versus journal papers) as well as the international scientific journal rankings.
3. Several recommendations from the previous assessment have not been yet fully implemented (see the recommendation part).

Assessment of the requirement [4]

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

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

The institution has not implemented 3 short- and 8 long-term recommendations for the study field from 2020; 2 of the former require immediate action and there have not been any noticeable change in the direction of changes regarding the latter.

1.7. Recommendations for the Study Field

Short-term recommendations

- | |
|---|
| 1) To focus on research (scientific contribution) clearly in the aim of the StF to strengthen VeUAS strategic engagement in national and municipal strategy and policy planning framework. |
| 2) To create and start implementing the institution's internationalization strategy that will address the attraction and retention of international academic staff and students; establish a clear connection between the StF's goal and this strategy. |
| 3) To ensure VeUAS webpage in Latvian (https://www.venta.lv/nac-studet/studentu-uznemsanas-noteikumi) transition to English version (make sure it does not change much from the webpage in Latvian) or re-direct to EN admission page (https://www.venta.lv/en/join-us/terms-of-admission). |
| 4) Update the list of cooperation partners on the VeUAS webpage (so that it matches with the list provided in the SAR's annex 2.14). |
| 5) To review course descriptions, ensuring: adequate amount of reading within compulsory literature lists (e.g. 8 books for one course would require specific page numbers to be noted): alignment of course's contact hours to topics` explore hours (e.g. Course Personal Development, 8 KP, 12 ECTS, 128 contact hours, while topics are mentioned for 96 hours resulting in 30 hours missing); review of the assignments for doctoral students of the joint doctoral study programme in the course descriptions (some are missing). |
| 6) To further develop the Quality assurance handbook by adding operational information about the main quality assurance mechanisms and practical tools to close the feedback loop, their implementation and responsibilities. |
| 7) To ensure the compliance of the elected academic staff members who do not have any scientific publications during 6 years period, to the requirements of the Regulation "VeAUS Academic Staff Selection Procedure" (adopted by the VeUAS Senate on 31 August, 2021) and the respective normative acts of the Republic of Latvia. |
| 8) To clarify reimbursement policy and funds available for professional development of teaching staff to make the system more transparent and encouraging, amend internal regulations if needed. |

- 9) To make visible the incorporation of latest scientific research results in the teaching and study process.
- 10) To pay explicit attention to attracting and retaining qualified foreign academic staff.

Long-term recommendations

- 1) To supplement the study field quality assurance system with a mechanism helping to detect when smaller changes in the study programs accumulate up to 20% of a program`s volume.
- 2) To strengthen communication between the leadership/administration of VeUAS, thus StF, study programs and the Council.
- 3) To review the current VeUAS academic integrity assurance policy, methods and instruments and strengthen the policy, particularly by identifying effective anti-plagiarism tools and providing a clear procedure for their use, including for academic integrity assurance and the plagiarism risks detection as well as for the follow-up procedure in case the plagiarism risk is detected. This includes considering the usage of (also) other anti-plagiarism tools than LAIS, e.g. Turnitin or Ouriginal, to strengthen the effective academic integrity culture and ensure the systematic usage of anti-plagiarism tools for all assignment types.
- 4) To increase the number of the academic staff`s publications in international academic journals with a high impact factor (adopting one of the internationally accepted rankings such as the ABS Academic Journal Guide).
- 5) To review the balance between teaching and academic workload and increase cooperation with foreign HEIs in order to arrange joint publications in highly rated academic journals.
- 6) To develop more active collaborations with social partners on joint research projects.
- 7) To enhance cooperation of the academic staff with other universities in terms of research and scientific projects, including the increase of international scientific networking by e.g. creating joint working research groups with other local and foreign universities.
- 8) To ensure the systematic implementation of all requirements set out in the regulation "VeUAS staff selection procedure", ensure equally application of the requirements to all academic staff members.
- 9) To consider reviewing the quality of work assessment mechanisms (e.g., teaching observations) and staff professional development mechanisms by not only controlling the compliance with minimum requirements, but also supporting the teaching process excellence (e.g. provision of training on the use of innovative teaching methods) and facilitating professional development of the staff members (e.g. provision of courses on academic integrity, training on teaching-research link).
- 10) To provide the initial, at least short, training on pedagogical methods and didactics for new teachers including guest lecturers; create pathways for the development of the younger generation of professors.

II - "Business Management" ASSESSMENT

II - "Business Management" ASSESSMENT

2.1. Indicators Describing the Study Programme

Analysis

2.1.1. The study program Business Management code 42345 is developed in accordance with the requirements of the study field and the it's compliance of the study programme with the relevant education standard and the qualification is provided in Appendix 4.4 and 4.5 of the Self-assessment report (SAR). The content of the study program is also in compliance with the mission and vision of the VeUAS.

2.1.2. The aim of the "Business Management (42345) study program is "to provide professional higher education opportunities that are entrepreneurial and open for sustainability of society and the development of economy, in order to prepare competent, critically thinking, emotionally intelligent and digitally skilled professionals with interdisciplinary knowledge for employment in leading positions in the private and public sectors, while strengthening the ability to compete in the global market.", which is in line with the mission and vision of the VeUAS Development Strategy 2021-2027 outlining the importance of providing "high-quality, up-to-date education corresponding to the current educational trends both in Europe and the world".

The acquired qualification level corresponds to the Latvian Qualifications Framework (LQF) level 6 and also takes into consideration recent regional developments and the requirements of the labor market. Therefore, the program was updated recently and now graduates are not only awarded a Professional Bachelor's degree in Business Administration but also the professional qualification of a Functional Manager, with further specialization in Marketing Manager, International Relations Manager, Finance Manager. while previously students received a qualification of business manager. These changes were made in tight interrelation with labor market representatives and the recent trends in the rapidly changing business environment as the program was launched in 2014 and some of the offered qualifications seemed outdated. In line with the new qualification offered there were made appropriate changes in the aim, goals, learning outcomes and the obtained knowledge and skills to make them interrelated and compatible with each other.

The title of the program represents its content, which supports the achievement of the stipulated learning outcomes. Studies are conducted in Latvian in the form of full-time studies (4 years) with the volume of 160 CP, after successful completion of the program the graduates are also able to continue their education at other higher education institutions to obtain Master degree. The study program has several main objectives outlining necessary knowledge, skills and competences formulated in accordance with the LQF level 6 -requirements.

The admission of students is based on regulatory laws and legislation (Article 46 of the Law on Higher Education Institutions and the Cabinet of Ministers Regulations No. 846 (as of 10 October 2006) "Regulations regarding the Requirements, Criteria and Procedures for Admission to Study Programmes". Prerequisites for admission to the program are transparent and ensure the entrants of the program with the appropriate level of the knowledge and skills, which is required to achieve the learning outcomes of the program, stating the main criteria as well as the score required for the admission. Admission rules for the years 2023-2024 are clearly defined and publicly available at the website of the VeUAS <https://www.venta.lv/nac-studet/studentu-uznemsanas-noteikumi> with the full text stipulating minimum entrance grades and foreign language test are presented in detail in the document "UZŅEMŠANAS NOTEIKUMI UN IMATRIKULĀCIJAS KĀRTĪBA VENTSPILS AUGSTSKOLĀ 2023./2024. AKADĒMISKAJĀ GADĀ" publicly available at the website of the university.

In order to be admitted a person needs to have general secondary education or vocational secondary education (3rd level of qualification in accordance with Paragraph 5(3) of the Vocational Education Law of the Republic of Latvia) may apply for studies in the professional bachelor's study programme "Business and the compulsory state exams (mathematics, English and Latvian) must be completed. The admission competition's score is presented in the admission rules. Certain

advantages are given to the candidates having received awards in Latvian or international Olympiads in mathematics, informatics and business economics.

2.1.3. According to SAR p. 128 and the information received during the visit the program was updated according to the latest requirements of the labor market established via cooperation with employers as well the development recommendations of AIKA. The changes were aiming to implement digital components and the innovation skills and knowledge. The main changes include: the qualification of Business Manager has been changed to Functional Manager, providing in-depth professional specializations: Marketing Manager, International Relations Manager, Finance Manager and the related changes in the study content; introduction of new IT related courses; introduction of new courses like Work Environment, Circular Economy etc. initiated by the latest developments in modern business world; introduction of 30 ECTS internship in the selected field of specialization; reducing the number of credit allocated to Bachelor Thesis from 30 ECTS to 18 ECTS. The suggested changes of the study program are well justified by the requirement of the labor market, properly analyzed by the VeUAS and are already supported by the relevant initiatives.

2.1.4. Objectives, tasks and learning outcomes of the study programme are clearly defined. Strong impact is placed on the professional aspect of the program, offering the professional qualification in three different types of specializations: Marketing Director; Director of International Relations; Finance Director, which adds value to the employability of graduates being above 90%.

The structure of the evaluated study program enables achievement of stipulated learning outcomes preparing highly educated professional equipped with all required knowledge, research and personal skills as well as social abilities to work in various organizations in terms of rapidly changing market conditions considering "Sustainable Europe 2030 Strategy" as well as "Sustainable Development Strategy of Latvia 2030". During the visit employers emphasized that the program is tailored to the demand of the current labor market and latest developments in the world business environment and it is also reviewed on a regular basis.

The data presented to the experts' panel shows that while the number of admitted students was constantly decreasing over years from 2019-2020 (37) till 21 in 2021/2022, it seems to be picking up in 2022/2023 – 30 students. However, the number of graduates is in constant downtrend since 2019/2020 – 28, 2020/2021 – 27 and 2021/2022- 20 graduates.

High drop-out rate and low number of graduates demonstrate that there is a need in a clear marketing strategy logically following the strategic planning stipulating what to sell to whom and how, which was also mentioned during the interviews with social partners. More efforts should be put in order to attract potential students to the University.

2.1.5. Not applicable

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

In general, it can be concluded that the name of the study programme "Business Management" (42345) and the professional qualification of "Functional Director" to be acquired, learning outcomes, and admission requirements are logically interrelated. The program has incorporated changes derived from the labor market requirements. The content of the study program contributes to the principles of sustainable business management. However, the decreasing number of graduates as well as high dropout rates confirm the need for the clear marketing strategy for attracting prospective students.

Strengths:

1. The program structure, aims, tasks and learning outcomes to contribute to the recent

sustainability initiatives in the area of business management.

Weaknesses:

1. High dropout rates.
2. Decreasing number of graduates.
3. Lack of clear marketing strategy for attracting prospective students.

2.2. The Content of Studies and Implementation Thereof

Analysis

2.2.1. The programme consists of general study courses, basic theoretical courses, professional specialization courses (in line with the three qualification tracks offered – Marketing Director, Director of International Relations or Finance Director), electives, an internship as well as a Bachelor thesis. This corresponds to at least 154 credit points related to the study courses and at least 12 credit points related to the thesis (the annex 4.4 specifies 240 ECTS).

The programme aims to provide 'higher education opportunities that are open and entrepreneurial for the sustainability of society and the development of the economy, in order to prepare competent, critically thinking, emotionally intelligent and digitally skilled professionals with interdisciplinary knowledge for employment in leading positions in the private and public sectors, while strengthening the ability to compete in the global marketplace' (SAR, p.137). The general programme structure of courses is quite standard but it is difficult to make judgements about the complementarity or interconnectedness based on the available data.

The self-assessment report and related annexes contain exhaustive information about the programme's compliance to the national education standard, as well as about the topicality and relevance of the programme's content to the industry needs, labor market and scientific trends. The comparison with other programmes delivered at other EU recognized universities (Centria University of Applied Sciences and University of Tartu) was also carried out, albeit not fully comparable with academic programmes like 'Business Administration' in the University of Tartu. We note, however, there is a bit of a confusion in the submitted documentation related to the title of the professional bachelor programme. While the content discussed concerns the programme entitled 'Business Management', the annexes (4.2, 4.3, etc., except for the diploma supplement) consistently refer to the professional bachelor's study programme 'Business Administration'.

The range of the offered courses is very broad and diverse (even broader than in the compared international programmes), with newer courses on artificial intelligence, circular economy, business modeling, etc. added. The content seems relevant, yet might be useful to weigh quantity with quality. In particular, the course syllabi could provide more detailed information on the evaluation criteria of the study results. The evaluation components and their weights are presented, but how exactly, for example, performance in classes (which may account for as high as 30% of the final grade), is assessed is not clear.

The list of bibliography tends to contain numerous textbooks or books and no or almost no latest scientific publications. For instance, Management Psychology refers to five books only in the basic literature section, Macroeconomics refers to six textbooks.

2.2.2. Not applicable

2.2.3. The programme courses employ a variety of teaching methods: 'active work during classes, the acquisition of theoretical knowledge and the transfer of this knowledge into practical work, individually or in groups, through discussions to build dialogue and strengthen practical skills using brainstorming, simulation, etc.' (SAR, p.139), developing course papers, reports, essays, presentations, etc. Students also attend guest lectures by experts in the field or seminars by foreign

lecturers. The evaluation methods mentioned are 'test, homework, essay, report, course paper, demonstration of a presentation, examination'. The course syllabi and/or the self-assessment could provide more information on how the evaluation methods match the teaching methods (this comment remains pertinent from the previous accreditation period). Also, given the highlights of interdisciplinary competencies (incl. technological and digital skills) and scientific research based decision-making in the programme's aims and outcomes, it would be relevant to see how both aspects are addressed in the teaching and evaluation process.

Student-centered approach is considered by taking individual capabilities of students into account and 'cooperation in the process of providing feedback'. Other options for bridging the gap between different levels of competences exist such as consultations and individual discussions.

2.2.4. Internship (worth 30 ECTS) is an integral part of the professional programme. Students undertake it during the 7th semester within the chosen specialization. Its aims and related procedures are clearly explained in the annex 4.10. Students' tasks are to carry out practical work independently, solving a real problem in a business or organization management; document the traineeship and prepare a report. In general, these tasks match the learning outcomes of internships outlined in the annex 4.9. The evaluation components are also clear (by the external supervisor, internal reviewer, by the defense committee). However, like with other courses the concrete evaluation criteria are not elaborated upon.

Following the meetings with the students and employers, the team of experts concluded that there are quite extensive or at least sufficient opportunities for internships. It is admittedly one of the strongest aspects of the professional programmes.

2.2.5. Not applicable

2.2.6. Theses' topics are chosen according to the specializations: marketing, international relations, finance. Students discuss topic ideas with teachers and formalize them in a standard way (through thesis proposals/applications). Examination of the sample theses (N=2) showed that some students choose to conduct research in a specific organization and focus their theses around a central theme, e.g. new product promotion in this organization. Thus, internships can serve as pathways into the thesis work. Such theses tend to be very practical, with minimal or no theoretical part included.

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

The content of the professional bachelor study programme "Business Management" (42345) meets the basic requirements. Based on the available information provided in the self-assessment report and the annexes, the study courses within the programme are relevant, some of them recently updated. To what extent they are complementary with each other appears challenging to evaluate, since the annex 4.9 does not group the courses into general, basic or professional, while some courses mention others as prerequisites (many require just general secondary or vocational education).

Strengths:

1. Sufficient opportunities for and fine organization of internships.
2. Renewed course offerings with artificial intelligence, circular economy, business modeling, etc.
3. Well-assessed relevance to the industry needs and performed comparison to similar offerings in other EU countries.
4. Elaborate alignment of the qualifications granted with the professional standards; comprehensive map of which study courses contribute to the learning outcomes achievement within the three target professional standards.

Weaknesses:

1. Need for clearer evaluation of interdisciplinarity-related outcomes; similarly, if the use of scientific research is mentioned in the learning outcomes, how is this evaluated (not obvious from the study course descriptions).
2. In general the alignment between the teaching and evaluation methods is not straightforward. The evaluation component structure might require revision (with respect to the weight of individual/group components).
3. The revision of bibliography is required, since there is a large number of books (reducing the number of textbooks to make sure it is realistic for the students to read them, adding the latest scientific articles).
4. Complementarity and interconnections between the courses is challenging to grasp (might be useful to address the logic separately).

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

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

NA

2.3. Resources and Provision of the Study Programme

Analysis

2.3.1. The overall compliance of the resources and provision - study provision, scientific support, informative provision, material and technical provision, and financial provision - with the necessities for the implementation of the study programmes and the learning outcomes is appropriate. It must be highlighted that VeUAS does not separate infrastructure by its study programmes within the study field of Management, Administration and Management of Real Property. Resources are assessed on the Faculty and University level. The resource base available for the implementation of the Professional bachelor study programme "Business Management" (study, informative, material and technical provisions, infrastructure) is fully sufficient to enable the possibility to achieve defined study outcomes.

During the visit the involved parties confirmed that resources and provisions are adequate for implementation of the study programme and there is clear procedure on how new material or informative resources can be requested, approved and procure (including software licensing and other necessities). In conclusion, during the visit there were no indications from both staff members and students of possible shortcomings regarding material and resource provisions.

There are no exclusive resources (or specific resource needs) for the Professional bachelor study programme "Business Management" that does not apply to other study programmes undergoing evaluation, therefore analysis in Joint Opinion chapter 1.3. applies in this instance as well.

2.3.2. Not applicable

2.3.3. VeUAS notes that as of October 1st, 2022, the study programme has on average 93 students. The tuition fee of the programme per student is EUR 1520 per year. Expenses per student are 2193 EUR. The break-even point of the program would require 113 students - 89 budget and 24 fee-paying students (SAR 3.3.3.).

The revenue can be broken down as follows: state subsidy 84%, municipal funding 13%, tuition fees

4%. While expenditures - remuneration 59%, scholarships 16%, goods and services (for the faculty) 3%, other expenses 22% (SAR 3.3.3.).

As of now student number is just under the break-even threshold, therefore indicating the need to address the issue regarding student number or sustainability of study programme. However, the financial base is sufficient for the implementation of study programmes, taking into account that the costs of implementing study programmes are covered from various financial sources: state financing, municipal financing and tuition fees.

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

In general, study provision, scientific provision, informative provision, material and technical provision and also financial provision comply with the conditions for the implementation of the study programme and indicate the possibility to ensure that learning outcomes are achieved.

Strengths:

1. Study, technical and informative provisions are in good standing.

Weaknesses:

1. Decreasing and a relatively small number of students is a risk for the sustainability of the study programme from a financial point of view.

Assessment of the requirement [6]

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The study provision, scientific provision, informative provision, material and technical provision and financial provision create prerequisites for the achievement of the learning outcomes and indicate the possibility to ensure a successful study process.

2.4. Teaching Staff

Analysis

2.4.1. 31 teaching staff is involved in the implementation of the professional Bachelor's study programme "Business Management", incl:

- elected academic staff of the Ventspils University of Applied Sciences – 45% (14);
- guest lecturers – experts of the professional field, including 6 Ventspils University of Applied Sciences employees – 55% (17);
- academic staff with a PhD – 42% (13);
- academic staff studying for a PhD – 19% (6);
- academic staff with a Master's degree – 29% (9);
- academic staff with a Bachelor's degree – 10% (3) (SAR, p.3.4.1).

The teaching staff of the professional Bachelor's study programme "Business Management" meet the requirements set out in the laws and regulations. They have been involved in the implementation of the study course as a result of the assessment of their individual qualifications.

Teaching staff include experienced practitioners who have successfully worked in business at local and international level, in the management of state and local government institutions. The teaching staff members who do not have doctoral degree, have sufficient practical work experience. Thus the

requirements by the Law on Higher Education Institutions, section 39, are fulfilled.

The review panel agrees that the academic qualifications and professional experience of teaching staff allows to achieve the study programme objectives and learning outcomes.

2.4.2. Significant changes have been implemented in the study programme "Business Management", which also affected the composition of the teaching staff with more than 30% of new teaching staff being attracted, both academic staff and experts in the professional field. The changes positively affected the programme development.

2.4.3. Not applicable

2.4.4. The Latvian Council of Science (LCS) expert rights have been granted to two teaching staff members of the study programme.

The analysis made by the peer review panel of the list of academic publications, conferences, projects of the academic staff from 2017 to 2022 (Appendix 2.13 to the SAR) indicate that not all members of the teaching staff members have published in peer-review editions. Information about the research results of some of teaching staff members is not provided in the Appendix 2.13.

It should be ensured that the information about the publications of all teaching staff members is updated and collected. The VeUAS should put more effort to support the involvement of its teaching staff members in research activities and linking teaching to research results by providing necessary support and resources, incentives, requirements and facilitating instruments.

2.4.5. The cooperation takes place both in formal and informal settings. The involvement and participation of the teaching staff takes place in the study programme assessment and possible improvement discussions in the study programme council meetings and in the framework of the Faculty discussions, where students, employers' and entrepreneurs' representatives participate. It was confirmed during the interviews that cooperation among teaching staff takes place.

In order to ensure continuity of the implementation of the study programme, the VeUAS makes an effort to integrate new teaching staff, including VeUAS Doctoral students, into the pedagogical and research work under the supervision of VeUAS professors.

During interviews, formal and informal meetings among teaching staff were mentioned as the main method to facilitate cooperation and mutual coordination of content and teaching.

The student-lecturer ratio is low - 4.7 that allows for an individual approach in teaching and learning.

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

The qualification of the teaching staff members involved in the implementation of the study programme complies with the requirements and enables the achievement of the aims and learning outcomes of the study programme. The teaching staff changes that were caused by changes made in the structure of the study programme, positively affected the programme development. The information about the scientific publications of all teaching staff members has not been provided, some staff members do not have scientific research results at all, including one elected academic staff member. There are mechanisms in place to facilitate mutual cooperation of the teaching staff, cooperation takes place de facto to support the achievement of the aims of the study programme and interconnection of study courses.

Strengths:

1. Teaching staff involved in the implementation of the study programme are with high qualifications and include experienced practitioners who have successfully worked in business at local and international level.

2. Demonstrated capacity to attract new teaching staff in case of changes made in the curriculum of the study programme.
3. Low student-lecturer ratio allowing for an individual approach in teaching and learning.

Weaknesses:

1. Only few teaching staff members have publications in peer-reviewed editions.

Assessment of the requirement [7]

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The formal qualification requirements of the academic staff members are fulfilled.

2.5. Assessment of the Compliance

Requirements

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Annex 4.4 ("4-4-_appendix_compliance-to-national-standard.pdf") confirms that the study program complies with Cabinet Regulation No. 512 "Noteikumi par otrā līmeņa profesionālās augstākās izglītības valsts standartu"

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Annex 4.5 ("4_5_annex_compl_with_prof_stand_and_PQ_ENG.xls") confirms that the programme is compliant with the professional standard of "Functional Director" (approved on 12 June, 2019). Study programme is also compliant with professional qualification requirements for specialization modules - "Finance Director" (approved on 16 October, 2019), "Director of International Relations" (approved on 11 December, 2019) and "Marketing Director" (approved on 18 September, 2019).

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Attached study course descriptions ("4-9_pielikums_studiju_kursu_apraksti.pdf") are prepared in latvian. Descriptions complies with regulations set forth in Law on Higher Education Institutions.

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The provided Diploma sample ("4.1.attachment_Diploma_attachment_example_Eng.pdf") complies with the procedure by which state-recognised documents of higher education are issued in accordance with Cabinet Regulation No. 202 "Kārtība, kādā izsniedz valsts atzītus augstāko izglītību apliecinošus dokumentus".

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Attached resumes of staff and VeUAS confirmation letter 30.12.2022. Nr. 1-10.1/81 (2-10_apliecinājums par valsts valodu.pdf) verifies that state language proficiency is compliant with Cabinet Regulation No. 733 "Noteikumi par valsts valodas zināšanu apjomu, valsts valodas prasmes pārbaudes kārtību un valsts nodevu par valsts valodas prasmes pārbaudi".

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Sample of attached study agreement ("2-5_appendix_stud_liguma_paraugs_ENG.pdf") complies with Cabinet Regulation No. 70 "Studiju līgumā obligāti ietveramie noteikumi".

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Attached contract with Liepāja University ("2.3._pielikums_sadarbības_līgumi_LV.pdf") confirms that the institution provides the possibility to continue studies within the professional bachelor study programme "Business and Organization Management".

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

VeUAS confirmation letter 30.12.2022. Nr. 1-10.1/80 states, that students are guaranteed compensation for losses if the study programme is not accredited or the licence of the study programme is revoked due to the actions of the college (actions or failure to act) and the student does not wish to continue the studies in another study programme.

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

Assessment of the requirement [8]

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Study programme complies with regulatory requirements.

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

Study programme corresponds to the study field, awards the professional qualification of "Functional Director", learning outcomes and admission requirements are logically interrelated. Based on the available information provided in the self-assessment report and the annexes, the study courses within the programme are relevant, some of them recently updated. To what extent they are complementary with each other appears challenging to evaluate. Study resources and provisions comply with the conditions for the implementation of the study programme and indicate the possibility to ensure that learning outcomes are achieved, however student number is just under break-even threshold. The qualification of the teaching staff members involved in the implementation of the study programme complies with the requirements and enables the achievement of the aims and learning outcomes of the study programme. The information about the publications in peer-reviewed editions of all academic staff members has not been provided, many staff members do not have scientific research results, including one elected academic staff member. There are mechanisms in place to facilitate mutual cooperation of the teaching staff, cooperation takes place de facto to support the achievement of the aims of the study programme and interconnection of study courses. Study programme complies with regulatory requirements.

Evaluation of the study programme "Business Management"

Evaluation of the study programme:

Good

2.6. Recommendations for the Study Programme "Business Management"

Short-term recommendations

1. To consider developing and implementing a clear marketing strategy directed at attracting prospective students.
2. Since one of the programme's learning outcomes is to develop interdisciplinary knowledge related to professional activity, it should be made clearer how the interdisciplinarity-related outcomes are evaluated. Similarly, the use of scientific research is mentioned in the learning outcomes, but it is not clear from the syllabi how this aspect, among others, is evaluated.
3. To revise the evaluation component structure with respect to the weight of individual/group components, also making clearer the alignment between the teaching and evaluation methods in the syllabi.
4. To revise bibliography of the study courses, reducing the number of textbooks/making it more concise to make sure it is realistic for the students to read them all, and adding the latest scientific articles that students can source themselves from the available databases.
5. To specify the logic of complementarity and interconnections between the programme's study courses, making them clear for students and future experts undertaking the assessment procedures.

Long-term recommendations

1. To consider implementing a mentorship programme, taking into account experience from the study programme "Start-up Management" to further enhance student learning experience and personal growth.
2. To regularly monitor the high dropout rates among students and develop an actionable strategy to tackle this problem.
3. To develop and implement a strategy with special measures in place (e.g. through positive word-of-mouth, social networks or alike) to increase the number of students.
4. To put more efforts into supporting the involvement of the teaching staff members in research activities and linking teaching to research results by providing necessary resources, incentives, requirements, and facilitating policy instruments, e.g. workload management related, financial, other bonus system.

II - "Start-up Management" ASSESSMENT

II - "Start-up Management" ASSESSMENT

2.1. Indicators Describing the Study Programme

Analysis

2.1.1. The study content of the professional bachelor's study program "Startup Management" is interrelated with code 42 345, which corresponds to the Cabinet of Ministers' regulations of June 13, 2017 no. 322 "Rules on the Classification of Latvian Education" for the second level of classification established 42 "Second-level professional higher education (fifth-level professional qualification and professional bachelor's degree) or second-level professional higher education (fifth-level professional qualification). The compliance of the study programme with the relevant education standard and the qualification is provided in Appendix 3.3 and 3.4 of the Self-assessment report. The content of the study program is in compliance within the Study field "Management, Administration and Management of Real Property" as well as with mission and strategy of the VeUAS.

2.1.2. The aim of the "Start-up Management" (42345) study program is "prepare competitive specialists for the Latvian and international labor market with fundamental education in business management that is in line with the state standard for professional higher education in the Republic of Latvia „which is in line with the mission and vision of the Ventspils University of Applied Sciences Development Strategy 2021-2027 outlining the importance of providing education corresponding to the current educational trends both in Europe and the world". The title of the program "Start-Up Management", its objectives, tasks and learning outcomes of the study programme are clearly defined. However, it does not reflect the "start-up" focus of the study programme omitting the entrepreneurship component and the contribution to starting a new company, which will give future students a clear idea of who is the target audience of this particular study programme.

The acquired qualification level corresponds to the Latvian Qualifications Framework (LQF) level 6 and also takes into consideration recent regional developments and the requirements of the labor market. The graduates are not only awarded a Professional Bachelor's degree in Business Administration but also get the professional qualification of an Enterprise Manager, which corresponds to the aim and learning outcomes of the program. The study program outlines all necessary knowledge, skills and competences formulated in accordance with the LQF level 6 - requirements. However, it should be noted that while the stipulated skills gained on the completion of the programme are in line with LQF level 6 requirements and compatible with each other, they form a very long list of 29 items, which is hard to read and remember. It is recommended to make it shorter and less detailed by combining several minor skills into major ones.

Studies are conducted in English in the form of full-time studies (4 years) with the volume of 160 CP, after successful completion of the program the graduates are also able to continue their education at other higher education institutions to obtain Master degree. The program has a tight connection with the labor market addressing the latest demand for the educated entrepreneurs in the European Union. During the visit it became evident that social partners played an important role in development of the programme and are actively attracted to make changes and improvements. The programme contributes to the sustainable business development of the region and the expert panel is of the opinion that it should be reflected in the list of competences, skills and knowledge obtained by graduates. Strong impact placed on the professional aspect of the program, offering various internship opportunities including the paid ones in various well-developed technologic companies.

The structure of the evaluated study program enables achievement of stipulated learning outcomes preparing highly educated professional equipped with all required knowledge, research and personal skills as well as social abilities to work in various organizations in terms of rapidly changing market conditions considering "Sustainable Europe 2030 Strategy" as well as "Sustainable Development Strategy of Latvia 2030". During the visit employers emphasized that the program is tailored to the demand of the current labour market and latest developments in the world of entrepreneurship.

The admission of students is based on regulatory laws and legislation (Article 46 of the Law on Higher Education Institutions and the Cabinet of Ministers Regulations No. 846 (as of 10 October 2006) "Regulations regarding the Requirements, Criteria and Procedures for Admission to Study Programmes". Prerequisites for admission to the program are transparent and ensure the entrants

of the program with the appropriate level of the knowledge and skills, which is required to achieve the learning outcomes of the program, stating the main criteria as well as the score required for the admission. Admission rules for the years 2023-2024 are clearly defined and publicly available at the website of the <https://en.venta.lv/join-us/terms-of-admission> with the full text stipulating minimum entrance grades and foreign language test are presented in detail in the document "TERMS OF ADMISSION AND THE MATRICULATION PROCESS FOR VENTSPILS UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES INTERNATIONAL CANDIDATES FOR STUDIES IN ENGLISH-TAUGHT STUDY PROGRAMMES IN THE ACADEMIC YEAR 2023/2024" publicly available at the website of the university https://irp.cdn-website.com/9945ff8b/files/uploaded/22-56_Uznemsanas_noteikumi_arzemniekiem_ENG_2023-24.pdf

In order to be admitted a person needs to have general secondary education, as well as to have passed centralized examination results in mathematics, Latvian and English, additionally there is a test designed by VeUAS especially for this programme designed to determine the knowledge of logic, mathematics, personality type, technology terminology knowledge.

2.1.3. No changes have been made to the parameters of the study programme.

2.1.4 The data presented to the experts' panel shows that while the number of admitted students was constantly increasing over years from 2019-2021 (8 and 17 students) with a decrease in the academic year 2021-2022 (9 students) due to pandemic and the increase in 2022/2023 - 13 students. The program has no graduates yet, therefore this factor is not assessed during the present evaluation, but the low drop-out rate and the increasing number of enrolled students demonstrated the demand of this program and its popularity. The expert panel would recommend to develop a clear marketing strategy logically following the strategic planning stipulating what to sell to whom and how, which was also mentioned during the interviews with social partners. More efforts should be put in order to attract potential students to the University.

2.1.5. Not applicable

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

In general, it can be concluded that the name of the study programme "Start-up Management" (42345) and the professional qualification of "Enterprise Manager" to be acquired, learning outcomes, and admission requirements are logically interrelated. The program contributes to the education of professional entrepreneurs in the region. However, it would be beneficial to incorporate the start-up aspect into the aim of the study program as well as to develop a clear marketing strategy in order to keep on going successfully.

Strengths:

1. The program structure, aims, tasks and learning outcomes to contribute to the demand of educated entrepreneurs in the European Union.

Weaknesses:

1. Lack of start-up focus in the aim of the study program.
2. Lack of clear marketing strategy in regard to attracting prospective students.

2.2. The Content of Studies and Implementation Thereof

Analysis

2.2.1. 'Start-up Management' is considered to be a flagship programme of the study field that

develops both managerial and entrepreneurial skills of students with the use of experiential learning methods (predominantly modeled from the Tiimiakatemia approach).

The programme's objective 'To prepare competitive specialists for the Latvian and international labor market with fundamental education in business management that is in line with the state standard for professional higher education in the Republic of Latvia' (SAR, p.151) does correspond to the learning outcomes. However, as also noted during the previous accreditation period, the list of skills stated in the learning outcomes is very extensive and needs to be grouped into thematic clusters of skills, e.g. enterprise start-up skills, market analysis, strategic planning, human resource management, other. Otherwise, they are somewhat scattered. Grouping the target competences into 7 categories (digital, entrepreneurial, communication, etc.) is very helpful.

The programme's structure in terms of the content and composition of courses is clear: 1) general courses, 2) core theoretical courses combined with information technology courses, 3) professional specialization, and 4) optional courses. In line with the standard requirements of a professional programme, 'Start-up Management' offers Internship (30 ECTS). The total number of the programme's ECTS amounts to 240 ECTS.

Annexes 3.3 and 3.4 provide information on the compliance of the study programme with the national regulations and professional qualification standards (that correspond to the enterprise manager qualification). From the viewpoint of content, this information looks compelling.

Owing to the high practicality and more innovative teaching methods employed in the programme, which include involvement of practitioners in the delivery and design of study courses, it seems to be up-to-date with the current trends in entrepreneurship and management practice (research/scientific aspects less salient).

Given the overall success of the programme, also in terms of the student numbers' dynamics, it remains questionable why there were so few international students. Annex 3.3 reports only 1 student from Ghana.

Finally, when it comes to interconnectedness and complementarity of courses, within the course groups, e.g. the core theoretical courses, the complementarity could be thought-through in a more comprehensive way. As the case with the 'Business Management' programme, most of the courses have 'general secondary education' as a prerequisite. If a clearer interconnectedness is in place, it should be better highlighted in the documentation.

2.2.2. Not applicable

2.2.3. The self-assessment report states that 'student-centered education is embedded in core values and practically in all daily processes'. Mentorship as one of the most effective and popular methods of the programme clearly helps ensure this. Teaching in relatively small groups helps make the learning process more personalized. It also seems like students have quite a lot of freedom and can come up with bottom-up learning initiatives, while still being guided and supported by teachers. As noted in the previous section ('Business Management' study programme), the course descriptions have a similar deficiency or lack of information on how the learning outcomes are actually measured (Annex 3.7). The question of how to assess performance in classes or practical work, to make sure it aligns with the learning outcomes and study objectives, remains open for the external experts. The generic assessment structure is operational and quite common.

During the meetings with the students and graduates, it was concluded that they are quite satisfied with the programme and appreciate its innovativeness.

2.2.4. The internship of 30 ECTS is a compulsory and fundamental part of the programme. SAR (p.164) states that students 'complete their internship at a company created by their team'. The internship seems to be appropriately formalized, however, the 'Internship' course description (approved by VeUAS FEM Council on 19.12.22) suggests that students can complete the internship

at an existing organization: 'The student performs the internship in an independently chosen company or organization. As an internship company, the student can choose any company, including his workplace, but primarily choose a work environment and role that is directly related to the development of new products, innovations and/or information communication technologies'. Annex 3.8 provides exhaustive information about the formal internship regulations but does not make clear in which language the internship should be undertaken. That is, if the final course deliverable (an internship report) is in English, it is unclear whether the students are required to undertake the internship in an English-speaking organization. Since the study programme is implemented in a foreign language, i.e. English, the course description should clarify what requirements towards the internship organizations are set and followed, to what extent FEM provides the internship completion opportunities in a foreign language, if the company's choice is other than the one created by the students' teams.

2.2.5. Not applicable

2.2.6. The programme started in autumn 2019, which makes it 2022/2023 the fourth study year. Hence, no samples of final theses can be evaluated yet.

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

Sound study programme that aims to develop diverse entrepreneurial and managerial skills by applying innovative teaching methods; highly practice-based. Despite its potential, the programme has a very low number of international students. The current state of writing the learning outcomes is still too unfocused/unstructured, especially with regard to skills. While the programme is delivered in English, it is unclear whether all students complete the compulsory internship also in English, particularly when they choose to do the internship at an existing local organization.

Strengths:

1. Positive trend in the number of students.
2. Use of mentorship and other innovative teaching methods (e.g. student enterprises) that clearly have the capacity to achieve the set learning outcomes.
3. Students are generally satisfied with the programme and their perceived employability increases.

Weaknesses:

1. Surprisingly low number of international students (can almost be labeled as 'insufficient').
2. Some deficiencies in the way the learning outcomes are written up (too many, scattered, ungrouped), not fully understandable how exactly they are assessed (to make a solid judgment about the alignment between learning outcomes, teaching and assessment methods).
3. Unclear whether the programme provides opportunities for the internship completion in the English language (since the programme is offered in English).
4. No Bachelor thesis examples yet, to be able to make a justified conclusion about the thesis quality (the experts' team would benefit from some interim assignments).

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

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

NA

2.3. Resources and Provision of the Study Programme

Analysis

2.3.1. The overall compliance of the resources and provision - study provision, scientific support, informative provision, material and technical provision, and financial provision - with the necessities for the implementation of the study programmes and the learning outcomes is appropriate. It must be highlighted that VeUAS does not separate infrastructure by its study programmes within the study field of Management, Administration and Management of Real Property. Resources are assessed on the Faculty and University level. The resource base available for the implementation of the Professional bachelor study programme "Start-up Management" (study, informative, material and technical provisions, infrastructure) is fully sufficient to enable the possibility to achieve defined study outcomes.

During the visit the involved parties confirmed that resources and provisions are adequate for implementation of the study programme and there is clear procedure on how new material or informative resources can be requested, approved and procure (including software licensing and other necessities). In conclusion, during the visit there were no indications from both staff members and students of possible shortcomings regarding material and resource provisions.

There are no exclusive resources (or specific resource needs) for the Professional bachelor study programme "Start-up Management" that does not apply to other study programmes undergoing evaluation, therefore analysis in Joint Opinion chapter 1.3. applies in this instance as well.

2.3.2. N/A

2.3.3. VeUAS notes that as of October 1st, 2022, the study programme has on average 37 students. The tuition fee of the programme per student is EUR 3000 per year for full-time studies. Expenses per student are 2193 EUR. The break-even point of the program would require 27 (SAR 3.3.3.).

The revenue can be broken down as follows: state subsidy 9%, municipal funding 8%, tuition fees 83%. While expenditures - remuneration 59%, scholarships 16%, goods and services (for the faculty) 3%, other expenses 22% (SAR 3.3.3.).

The financial base is sufficient for the implementation of study programmes, taking into account that the costs of implementing study programmes are covered from various financial sources: state financing, municipal financing and tuition fees.

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

In general, study provision, scientific provision, informative provision, material and technical provision and also financial provision comply with the conditions for the implementation of the study programme and indicate the possibility to ensure that learning outcomes are achieved.

Strengths:

1. Study, technical and informative provisions are in good standing.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses identified.

Assessment of the requirement [6]

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The study provision, scientific provision, informative provision, material and technical provision and financial provision create prerequisites for the achievement of the learning outcomes and indicate the possibility to ensure a successful study process.

2.4. Teaching Staff

Analysis

2.4.1. The implantation of this study programme significantly rely on the guest lecturers. 2 lecturers from the academic staff of VeA and 13 guest lecturers participate in the execution of the study program, including entrepreneurs; human resources, marketing, finance, ICT specialists; professional business mentors; and business angels and venture capital investors (SAR, p. 3.4.1).

The qualification level of teaching staff is as follows:

- 1 Doctor (PhD) in Economics and Business;
- Doctoral student (from the industry);
- 8 representatives of the industry with a Master's degree – representatives from companies/organizations with significant practical experience in the topics covered by the study programme;
- representatives of the industry with a Bachelor's degree – representatives from companies/organizations with significant practical experience in the topics covered by the study programme.

All lecturers have at least 5 years of experience of practical work and distinction/ achievements in the field and teaching experience in other VeUAS study programmes or other universities, or at least business mentoring experience. Elected teaching staff members who do not have doctoral degree, have sufficient work experience to fulfill the requirements of the Law on Higher Education Institutions, section 39.

The English language skills of teaching staff are sufficient to fulfill the requirements and to meet the programme objectives. The documents provided certifies that the English language proficiency level of the teaching staff is at least B2. The interviews confirmed that the overall English language proficiency was good.

Considering the practical nature of the programme, the involvement of the experienced guest lecturers can be considered as an advantage. Although significant shortcomings in this regard were not detected by the panel, nevertheless the attention should be paid to continuous professional development of guest lecturers, including completing ongoing doctoral and master studies, pedagogical skills development, and involvement of lecturers in the research in cooperation with permanent academic staff members.

According to the Analysis of the results of student surveys provided by the VeUAS (Annex 2-6 to the SAR), the student satisfaction with the lecturer's performance was the highest for the study programme "Start-up Management" comparing to other study programmes, for the whole period of 2019 - 2022. High student satisfaction with their teachers could be observed also during interviews.

2.4.2. In the academic year 2021/2022, lecturers of some courses were replaced by other lecturers with appropriate qualifications and sufficient experience. The changes implemented were also linked to the need to reduce the dependence on one lecturer, recommended in the previous accreditation report. Currently, the distribution of the courses among lecturers is much more balanced.

2.4.3. Not applicable

2.4.4. The analysis made by the peer review panel of the list of scientific publications, conferences,

projects of the teaching staff from 2017 to 2022 (Appendix 2.13 to the SAR) indicates that not all teaching staff members have scientific publications. Information about the research results of two teaching staff members is not provided in the Appendix 2.13 of the SAR.

It would be recommended that VeUAS put more effort to support the involvement of its teaching staff members in research activities and linking teaching to research by providing necessary support and resources, incentives, requirements and facilitating instruments.

2.4.5. This study programme is unique to other VeUAS study programmes with its mentorship programme. Each group of students has a permanent mentor who coordinates the communication between the students and teachers, and the communication and cooperation between VeUAS and the teaching staff. Solving practical business problems (challenges) is actively used as a learning method in this programme which often continues throughout several courses and requires increased cooperation between lecturers. This method prompts interdisciplinary learning and problem-solving skills. Existence of the mentor contributes to the collaboration and legacy of projects developed in lectures. The panel observed very high satisfaction by students with the mentorship programme, and the only improvement they suggested was to ensure more mentorship hours.

The interconnection of study courses is partly reflected in the mapping of study courses and the information provided in the course descriptions.

During interviews, formal and informal meetings among teaching staff were mentioned as the main method to facilitate cooperation and mutual coordination of content and teaching.

The student-lecturer ratio is very low - 2.47 which allows for individual approach and personal contact which was confirmed by students.

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

The qualification of the teaching staff members involved in the implementation of the study programme comply with the requirements, and enables the achievement of the aims and learning outcomes of the study programme. The teaching staff changes were initiated to ensure better balance in the workload of the teaching staff, in order to implement recommendations from the previous accreditation report. The changes have positively affected the implementation of the study programme. The information about the scientific publications of all teaching staff members has not been provided, some teaching staff members do not have research results at all.

There are mechanisms in place to facilitate mutual cooperation of the teaching staff, cooperation takes place de facto to support the achievement of the aims of the study programme and interconnection of study courses.

Strengths:

1. Student mentors contribute to both, learning experience and personal development of students and cooperation among lecturers.
2. The method of solving practical tasks (challenges), which is implemented in parallel to several study courses, as a learning method that provides problem-solving skills and interdisciplinary learning.
3. Low student-lecturer ratio allowing for an individual approach in teaching and learning.
4. Very high student satisfaction with the performance of the teaching staff.

Weaknesses:

1. High dependence on guest lecturers, which could pose a risk to the sustainability of the program and affect the involvement of guest lecturers in research.
2. Only few teaching staff members have publications in peer reviewed editions.

Assessment of the requirement [7]

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The formal requirements of the qualification of the academic staff have been fulfilled.

2.5. Assessment of the Compliance

Requirements

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Annex 3.3 ("3_3_appendix_education-standard_ENG.docx.pdf") confirms that the study program complies with Cabinet Regulation No. 512 "Noteikumi par otrā līmeņa profesionālās augstākās izglītības valsts standartu"

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Annex 3.4 ("3-4 - Profesijas standarts ENG_preciz.pdf") confirms that the programme is compliant with the Enterprise Manager professional standard (approved on September 18, 2019)

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Attached study course descriptions ("3_7_appendix_course_descriptions_ENG.pdf") are prepared in english. Descriptions complies with regulations set forth in Law on Higher Education Institutions.

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The provided Diploma sample ("3-1_appendix_diploma_diploma-supplement.pdf") complies with the procedure by which state-recognised documents of higher education are issued in accordance with Cabinet Regulation No. 202 "Kārtība, kādā izsniedz valsts atzītus augstāko izglītību apliecinošus dokumentus".

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Attached resumes of staff and VeUAS confirmation letter 30.12.2022. Nr. 1-10.1/81 (2-10_apliecinājums par valsts valodu.pdf) verifies that state language proficiency is compliant with Cabinet Regulation No. 733 "Noteikumi par valsts valodas zināšanu apjomu, valsts valodas prasmes pārbaudes kārtību un valsts nodevu par valsts valodas prasmes pārbaudi".

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Attached resumes of staff and VeUAS confirmation letter 11.10.2022. Nr. 1-10.1/52 ("2-11_pielikums_apliecinajums par angļu val_LV_ENG.edoc") verifies that language proficiency in English is at least B2.

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Sample of attached study agreement ("2-5_appendix_stud_liguma_paraugs_ENG.pdf") complies with Cabinet Regulation No. 70 "Studiju līgumā obligāti ietveramie noteikumi".

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Attached contract with Turība University ("2.3._pielikums_sadarbības_līgumi_LV.pdf") confirms that the institution provides the possibility to continue studies within the professional bachelor study programme "Business Administration".

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

VeUAS confirmation letter 30.12.2022. Nr. 1-10.1/80 states, that students are guaranteed compensation for losses if the study programme is not accredited or the licence of the study programme is revoked due to the actions of the college (actions or failure to act) and the student does not wish to continue the studies in another study programme.

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

Assessment of the requirement [8]

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Study programme complies with regulatory requirements.

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

Study programme title, awarded professional qualification and admission requirements are interrelated. The program contributes to the education of professional entrepreneurs in the region. However, it would be beneficial to incorporate the start-up aspect into the aim of the study program as well as to develop a clear marketing strategy in order to keep on going successfully. The current state of writing the learning outcomes is still too unfocused/unstructured, especially with regard to skills. While the programme is delivered in English, it is unclear whether all students complete the compulsory internship also in English, particularly when they choose to do the internship at an existing local organization. Study, informative and technical provision comply with the conditions for the implementation of the study programme and indicate the possibility to ensure that learning outcomes are achieved. The qualification of the teaching staff members involved in the implementation of the study programme comply with the requirements, and enables the achievement of the aims and learning outcomes of the study programme, however the information about the scientific publications of all teaching staff members has not been provided, some teaching staff members do not have research results at all.

Evaluation of the study programme "Start-up Management"

Evaluation of the study programme:

Good

2.6. Recommendations for the Study Programme "Start-up Management"

Short-term recommendations

1. To add the start-up component into the aim of the study program.
2. To consider developing and implementing a clear marketing strategy in regard to attracting prospective students, including, given the innovativeness of the programme, to develop and start implementing a marketing strategy for attracting international students.
3. To revise the learning outcomes making them realistic, achievable and measurable and grouping to achieve up to ~15(which is the average used practice in Latvia).
4. To clarify in the Internship course description whether it provides opportunities for the internship completion in the English language (since the programme is offered in English); to make sure that the self-assessment report and the information communicated in the annexes are aligned.

Long-term recommendations

1. To pay systematic attention to a continuous professional development of guest lecturers, including the completion of VeUAS offered Doctoral- and Master-level studies, pedagogical skills development, and involvement of lecturers in the research in cooperation with permanent academic staff members.

II - "Business Administration" ASSESSMENT

II - "Business Administration" ASSESSMENT

2.1. Indicators Describing the Study Programme

Analysis

2.1.1. The study content of the professional bachelor's study program "Business Administration" is interrelated with code 43 345, which corresponds to the Cabinet of Ministers' regulations on the Classification of Latvian Education". The compliance of the study programme with the relevant education standard Appendix 5.4 of the Self-assessment report. The content of the study program is in compliance within the Study field "Management, Administration and Management of Real Property" as well as with mission and strategy of the VeUAS.

2.1.2. The aim of the "Business Administration" (43345) study program is "to train high-level specialists, managers and entrepreneurs in sectors important for the national economy, while making a significant contribution to the development of entrepreneurship in Latvia", which is in line with the strategic priorities and the mission of VeUAS "to provide high-quality, up-to-date education corresponding to the current educational trends both in Europe and the world and to organise and develop a flexible educational system that implements principles of lifelong learning" stated in the Ventspils University of Applied Sciences Development Strategy 2021–2027. The strategic goals of the programme are well formulated and correspond to the general aim, however, one of them claiming to "Prepare specialists for private economic structures for work in Latvia, other European Union member states and foreign states outside the EU" seems to be narrow and limited, omitting the public listed companies and the non-for-profit institutions. The experts panel would recommend to rephrase this goal and broaden the scope as the qualifications, knowledge and skills obtained enable

the graduates successfully enter the labour market in different field regardless of the ownership of the selected company.

The acquired qualification level corresponds to the Latvian Qualifications Framework (LQF) level 6 and is tailored to the labor market requirements. Graduates are awarded Bachelor Degree of Social Sciences in Business Administration and are also able to continue their education at other higher education institutions to obtain Master degree. The study program has several main objectives outlining necessary knowledge, skills and competences formulated in accordance with the LQF level 6 requirements.

The content of the program is developed in accordance with the latest business developments in Latvia and is reflected in the title corresponding to the content and the requirements of the study field. Objectives, tasks and learning outcomes of the study programme are clearly defined. Strong impact is placed on the practical impact enabling students to adapt quickly to the modern business environment. The structure of the evaluated study program enables achievement of stipulated learning outcomes by preparing highly educated professionals equipped with all required knowledge, research and personal skills as well as social abilities to work in various organizations in terms of rapidly changing market conditions. During the visit employers emphasized that the program is tailored to the demand of the current labor market and latest developments in the world business environment and it is also reviewed on a regular basis.

The admission of students is based on regulatory laws and legislation (Article 46 of the Law on Higher Education Institutions and the Cabinet of Ministers Regulations No. 846 (as of 10 October 2006) "Regulations regarding the Requirements, Criteria and Procedures for Admission to Study Programmes". Prerequisites for admission to the program are transparent and ensure the entrants of the program with the appropriate level of the knowledge and skills, which is required to achieve the learning outcomes of the program, admission rules for the years 2023-2024 are clearly defined and publicly available at the website of the VeUAS <https://en.venta.lv/join-us/terms-of-admission> with the full text stipulating minimum entrance grades and foreign language test are presented in detail in the document "TERMS OF ADMISSION AND THE MATRICULATION PROCESS FOR VENTSPILS UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES INTERNATIONAL CANDIDATES FOR STUDIES IN ENGLISH-TAUGHT STUDY PROGRAMMES IN THE ACADEMIC YEAR 2023/2024" publicly available at the website of the university

https://irp.cdn-website.com/9945ff8b/files/uploaded/22-56_Uznemsanas_noteikumi_arzemniekiem_ENG_2023-24.pdf

Studies are conducted in English in the form of full-time studies (3 years) and in Latvian in the form of part-time studies (4 years), aimed at both international and local students as well as those who are already working. During the visit it became evident that there is a market demand for the graduates and the employment rate is above 90%.

2.1.3. The main corrections since the last accreditation of the study program were related to a clear division of learning outcomes to the following categories: "Knowledge", "Skills and Abilities", "Competences". They were taken into account and Annex 5.5. gives a detailed overview of mapping of the study courses/modules for the achievement of learning outcomes of the study program.

2.1.4. The program was developed in line with latest market requirements based on the outcomes of the World Economic Forum 2020 outlining the ten core skills of professionals as well as the main goal of the National Development Plan of Latvia stated as "human resilience". This program contributes to attracting and retaining human resources to the region.

The data presented to the experts' panel shows that there is a negative enrolment dynamic especially for the English version of the program: from 18 students in 2019/2020 academic year till 4 in the years of 2022/2023. There is also a low number of graduates with "zero" in 2019/2020 and 2021/2022 academic years. These facts as well as high drop-out rate are a matter of serious concern

and represent a challenge for the sustainability of the particular study programme. The expert panel is of the opinion that this issue should be addressed specifically in a tight alliance with the labor market. There is also a need to develop a clear marketing strategy logically following the strategic planning stipulating what to sell to whom and how, which was also mentioned during the interviews with social partners.

2.1.5. Not applicable

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

In general, it can be concluded the name of the study programme “Business Administration (43345), learning outcomes, and admission requirements are logically interrelated. The program was developed in accordance with the latest labor market requirement and the National Plan of Latvia and contributes to the attracting and retaining human resources to the region. It is compliant with the study field and has a high rate of employment. However, the low number of admitted students as well as low number of graduates combined with high dropout rates make it necessary to develop a clear market strategy to ensure sustainability of the study program.

Strengths:

1. The studies are conducted in English and Latvian aiming to attract foreign and local students.
2. The program is tailored to the needs of the modern business environment.

Weaknesses:

1. High dropout rates.
2. Low number of admitted students per year and low number of graduates.
3. Lack of clear marketing strategy in regard to attracting prospective students.

2.2. The Content of Studies and Implementation Thereof

Analysis

2.2.1. The academic Bachelor study programme ‘Business Administration’ has an overarching aim ‘to provide competitive, high-quality theoretical knowledge and education based on practical competence’ (SAR, p.68). The programme is based on ‘the principle of systematization and emphasizing the role of skillful management in ensuring a rational operation of economic structures’ (SAR, p.78). The learning outcomes are written out comprising knowledge, skills and attitudes (in line with the European Competence Framework; as a side note and observation, other programmes follow another set of guidelines – knowledge, skills, competences). The compliance with the educational standards is outlined in Annex 5.4., where somehow attitudes transformed into competences (this aspect needs attention). As the case with the other programmes, it is important to ensure that the learning outcomes’ achievement is measurable. The way some outcomes are currently formulated, e.g. ‘scrupulosity based on the ability to work and fulfil tasks while observing quality and environmental standards, independently searching and implementing motivation in improving current activities, and would be directed at using potentially available economic resources’ (SAR, p.70), suggests that the unambiguous evaluation of achievement is likely to be challenging.

The self-assessment report states (p.80) that the content of the study programme was developed based on the needs of the sector. Annex 5.6 outlines two groups of courses – mandatory courses and courses of limited and free choice, amounting to 120 credit points (in the local system) earned in three years (full-time) or four years (part-time). The approach to target balanced competence development ranging from cognitive development, critical thinking to dealing with

uncertainty/unpredictable environment is clear and relevant. The courses are referred to as being developed 'based on both scientific methods and practical business environments' in the mandatory courses and based on personality development insights in the elective courses.

The programme is offered in English in a full-time format, thus attracting international students (including those in the ERASMUS+ exchange programme) and in Latvian, in a part-time format for working professionals. In the part-time studies, online learning is actively employed (80% of classes). The Moodle platform serves as an important teaching-learning tool.

Judging by the course descriptions, the courses in this programme are better connected to one another than in other programmes, because more pre-requisites of successfully completing certain courses before enrolling to other courses are visible.

2.2.2. Not applicable

2.2.3. The self-assessment report mentions the independent organization of individual work by students, examination at the beginning of a semester, work in classes and participation in discussions. 'The student-centered principle of education permeates all the courses of the study programme, but it should be noted that the student should also take responsibility for the fulfillment of the obligations undertaken and the proper approach to the studies and the implementation of the tasks provided in them'.

From the viewpoint of teaching methods and overall teaching approach employed, the programme seems to be quite standard and perhaps even requiring more attention to using more engaging teaching methods (e.g. student lectures, flipped classroom). Some individual attention is provided to international students, to manage cultural differences and part-time students are given extra opportunities to use electronic forms of communication (also via Moodle).

The alignment between teaching methods and evaluation methods is challenging to conclude upon, similarly to other programmes of the study field. The evaluation structure is clear but what exactly is being assessed within each component, e.g. in practical work or study course tests, and how remains unspecified.

2.2.4. This is an academic programme that does not contain an internship.

2.2.5. Not applicable

2.2.6. The topics of 10 theses provided in the self-assessment report suggest that they are closely connected to the programme's study area – ranging from marketing communication, foreign direct investments, strategic marketing to managing specific industries and doing more case-based theses (local companies or well-known international brands like Red Bull and McDonalds). The inspection of one sample Bachelor thesis based on the local trade company (marketing communications area) demonstrated that the thesis is well-structured, neatly presented in terms of the written work quality but very thin on the research part/theoretical framework; the sources used are mostly internet links and a couple of textbooks (no scientific articles).

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

Well-planned academic programme that requires more attention for the research related aspects of the content, a renewed approach to teaching methods and a careful formulation of the learning outcomes (to make sure they are measurable and achievable).

Strengths:

1. Clear structure of the courses and acceptable interconnectedness between them.

2. Opportunities of both full-time and part-time study options, including the former attracting international students (potential for further development and strategic focus).

Weaknesses:

1. Some learning outcomes are ambiguously formulated, not clear how to achieve or measure them.
2. Weak scientific/research component of teaching that reflects in the quality of the theses; should be worked on and strengthened, especially given the nature of the academic programme.
3. Lack of innovative teaching methods that could engage and motivate students.

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

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

NA

2.3. Resources and Provision of the Study Programme

Analysis

2.3.1. The overall compliance of the resources and provision - study provision, scientific support, informative provision, material and technical provision, and financial provision - with the necessities for the implementation of the study programmes and the learning outcomes is appropriate. It must be highlighted that VeUAS does not separate infrastructure by its study programmes within the study field of Management, Administration and Management of Real Property. Resources are assessed on the Faculty and University level. The resource base available for the implementation of the Academic bachelor study programme "Business Administration" (study, informative, material and technical provisions, infrastructure) is fully sufficient to enable the possibility to achieve defined study outcomes.

During the visit the involved parties confirmed that resources and provisions are adequate for implementation of the study programme and there is clear procedure on how new material or informative resources can be requested, approved and procure (including software licensing and other necessities). In conclusion, during the visit there were no indications from both staff members and students of possible shortcomings regarding material and resource provisions.

There are no exclusive resources (or specific resource needs) for the Academic bachelor study programme "Business Administration" that does not apply to other study programmes undergoing evaluation, therefore analysis in Joint Opinion chapter 1.3. applies in this instance as well.

2.3.2. Not applicable

2.3.3. VeUAS notes that as of October 1st, 2022, the study programme has on average 26 students. The tuition fee of the programme per student is EUR 1700 per year for full-time studies, EUR 1100 for part-time studies. Expenses per student are 2193 EUR. The break-even point of the program would require 32 (SAR 3.3.3.).

The revenue can be broken down as follows: state subsidy 87%, municipal funding 13%. While expenditures - remuneration 59%, scholarships 16%, goods and services (for the faculty) 3%, other expenses 22% (SAR 3.3.3.).

As of now student number is just under the break-even threshold, therefore indicating the need to address the issue regarding student number or sustainability of study programme. However, the

financial base is sufficient for the implementation of study programmes, taking into account that the costs of implementing study programmes are covered from various financial sources: state financing, municipal financing and tuition fees.

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

In general, study provision, scientific provision, informative provision, material and technical provision and also financial provision comply with the conditions for the implementation of the study programme and indicate the possibility to ensure that learning outcomes are achieved.

Strengths:

1. Study, technical and informative provisions are in good standing.

Weaknesses:

1. Decreasing and a relatively small number of students is a risk for the sustainability of the study programme from a financial point of view

Assessment of the requirement [6]

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The study provision, scientific provision, informative provision, material and technical provision and financial provision create prerequisites for the achievement of the learning outcomes and indicate the possibility to ensure a successful study process.

2.4. Teaching Staff

Analysis

2.4.1. The study programme is implemented with the involvement of 17 teaching staff members. Based on the information provided in the Annex 2.8 to the SAR, 6 professors or associated professors elected at the VeUAS take part in implementation of the study programme. Thus the requirement of the Law on Higher Education Institutions, Section 55, Paragraph one, Clause 3 is fulfilled (on the minimum number (5) of professors and associate professors elected to academic positions taking part in the implementation of academic study programmes). However, the Review Panel notes that the information provided in the SAR, p. 3.4.1., Table 5.4., in few cases differs from the information provided in the Annex 2.8.

Some teaching staff members have good practical experience in business and administration and hold managerial roles in private or public institutions which is beneficial to the study process.

The English language skills of teaching staff are sufficient to fulfill the requirements and to meet the programme objectives. The documents provided certifies that the English language proficiency level of the teaching staff is at least B2. The interviews confirmed that the overall English language proficiency was acceptable.

2.4.2. Changes were made in the implementation of this academic Bachelor's study programme by aligning the full-time study courses in English with the newly developed and updated part-time study programme in Latvian which was in line with the recommendations of the previous accreditation report (2020). The courses involving mathematical methods have been reduced, and the courses

included reflect the latest interdisciplinary digital trends and the application of learning outcomes in the professional field, especially in the part-time programme (SAR, 3.4.2).

According to the Analysis of the results of student surveys provided by the VeUAS (Annex 2-6 to the SAR), the student satisfaction with the lecturer's performance was the lowest for the study programme "Business Administration" comparing to other study programmes in the period 2020-2021, however the satisfaction increased in 2021 reaching the 2nd rank among other programmes in 2021 and 2022.

Considering this positive change, the review panel does not have any concerns about the continuity or negative developments of the programme.

2.4.3. Not applicable

2.4.4. The analysis made by the peer review panel of the list of scientific publications, conferences, and projects of the teaching staff from 2017 to 2022 (Appendix 2.13 to the SAR) indicates that not all teaching staff members have scientific publications.

Information about the research results of some of the teaching staff members is not provided in the Appendix 12.13.

The review Panel recommends that the scientific research results of all teaching staff members are updated and collected. The VeUAS should also put more effort to support the involvement of its teaching staff members in research activities and linking teaching to research by providing necessary support and resources, incentives, requirements and facilitating instruments.

2.4.5. Several lecturers of the Faculty of Translation Studies and the Faculty of Information Technology are involved in implementing the programme. Several study courses, such as Psychology, English, Intercultural Communication Aspects, Project Management, Record-keeping, Human Resources, Sustainability and Green Thinking involve students of the study programme "Languages and Intercultural Communication" (implemented by the Faculty of Translation Studies of VeUAS) (SAR, 3.4.5).

During interviews, formal and informal meetings among teaching staff were mentioned as the main method to facilitate cooperation and mutual coordination of content and teaching.

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

The qualification of the teaching staff members involved in the implementation of the study programme comply with the requirements, and enables the achievement of the aims and learning outcomes of the study programme. The teaching staff changes were initiated to ensure better balance in the workload of the teaching staff, in order to implement recommendations from the previous accreditation report. The changes have positively affected the implementation of the study programme. The information about the publications in peer-reviewed editions of all teaching staff members has not been provided, some teaching staff members do not have scientific research results. There are mechanisms in place to facilitate mutual cooperation of the teaching staff, cooperation takes place de facto to support the achievement of the aims of the study programme and interconnection of study courses.

Strengths:

1. Low student-lecturer ratio allowing for an individual approach in teaching and learning.
2. Practical experience and professional achievements of teaching staff members.

Weaknesses:

1. Only few teaching staff members have publications in peer-reviewed editions.

Assessment of the requirement [7]

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Formal qualification requirements of the academic staff members have been fulfilled.

2.5. Assessment of the Compliance

Requirements

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Annex 5.4 ("5-4_pielikums_Atbalstiba valsts standartam_BA (ENG)_02.docx (1).pdf") confirms that the study program complies with Cabinet Regulation No. 240 "Noteikumi par valsts akadēmiskās izglītības standartu"

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Attached study course descriptions (" 5_7_appendix_BA_kursu_apraksti.prec.pdf") are prepared in english and latvian. Descriptions complies with regulations set forth in Law on Higher Education Institutions.

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The provided Diploma sample ("5-1_diploma_diploma-supplement.pdf") complies with the procedure by which state-recognised documents of higher education are issued in accordance with Cabinet Regulation No. 202 "Kārtība, kādā izsniedz valsts atzītus augstāko izglītību apliecinošus dokumentus".

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Attached confirmation ("5_8_pielikums_apliecinajums.pdf") indicates involvement of 3 elected professors and 2 associated professors.

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Attached resumes of staff and VeUAS confirmation letter 30.12.2022. Nr. 1-10.1/81 (2-10_apliecinājums par valsts valodu.pdf) verifies that state language proficiency is compliant with Cabinet Regulation No. 733 "Noteikumi par valsts valodas zināšanu apjomu, valsts valodas prasmes pārbaudes kārtību un valsts nodevu par valsts valodas prasmes pārbaudi".

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Attached resumes of staff and VeUAS confirmation letter 11.10.2022. Nr. 1-10.1/52 ("2-11_pielikums_apliecinajums par angļu val_LV_ENG.edoc") verifies that language proficiency in English is at least B2.

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Sample of attached study agreement ("2-5_appendix_stud_liguma_paraugs_ENG.pdf") complies with Cabinet Regulation No. 70 "Studiju līgumā obligāti ietveramie noteikumi".

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

VeUAS confirmation letter 30.12.2022. Nr. 1-10.1/80 states, that students are guaranteed compensation for losses if the study programme is not accredited or the licence of the study programme is revoked due to the actions of the college (actions or failure to act) and the student does not wish to continue the studies in another study programme.

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

Assessment of the requirement [8]

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Study programme complies with regulatory requirements.

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

Study programme is compliant with the study field and has a high rate of employment. However, the low number of admitted students as well as low number of graduates combined with high dropout rates make it necessary to develop a clear market strategy to ensure sustainability of the study program. Study programme requires more attention for the research related aspects of the content, a renewed approach to teaching methods and a careful formulation of the learning outcomes. Study, material and informative provisions comply with the conditions for the implementation of the study programme and indicate the possibility to ensure that learning outcomes are achieved. The qualification of the teaching staff members involved in the implementation of the study programme comply with the requirements, and enables the achievement of the aims and learning outcomes of the study programme. The information about the publications in peer-reviewed editions of all teaching staff members has not been provided, some teaching staff members do not have scientific research results.

Evaluation of the study programme "Business Administration"

Evaluation of the study programme:

Good

2.6. Recommendations for the Study Programme "Business Administration"

Short-term recommendations

1. To consider developing and implementing a clear marketing strategy directed at attracting prospective students, logically following the strategic planning stipulating what to "sell" to whom and how.

2. To update information about teaching staff involved in implementation of the academic bachelor study programme "Business Administration" as the information provided in the SAR, p. 3.4.1., Table 5.4., in few cases differs from the information provided in the Annex 2.8.
3. To collect and sustain full information about scientific publications of all teaching staff.
4. To review how some learning outcomes are formulated, making sure they are achievable and measurable, and the evaluation methods are aligned with the outcomes.
5. To strengthen the scientific/research component of teaching in order to comply with the academic standards of the Bachelor programme. As part of this recommendation, the quality of students' Bachelor theses should be improved with clearer theoretical frameworks and more references to peer-reviewed scientific articles on a given topic.
6. To introduce a more innovative approach to teaching by using methods that can augment students' engagement and motivation (e.g. students' lectures, flipped classroom, learning diaries and reflections) (some of these methods can simultaneously serve as evaluation methods).

Long-term recommendations

1. To consider implementing a mentorship programme, taking into account experience from the study programme "Start-up Management" to further enhance student learning experience and personal growth.
2. Consider developing and implementing policy and measures aiming to increase the number of graduates.
3. To put more effort into supporting the involvement of the academic staff members in research activities and linking teaching to research results by providing necessary resources, incentives, requirements, and facilitating instruments.
4. In relation to negative enrolment dynamic as well as high drop-out rate which are matters of serious concern representing a challenge for the sustainability of study programme, to address these issues specifically in a tight alliance with the labor market.

II - "Business Administration" ASSESSMENT

II - "Business Administration" ASSESSMENT

2.1. Indicators Describing the Study Programme

Analysis

2.1.1. According to SAR the compliance of the name of the study program - "Business Administration" - to the thematic field of education is indicated in the International Standard Classification of Education there one of the groups is defined as "Business and administration", belonging to the thematic area "Marketing and administration", which is part of the educational thematic group "Social sciences, marketing and law. It is also in compliance with the OECD classification corresponding to the field of "Economics and Business" as well with the Cabinet Regulation No. 793 "Regulations Regarding Opening and Accreditation of Study Fields".

2.1.2. The aim of the "Business Administration" (47345) Professional master study programme is "prepare competitive managers and leading specialists for professional practical activity in the field

of business administration.”, which is in line with the strategic priorities and the mission of VeUAS “to provide high-quality, up-to-date education corresponding to the current educational trends both in Europe and the world and to organise and develop a flexible educational system that implements principles of lifelong learning” stated in the Ventspils University of Applied Sciences Development Strategy 2021-2027. However, it does not reflect the very nature and meaning of the MBA programme omitting the leadership component and contribution to sustainable business development, which will serve as a clear message to future students. In the SAR (p.98) it is stated that “the content of the study programmes is based on the implementation of the UN Sustainable Development Goals and the study programmes prepare professionals who support sustainable, responsible and ethical entrepreneurship”. In the opinion of the experts’ panel that statement is very much in line with the current ESG trend in business and should be incorporated into the aim and the tasks of the programme to attract students and motivate them to choose this particular program. This would ensure the consistency among aim, tasks and the results of the study programme.

The acquired qualification level corresponds to the Latvian Qualifications Framework (LQF) level 7 and the requirements of the professional qualification Level 5 occupational standard “Manager of the organization” as well as to the latest trends on the national and international labour market.

Graduates are awarded Professional Master's Degree in Business Administration as well as the Qualification of the Manager of the Organization being also able to continue their education at other higher education institutions to obtain PhD degree. The main objectives of the study program outline necessary knowledge, skills and competences formulated in accordance with the LQF level 7 requirements.

The title of the program “Business Administration” code 47345 are in tight interrelation with it’s content, which is developed in accordance with the latest business and economic developments in Latvia and are in compliance with the requirements of the study field.

Objectives, tasks and learning outcomes of the study programme are clearly defined. Strong impact is placed on the requirement of the modern business environment, latest OECD skills strategy and the sustainable business development goals (SDGs). The structure of the evaluated study program enables achievement of stipulated learning outcomes by preparing highly educated business managers equipped with all required knowledge, research and personal skills as well as social abilities to contribute to sustainable business management of companies in terms of rapidly changing market conditions. During the visit employers emphasized that the program is tailored to the demand of the current labour market and latest developments in the world business environment and it is also reviewed on a regular basis.

Studies are conducted in Latvian in either two- or one-year period - at two levels depending on the profile of the enrolled student. The ones holding the professional Bachelor's degree may continue their studies by completing in-depth study courses in the field of business administration by completing the one year 40 CP level. The ones holding an academic Bachelor's degree are able to complete the program and obtain a Master's degree as well as professional qualification by completing a two-year programme of 80 CP. This would provide students with different academic background to continue their studies and get the desired degree and qualifications.

The admission of students is based on regulatory laws and legislation (Article 46 of the Law on Higher Education Institutions and the Cabinet of Ministers Regulations No. 846 (as of 10 October 2006) “Regulations regarding the Requirements, Criteria and Procedures for Admission to Study Programmes”. Prerequisites for admission to the program are transparent and ensure the entrants of the program with the appropriate level of the knowledge and skills, which is required to achieve the learning outcomes of the program. The admission requirements are different depending on the level of the study program: the ones applying for the two-year 80 CP program need to hold either academic Bachelor's degree in “Economics”, “Management, Administration and Real Estate Management” or an academic Bachelor's or professional Bachelor's degree or a second level

vocational higher education in another study direction and two years of management experience. While the ones interested in the year 40 CP level are required to have a professional Bachelor's degree or a second level vocational higher education and/or a fifth level professional qualification in "Economics" or "Management, Administration and Real Estate Management". The result for the admission is based on the weighted average grade obtained during the Bachelor studies. Based on the information obtained during the experts' visit at VEUAS, experts would suggest for Professional master study programme "Business Administration" (47345, 1 year, 40 CP) – to consider adding to admission requirements also professional (working or management) experience similarly as to 2-year 80 CP programme's format. This would possibly ensure a more coherent group of students in relation to their professional experience as currently it might sometimes be the case that the group is very diverse in their experience – some have lots of experience (adults) and some have none.

2.1.3. The program will encounter significant changes in accordance with the latest accreditation report as well as the Law on Higher Educational Institutions in regard to the planning of study courses and distribution of credits among the courses, choice and variety of elective courses. Some changes are already incorporated, the detailed information was presented in SAR p.94, table 61 showing the changes in credits for the selected courses, thesis and internship. The corrections made and planned to be made for this study program are justified and correspond to the study field requirements, their implementation is supported by the VEUAS and the main changes are made already.

2.1.4. During the visit it became evident that the program was developed in tight cooperation with social partners based on the latest requirements of the business market, considering the 2022 report by the Ministry of Economics "Informative Report on Medium and Long-term Labour Market Forecasts", OECD report for the development of future skills and the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). This is confirmed by the fact that there is a market demand for the graduates and the employment rate is above 90%.

The data presented to the experts' panel shows the slight decrease in the number of admitted students within 2019-2020 from 41 to 37, as well as the decline in the number of graduates from 35 till 28. During the meeting with the administration it was explained by the overall situation in the region as well as the Covid-19 impact. The expert panel considers this as a serious issue that should be addressed by developing a clear market strategy in close cooperation with the representatives of the labour market. There is also a need to develop a clear marketing strategy logically following the strategic planning stipulating what to sell to whom and how, which was also mentioned during the interviews with social partners.

2.1.5. Not applicable.

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

In general, it can be concluded that the name the "Business Administration" (47345), the professional qualification of "Manager of the Organization" to be acquired, learning outcomes, and admission requirements are logically interrelated. The program is developed in accordance with OECD Skills Strategy and SDGs and is tailored to the needs of the modern business environment which is confirmed by the high employability rate. This needs to be reflected in the aim of the study program adding value to its attractiveness for prospective students. As currently the declining number of graduates is challenging the sustainability of the program and requires the development of a clear marketing strategy.

Strengths:

1. The program is tailored to OECD Skills Strategy and SDGs.
2. The program is tailored to the needs of the modern business environment.

Weaknesses:

1. Lack of sustainability and leadership component in the formulation of the aim of the study program.
2. High dropout rates.
3. Declining number of graduates.
4. Lack of clear marketing strategy in regard to attracting prospective students.

2.2. The Content of Studies and Implementation Thereof

Analysis

2.2.1. The professional Master programme offers two levels of studies depending on the type of a Bachelor degree obtained: 60 ECTS for graduates with a professional Bachelor degree in related fields and 120 ECTS for graduates with an academic Bachelor degree. Thematically it provides an opportunity for a sequential continuation of the professional Bachelor programme 'Business Management'.

The self-assessment report states that the content of the programme is designed according to the requirements of the national vocational education standard, 'to provide students with the necessary knowledge of business administration, helping them to acquire the skills and achieve the competence required to become a manager of an organization, therefore enhancing their competitiveness in the labor market'. Annex 6.4 maps the correspondence of the programme's content to the fifth level of professional qualification (PKL 5) and the seventh level of the Latvian Qualifications Framework (LQF 7). The programme concisely sets out five major learning outcomes (classified into knowledge, skills and competences), the achievement of which results in a professional qualification Enterprise Manager.

The programme content consists of:

1) study courses that provide learning on the latest developments in the theory and practice of the field (Financial and Investment Management, Innovation and Technology Management, Strategic Human Resources Management), 2) study courses in research, innovation, project work and management science (e.g. Creative Entrepreneurship and Marketing, Practical Business Management, Organization of Research, Strategic Management, Crisis Management, Business Valuation). Elective study courses, internship/professional internship, development and defense of a Master's thesis are the other components of the programme.

From the course descriptions in the annex 6.7, it is evident that several courses set the basic knowledge in business and management as an entry prerequisite. The content within the study courses is described in the self-assessment report as 'sequential'. The interconnectedness between the courses within different components of the study programme is not directly evident from the materials provided (the study plan in the annex 6.6, course descriptions in the annex 6.7 or the self-assessment report).

Multiple assessments of the programme courses' relevance to the needs of the economy, business sector and labor market are carried out within the cooperation model emphasizing the sustainable development of Latvia in line with Cabinet of Ministers regulation: annual self-assessment reports of the study direction and study programmes; annual process of development, coordination and approval of study plans; meetings of the study programme council and the faculty council; meetings of the state examination commission, etc. This aspect of the programme looks strong and well-organized, ensuring that multiple stakeholders are involved in the programme re-design and improvement.

Some course descriptions contain multiple textbooks in the bibliography part (Crisis Management,

Sustainable Society) and no latest scientific articles, e.g. in the fields of entrepreneurship and marketing, that can still be very relevant to such applied fields within the professional programme. The learning outcomes evaluation structure is the same as in other programmes, hence, similar comments apply that there is not enough information to make unambiguous judgment about the alignment between the outcomes, teaching methods and evaluation methods.

2.2.2. The study programme 'Business Administration' corresponds to the field of Economics and Business Science, sub-discipline Business Administration. The self-assessment report states that 'Students of the study programme develop research on various issues and processes related to business administration, solving problem situations in different sectors of the economy. The research orientation of the programme is interdisciplinary, with entrepreneurship as its unifying element, and entrepreneurship can be pursued in different sectors of the economy' (SAR, p.104). While students do carry out independent research work under the supervision and the reported topics of the Master theses are relevant to the field, the overall tendency is that the studies conducted are very practical and 'thin on the theory part'. This might impose some limitations on the correspondence of the degrees awarded to the cutting-edge research in the field and the translation of this research into practice (which can be interpreted as the growth zone of the programme).

2.2.3. According to the self-assessment report, the programme extensively uses the problem-based learning approach and a variety of standard teaching methods such as lectures, seminars, discussions, practical classes, social simulations, role plays, literature studies, simulation games, individual and group consultations, study visits, case studies (extensively), students' independent individual work, presentations, conferences, guest speakers from the industry – in work groups and self-organized study. The interactive teaching methods seem to prevail in order to promote students' active and conscious participation in the study process. The self-assessment report emphasizes the practical experience of teaching staff that helps establish the synergy between theory and practice.

The study programme runs full-time, with at least 30% consisting of contact hours, whereby remote/distance learning does not exceed 50% of the total number of hours. What remains unclear from the information provided is how 'learning-by-doing' is applied in distance learning (p.105 of the self-assessment report).

The student-centered learning aspect seems to be ensured by providing individual consultations to students and by giving students direct voice in the improvement of the study programme (including personal expressions of wishes to the course lecturer, programme director, dean or specialists of the study department). Student surveys and course meetings are organized at least twice per academic year. The self-assessment report also outlines 11 principles of student-centered education that the programme adopts, including mutual respect between teaching staff and students, collaborative approach in the study course delivery, and promoting students' independence. Overall, this aspect seems quite well-developed in the study programme.

2.2.4. The programme offers two internship options: general internship (9 ECTS) and professional internship (30 ECTS). Regulations of participation in the internship are set out in the objectives and conditions (the annex 6.8). Students have to develop an individual internship plan, keep the diary of the process, prepare and defend the internship report.

The international aspect is also considered – through Erasmus+ mobility internships, students can get international business experience.

Overall, the internship seems to be well-organized and very relevant for the programme, particularly in the frames of the problem-based learning.

2.2.5. Not applicable

2.2.6. The analyzed Master theses, by the content and titles, can be considered as relevant and fitting well with the study programme's objectives. The overarching groups of topics elaborated upon in the self-assessment report include: current trends in economics and business, business environment and market research, financial analysis, business process analysis, strategic planning, etc. The sequence of steps in stages of writing the thesis is standard starting from the problem identification, coming up with a hypothesis to discussing results and conclusions. Some examples of the theses examined are as follows:

- Comparative analysis of economic development in the Baltic States;
- The role of the bio-economy in Latvian agricultural sector;
- Digital marketing as a tool for construction companies development in the Kuldiga region.

All of them are interesting and well-written, well-structured theses that, however, lack the theoretical contribution aspect or latest scientific research related developments. That said, some elements of basic theory application, e.g. Porter's Five Forces, digital marketing strategy, are present.

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

Quite strong, well thought-through study programme that is on a visible path of continuous development. Achievable learning outcomes, up-to-date teaching methods. Since the programme contains salient research orientation in spite of having a professional focus, this aspect can be better developed/supported (e.g. at the moment in the course descriptions there are very few latest scientific articles, e.g. in the fields of entrepreneurship and marketing, that can still be very relevant to such applied fields within the professional programme).

Strengths:

1. Elaborate principles of student-centered learning and the prevailing problem-based learning approach in teaching.
2. Well-planned options for the study programme completion that attract students with different types of Bachelor degrees, e.g. one year for professional Bachelor degree holders or a second level vocational higher education in the same study direction and two years for academic Bachelor degree holders or other comparable diploma in another study direction accompanied by managerial experience.

Weaknesses:

1. The interconnectedness between the study courses can be better highlighted/explained.
2. The research/scientific aspect of the Master theses seems somewhat deficient.

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

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The professional Master programme is designed with a salient orientation towards recent developments in business administration.

2.3. Resources and Provision of the Study Programme

Analysis

2.3.1. The overall compliance of the resources and provision - study provision, scientific support, informative provision, material and technical provision, and financial provision - with the necessities for the implementation of the study programmes and the learning outcomes is appropriate. It must be highlighted that VeUAS does not separate infrastructure by its study programmes within the study field of Management, Administration and Management of Real Property. Resources are assessed on the Faculty and University level. The resource base available for the implementation of the Professional master study programme "Business Administration" (study, informative, material and technical provisions, infrastructure) is fully sufficient to enable the possibility to achieve defined study outcomes.

During the visit the involved parties confirmed that resources and provisions are adequate for implementation of the study programme and there is clear procedure on how new material or informative resources can be requested, approved and procure (including software licensing and other necessities). In conclusion, during the visit there were no indications from both staff members and students of possible shortcomings regarding material and resource provisions.

There are no exclusive resources (or specific resource needs) for the Professional master study programme "Business Administration" that does not apply to other study programmes undergoing evaluation, therefore analysis in Joint Opinion chapter 1.3. applies in this instance as well.

2.3.2. Not applicable

2.3.3. VeUAS notes that in 2022/2023, the study programme would have 70 students. The tuition fee of the programme per student is EUR 2270 per year. Expenses per student are 2193 EUR. The break-even point of the program would require 32 (SAR 3.3.3.).

The revenue can be broken down as follows: state subsidy 56%, municipal funding 9%, tuition fees 35%. While expenditures - remuneration 59%, scholarships 16%, goods and services (for the faculty) 3%, other expenses 22% (SAR 3.3.3.).

VeUAS calculates that at least 64 students would be needed, including 42 students in the state-budget funded study places and 22 students who study at their own expense. Thus, taking into account that the programme had 70 students in 2022 ($70 > 64$), it can be concluded that the programme is not loss-making. The calculation of the programme's break-even point, or minimum number of students, revenue and expenditure is presented in Annex 6.11. (SAR 3.3.3.). As indicated by VeUAS, student number is just under the break-even threshold, therefore indicating the need to address the issue regarding student number or sustainability of study programme. However, the financial base is sufficient for the implementation of study programmes, taking into account that the costs of implementing study programmes are covered from various financial sources: state financing, municipal financing and tuition fees.

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

In general, study provision, scientific provision, informative provision, material and technical provision and also financial provision comply with the conditions for the implementation of the study programme and indicate the possibility to ensure that learning outcomes are achieved.

Strengths:

1. Study, technical and informative provisions are in good standing.

Weaknesses:

1. Decreasing and a relatively small number of students is a risk for the sustainability of the study programme from a financial point of view.

Assessment of the requirement [6]

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The study provision, scientific provision, informative provision, material and technical provision and financial provision create prerequisites for the achievement of the learning outcomes and indicate the possibility to ensure a successful study process.

2.4. Teaching Staff

Analysis

2.4.1. 16 lecturers are involved in the implementation of the programme. The level of qualification of teaching staff allows the achievement of intended learning outcomes: 4 of them are professors (1 - guest professor), 4 have doctoral degree (2 - assistant professors, 2 - guest professors), 4 have master degree and are pursuing doctoral studies (3 of them - guest lecturers), 4 have master degree (2 of them - guest lecturers). According to the SAR (3.4.1), 69% of teaching staff are elected at Ventspils University of Applied Sciences, and 31% are specially invited highly qualified specialists, 8 teaching staff members have doctoral degrees, six of them are associate professors or professors. Thus, the requirements of the Law on Higher Education Institutions, Section 39, are fulfilled.

2.4.2. Comparing the 2019/2020 and the 2021/2022 academic years, there has been a slight decrease in the number of teaching staff with Doctoral degrees, including professors and associate professors. Changes in the composition of the academic staff have been affected by the long-term absences and retirement of several teaching staff and the termination of employment. The newly invited guest lecturers are highly qualified professionals with experience in the field (SAR, 3.4.2). Some of the invited guest lecturers are Doctoral students of VeUAS, who are also successful in business (SAR, 3.4.1). Doctoral student involvement contributes to the development of the academic staff and preparation of the next generation of academic staff. No major changes in academic staff are planned in the future.

2.4.3. Not applicable

2.4.4. The majority of teaching staff members are involved in research activities, preparing scientific publications and co-publications published in journals and conference proceedings indexed in SCOPUS, Web of Sciences and EBSCO databases. The teaching staff involved in the study programme are authors of textbooks and scientific monographs. The high professional qualifications of the teaching staff are demonstrated by their rights to work as experts of the Latvian Council of Science (LCS). In the academic year 2021/2022, 4 teaching staff members were granted the expert rights in the Economics and Business. 3 teaching staff members worked in research and development project programmes (SAR, 3.4.1).

However, the analysis made by the peer review panel of the list of scientific publications, conferences, projects of the academic staff from 2017 to 2022 (Appendix 2.13 to the SAR) indicates that not all members of the academic staff members have published in peer-review editions.

It would be recommended that VeUAS should put more effort to support the involvement of its academic staff members in research activities and linking teaching to research by providing necessary support and resources, incentives, requirements and facilitating instruments.

2.4.5. Teaching staff from different faculties are involved in the implementation of the study process. Cooperation between the teaching staff is promoted through both formal and informal events, examples of which were mentioned in the SAR and during the interviews, e.g., meetings to coordinate thematic areas and evaluation criteria, discussion of the quality of final theses at meetings organized by the faculty, joint research projects and publications involving both teachers and students, both internal and in co-operation with external institutions.

In addition, teaching staff are invited to participate in organized professional development and methodological seminars, courses and discussions, as well as classroom observations of each other, where the application of psycho-pedagogical approaches and teaching methods are discussed afterwards.

The average teacher - student ratio is 5:1 allowing for individual approach in the teaching process.

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

The qualification of the teaching staff members involved in the implementation of the study programme comply with the requirements, and enables the achievement of the aims and learning outcomes of the study programme. The changes implemented in the composition of the teaching staff has not negatively affected the quality of the implementation of the study programme. Only few teaching staff members have publications in peer-reviewed editions, and the information about the scientific publications has not been provided for all teaching staff members, some teaching staff members do not have scientific research results at all. There are mechanisms in place to facilitate mutual cooperation of the teaching staff, cooperation takes place de facto to support the achievement of the aims of the study programme and interconnection of study courses.

Strengths:

1. Preparation of the next teaching staff generation by involving doctoral students in the programme implementation.
2. The practical experience of teaching staff in business and management, involvement of industry experts in the implementation of the study programme.
3. The high professional qualification of the teaching staff: four staff members have the rights to work as experts of the Latvian Council of Science in the field of Economics and Business.

Weaknesses:

1. Only a few staff members have publications in peer-reviewed editions. One elected academic staff member does not have research results at all.

Assessment of the requirement [7]

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Formal compliance requirements of the academic staff have been fulfilled.

2.5. Assessment of the Compliance

Requirements

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Annex 6.3 ("6_3_pielikums_valsts_standarts_ENG_2022_precizets.pdf") confirms that the study program complies with Cabinet Regulation No. 512 "Noteikumi par otrā līmeņa profesionālās augstākās izglītības valsts standartu"

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Annex 6.4. ("6_4_pielikums_standartam_LV_2022.pdf") confirms that the programme is compliant with the Manager of the Organisation professional standard (approved on September 18, 2019)

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Attached study course descriptions ("6_7_pielikums_studiju_kursu_apraksti_ENG_2022_precizets.pdf") are prepared in latvian. Descriptions complies with regulations set forth in Law on Higher Education Institutions.

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The provided Diploma sample ("6_1_appendix_diploma_diploma-supplement.pdf") complies with the procedure by which state-recognised documents of higher education are issued in accordance with Cabinet Regulation No. 202 "Kārtība, kādā izsniedz valsts atzītus augstāko izglītību apliecinošus dokumentus".

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Attached resumes of staff and VeUAS confirmation letter 30.12.2022. Nr. 1-10.1/81 (2-10_apliecinājums par valsts valodu.pdf) verifies that state language proficiency is compliant with Cabinet Regulation No. 733 "Noteikumi par valsts valodas zināšanu apjomu, valsts valodas prasmes pārbaudes kārtību un valsts nodevu par valsts valodas prasmes pārbaudi".

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Sample of attached study agreement ("2-5_appendix_stud_liguma_paraugs_ENG.pdf") complies with Cabinet Regulation No. 70 "Studiju līgumā obligāti ietveramie noteikumi".

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Attached contract with Turība University ("2.3._pielikums_sadarbības_līgumi_LV.pdf") confirms that the institution provides the possibility to continue studies within the professional master study programme "Management Sciences".

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

VeUAS confirmation letter 30.12.2022. Nr. 1-10.1/80 states, that students are guaranteed compensation for losses if the study programme is not accredited or the licence of the study programme is revoked due to the actions of the college (actions or failure to act) and the student does not wish to continue the studies in another study programme.

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

Assessment of the requirement [8]

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Study programme complies with regulatory requirements.

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

Study programme title, the professional qualification of “Manager of the Organization” to be acquired, learning outcomes, and admission requirements are logically interrelated. Study programme features achievable learning outcomes and up-to-date teaching methods. Since the programme contains salient research orientation in spite of having a professional focus, this aspect can be better developed/supported. Material, informative and study provisions comply with the conditions for the implementation of the study programme and indicate the possibility to ensure that learning outcomes are achieved. The qualification of the teaching staff members involved in the implementation of the study programme comply with the requirements, and enables the achievement of the aims and learning outcomes of the study programme, however Only few teaching staff members have publications in peer-reviewed editions, and the information about the scientific publications has not been provided for all teaching staff members, some teaching staff members do not have scientific research results at all.

Evaluation of the study programme "Business Administration"

Evaluation of the study programme:

Good

2.6. Recommendations for the Study Programme "Business Administration"

Short-term recommendations

1. To consider adding to the admission requirements a professional (working or management) experience similarly as to 2-year 80 CP programme's format. This would possibly ensure a more coherent group of students in relation to their professional experience as currently it might sometimes be the case that the group is very diverse in their experience – some have lots of experience (adults) and some have none.
2. To collect full information about the peer-reviewed publications of all academic staff members. An overview should also include the professional experience and achievements for those academic staff members that do not have scientific research results to ensure easier assessment on the compliance to requirements of the Law on Higher Education Institutions.
3. To introduce the sustainability and leadership component in the formulation of the study programme's aim.
4. To develop and implement a purposeful marketing strategy directed at attracting prospective students.
5. In the programme description, to highlight more explicitly how the study courses are interconnected.

6. To pay special attention to strengthening the theoretical component of the Master theses (presence of a theoretical framework/conceptual model, theoretical foundation of the empirical work rooted in the latest scientific developments).

Long-term recommendations

1. To regularly monitor the high dropout rates among students and develop an actionable strategy to tackle this problem.
2. To develop and implement a strategy with special measures in place (e.g. through positive word-of-mouth, social networks or alike) to increase the number of students.
3. To consider incorporating ESG trend into the aim and the tasks of the programme to attract students and motivate them to choose this particular program. This would ensure the consistency among aim, tasks and the results of the study programme.
4. To put more efforts into supporting the involvement of the academic staff members in research activities and linking teaching to research results by providing necessary resources, incentives, requirements, and facilitating instruments.
5. Consider including professional experience in admission requirements for the professional master level programme to ensure more coherent group's experience and knowledge level thus to avoid too wide diversity with some students having lots of experience (adults) and some having none.

II - "Economics and Business" ASSESSMENT

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2.1. Indicators Describing the Study Programme

Analysis

2.1.1. The joint study program Economics and Business (51345) is compliant with the study field is stated in the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED-F[1]) naming educational groups, with one defined as "Business and administration", being a part of the "Marketing and administration" field, which is in turn a part of the education group of "Social sciences, marketing and law". Also, according to the OECD classification, the study programme corresponds to the field of Economics and Business, with the sub-discipline "Business Administration".

2.1.2. The aim of the Economics and Business (51345) joint study program is "to provide Doctoral level academic studies in business and economics, to prepare highly qualified experts (specialists) capable of creating new knowledge in the field, and to obtain a Doctoral degree that meets international standards." which is in line with the mission and vision of the Ventspils University of Applied Sciences Development Strategy 2021-2027 outlining the importance of providing high-quality education corresponding to the current educational trends both in Europe and the world. However, the wording of the aim is not correct as the aim should represent the final destination point, reflecting the graduate's profile. The aim of the program should reflect the field of studies as well as their contribution to the scientific research in the selected field. This will deliver a message to potential students of what they will learn, and how they could implement the obtained knowledge and skills. The current aim seems to lack the focus of the target market and makes it difficult to understand who are the potential students and the graduates. Therefore, it would be beneficial to

develop a clear marketing strategy logically following the strategic planning of the VeUAS stipulating what to sell to whom and how, which was also mentioned during the interviews with social partners. More efforts should be put in order to make it clear how the Doctoral Study program contributes to development of the region and its contribution to the industrial field. During the site visit it was mentioned that managers and especially top-managers are also considered as potential students, that makes it extremely important to determine “why should managers make a decision to obtain PhD degree in Economics and Business”.

The acquired qualification level corresponds to the Latvian Qualifications Framework (LQF) level 8. The graduates are awarded a Doctoral degree of Science Doctor of Science (Ph.D.) in Social Sciences, which corresponds to the aim and learning outcomes of the program. The study program outlines all necessary knowledge, skills and competences formulated in accordance with the LQF level 8 requirements. However, it should be noted that no competences related to the ability of graduates to manage large-scale national and international research projects are present in the description of the program.

The title of the program, its content, code and learning outcomes are tightly interconnected and correspond to the degree awarded in social sciences “Doctor of Science (Ph. D.)” The program is a joint study program being carried out by Ventspils University of Applied Studies, Rēzekne Academy of Technologies and Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences in the form of full-studies of 120 CP and the duration of 3 years in English and Latvian. The information about the program is publicly available on the websites of all HEIs, however nothing was mentioned about the joint component of the website of Rēzekne Academy and says that it corresponds to “European Qualifications Framework (EQF) level: Level 6 and International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) level: Level 6” <https://www.rta.lv/study-programms/economics-and-business-phd> while the website of Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences <https://va.lv/en/study-here/phd-degree/economics-and-business/about-programme> gives no information about form (full-time or part-time) of the studies. The inconsistency in the information of study programs makes it difficult to get a good understanding and vision of benefits of the particular PhD studies. Delivering program in three different locations makes it difficult to achieve the homogeneity of the educational process. During the visit it was stated that PhD students in different HEIs have different opportunities, setting some students in disadvantaged positions. For instance, different kinds of support schemes at each institution put other students at a disadvantaged position. Joint study program students should have the same opportunities in all involved institutions otherwise it defeats the consortium's purpose.

The admission of students is based on regulatory laws and legislation (Article 46 of the Law on Higher Education Institutions and the Cabinet of Ministers Regulations No. 846 (as of 10 October 2006) “Regulations regarding the Requirements, Criteria and Procedures for Admission to Study Programmes”. Prerequisites for admission to the program are transparent and ensure the entrants of the program with the appropriate level of the knowledge and skills, which is required to achieve the learning outcomes of the program, stating the main criteria as well as the score required for the admission. Admission rules for the years 2023-2024 are clearly defined and publicly available at the website of the <https://en.venta.lv/join-us/terms-of-admission> with the full text stipulating minimum entrance grades and foreign language test are presented in detail in the document “TERMS OF ADMISSION AND THE MATRICULATION PROCESS FOR VENTSPILS UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES INTERNATIONAL CANDIDATES FOR STUDIES IN ENGLISH-TAUGHT STUDY PROGRAMMES IN THE ACADEMIC YEAR 2023/2024” publicly available at the website of the university https://irp.cdn-website.com/9945ff8b/files/uploaded/22-56_Uznemsanas_noteikumi_arzemniekiem_ENG_2023-24.pdf In order to be admitted for the PhD program a person needs to have a Master's degree in Social Sciences. If prior education was not acquired in social sciences or in the corresponding professional field, the applicant must provide evidence of work experience/informal education that corresponds to the knowledge, skills and competences defined in the 7th level of the

Latvian Qualifications Framework, in accordance with the procedure set out in Cabinet of Ministers Regulations No. 505 “Regulations for the Recognition of Competences Acquired Outside Formal Education or Professional Experience and Learning Outcomes Achieved in Previous Education”.

2.1.3. The program was evaluated in 2022 and according to the requirements of the Study Quality committee the awarded degree and the admission requirements were formulated more clearly and have the same wording in all three units: VeUAS, ViUAS and RTA.

2.1.4. The programme aims to contribute to the sustainable business development of the region. The idea of the program is to have a tight alliance with the labour market and to “improve the skills of the regional population, and the sustainability and retention of highly qualified staff in the region” by educating specialists capable of creating new knowledge in the field and performing high-scale scientific research. The program is meant to contribute to the sustainable development of the region by considering the findings of the “World Economic Forum 2019 Globalization 4.0 and the World Economic Forum 2019 report “Innovate Europe: Competing for Global Innovation Leadership” aiming to ensure “The programme will ensure three Principles for Innovative Doctoral Training (European Commission, 2011): internationalization, interdisciplinarity and the intersectoral approach” (SAR p. 180). However, the internalization aspects need to be improved in terms of active implementation of international joint research projects.

The data presented to the experts’ panel shows that the number of admitted students has decreased over years 2019-2020 and 2021-2022 (13 and 10 students respectively), while the dropout rate is quite low. The program has no graduates yet, therefore this factor is not assessed during the present evaluation. The expert panel is of the opinion that there is an ultimate need to develop a clear marketing strategy logically following the strategic planning stipulating what to sell to whom and how, which was also mentioned during the interviews with social partners. More efforts should be put in order to define the profile of the potential graduate and make the program attractive to managers and other potential students to the University.

The structure of the evaluated study program enables achievement of stipulated learning outcomes by preparing highly educated professionals equipped with all required knowledge, competences and skills able to perform scientific research and manage projects in various organizations in terms of a rapidly changing market environment. During the visit employers emphasized that the program is currently offering only a full-time option of studies, while managers of companies are working full-time and might be interested in a part-time option.

2.1.5. The program aims to develop the transfer of theoretical and research knowledge and skills into practice and to enhance the research abilities of the top management of organizations and enterprises. This in turn contributes to the development of the local business community and value to the responsible business management in line with Europe 2020 Strategy, findings of the World Economic Forum 2019 Globalization 4.0 and the World Economic Forum 2019 report “Innovate Europe: Competing for Global Innovation Leadership”, developed in collaboration with McKinsey. The program ensures a quality of the study process by achieving the three Principles for Innovative Doctoral Training (European Commission, 2011): internationalization, interdisciplinarity and the intersectoral approach, also focusing on the entrepreneurship aspect. The development and implementation of the joint study programme is well justified, but according to experts’ analysis and observations just partly ensures a quality study process with several deficiencies, weaknesses identified, e.g. a miscommunication case was detected (and solved) between the 3 consortium partner HEIs with different administration systems, different Moodle systems including burdening students’ workload (according to the students) within the 1st year; also different kind of support schemes at each of the 3 HEI puts respectively other students at disadvantage.

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

In general, it can be concluded that the name of the joint Doctoral study program “Economics and Business” (51345), aim, learning outcomes, and admission requirements are logically interrelated. The joint component of the program is definitely a plus, but the fact that the joint study program is carried out by three different institutions would require more coherence between the three units in regard to information provided about the program as well as the coordination between the HEIs enabling all students to have equal learning opportunities. The program has well formulated learning outcomes, however, the aim seems lacking the focus of the target market and makes it difficult to understand who are the potential students and thus the graduates. The clear market strategy and the distance option would be beneficial.

Strengths:

1. Joint component of the study program.
2. Focus on sustainable development of the region.

Weaknesses:

1. Lack of a part-time study option.
2. Lack of a clear image of the graduate profile.
3. Different information about the study program published on the websites of involved HEIs.
4. Lack of clear marketing strategy in regard to attracting prospective students.

2.2. The Content of Studies and Implementation Thereof

Analysis

2.2.1. The doctoral programme consists of 5 theoretical courses offered in the first study year (Qualitative Research Methods, Quantitative Research Methods, Business and Economic Trends, Assessment of Competences, Scientific Writing), 2 study courses offered in the second study year (Science Communication and Doctoral Exam), the total load of which equals to 37 credit points (in the local system). The overall load of the programme is 120 credit points, of which 83 credit points are allocated to the doctoral thesis writing and 8 to publications, conferences, summer schools, etc., in addition to the study course load.

The general planning of the programme structure is clear and coherent. Content-wise, the emphasis on the research methods courses is standard at the start of the programme (16 credit points in the first semester). The field-specific course on business/entrepreneurship is also logical and necessary. Below is a brief overview of some core courses and their content.

- The course on qualitative research is well-planned, with some relevant and widely used textbooks, e.g. by Bryman and Flick. What seems to be missing, however, that can benefit the course are examples of scientific papers from reputable outlets where qualitative research in business was applied. Since qualitative data analysis software is discussed as part of the course, references to the software like NVivo or Atlas.ti would be expected at least in ‘Other sources’ of the bibliography section.

- The course on quantitative research is focused on mathematics and statistics. The topics of classes are well-planned in a logical sequence. The basic literature is diverse, but it is not fully clear how many pages students have to read – this concerns the supplementary literature list too and other courses. The students might benefit from example papers where quantitative research in business was applied. The table with evaluation criteria of study results mapped against the course learning outcomes is not filled in. Examples of assignments provided by the institution as a supplementary information give a better idea of how the achievement of the course learning outcomes might be assessed (as in other courses and programmes, the information about evaluation and assessment in

relation to the learning outcomes is not sufficient to make unambiguous judgments about the constructive alignment and quality).

· The course on trends on business and economics is delivered by a relatively big number of lecturers/professors (N=11). The course load is sufficiently high to grant the need for more than four lecturers, however, the big number of professors involved can be challenging in terms of managing the workload. In addition, a variety of perspectives that each teacher brings in may serve as both an advantage and a challenge. The course description does not outline the responsibilities of each teacher. The listed topics that the course covers include: main schools of economic thought and their development, long-term planning, trends in modern business management theories, business economics and management decision-making, consumer behavior, behavioral economics, societal development and marketing trends, circular and environmental economy, labor theories and human resources developments, trends on the formation of start-ups, IT management decision-making, globalization processes in the economy and business. This is a diverse set of topics – the question is how the thematic continuity between/among the topics is ensured. The course description does not provide information about that. The supplementary information on the course assignments is helpful in understanding the general and some specific requirements that students need to fulfill. They contain case studies, discussions, presentations, investment exercises based on calculations, essay writing. The topic of the assignment on trends in modern business management theories (Nr.3) is not entirely clear – ‘How different economic schools of thought would solve the problems of the doctoral thesis’ (Does this mean how the varying schools of thought can apply to individual PhD theses of the students?).

Regarding the correspondence of the programme objectives and learning outcomes to the courses offered, there is a general match but also some specific points that deserve a more rigorous approach and attention of the programme directors. 1) Some of the listed competences appear to be very challenging to measure, let alone to achieve them, e.g. ‘Ability to manage business, management and research processes in companies, institutions and organisations, using latest research-based knowledge and skills...’ (Questions: does the programme make students manage business processes as part of the study plan; is it possible to assess the achievement of this outcome?); ‘Ability to independently assess and reasonably select the appropriate methods and methodologies for scientific research in uncertain and changing conditions, in order to create innovative solutions for sustainable economic growth’ (Questions: is the latter part of the learning outcome measurable; are uncertain and changing conditions always present or relevant for the current times specifically?). 2) The overarching question – are the learning outcomes (as well as the study programme’s goal) directed towards training scientists who are capable of conducting independent internationally-recognized research or rather ‘applied researchers, experts and high-level professionals for analytical, research and management work in the public and private sectors’. The region and the country might have a heightened need for applied researchers and highly qualified industry experts well-versed in research, and it can be reasonable to develop this niche.

The information provided in the self-assessment report, including annexes (7.3), suggests that the doctoral programme as the joint study programme (created by the consortium) is at the moment generally compliant with the requirements of the law on higher education institutions.

Since the intake of students allows professional Master degrees, it is important to ensure that each student’s starting level is taken into consideration. The self-assessment report mentions that ‘the programme includes specific short courses-seminars’, ‘to identify in a timely manner the skills and knowledge that need further development’. In case there is a considerable imbalance in the starting levels, what measures are taken, do these students get more training, different training or other?

While the programme is relatively new and still in the stage of development, it is offered in both Latvian and English languages. From the meetings with the students, the experts understood that the programme, at least currently, runs only in Latvian. Delivery in English would require substantial effort from the teaching staff to prepare the teaching materials. At this point, based on the self-

assessment report or meetings with the programme directors, it is difficult to make conclusions about the English version of the programme, as well as the programme's sustainability in general.

2.2.2. The admission to the programme is based on an application and presentation. According to the self-assessment report, 'the relevance/compliance to the field of economics and business science, topicality and planned novelty are carefully assessed during the presentation of the topic' (p.184). The theses' topics and supervisors are approved during the council meetings. The following steps of the procedure are standard – completion of the academic part, doctoral exam, submitting the thesis, defense, evaluation by the council (compliance with the Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No. 1001). There is not enough information on the external evaluation of the theses, however, and no theses defended yet.

The self-assessment report outlines 24 topics of the theses and their supervisors for the students admitted in 2020-2022, yet unapproved. The topics are quite diverse, yet all related to the fields of business and economics. The general observation, alongside the teaching staff's scientific output overview, the supervisors tend to have a limited number of scientific publications in peer-reviewed internationally recognized journals. Some supervisors hold doctoral degrees in fields unrelated to business or economics.

Furthermore, it is not possible to make unambiguous conclusions about the awarding degree criterion without examining examples of doctoral theses produced within the programme under evaluation.

2.2.3. The teaching methods outlined in the course descriptions of VeUAS seem appropriate. At the same time, these methods are quite standard/traditional, e.g. lectures, individual practical work such as an analysis of literature, seminars and discussions on thesis-related topics, workshops. This pattern is visible across all the courses outlined in the Annex 7.7. Hence, it is likely that all the consortium members implement the same approach to teaching. That said, the course descriptions do not provide sufficient information to make a clear conclusion about how exactly, using the lecture or practical seminar methods, the themes of scientific reasoning or preparing scientific publications are taught (this can range from traditional lecturing to interactive lecturing involving international guest talks, for example). As stated before in relation to other programmes, the evaluation criteria of the students' performance are not entirely clear unlike the evaluation structure (the question of how performance in classes is assessed remains pertinent).

The implementation and quality monitoring of the programme is carried out by FEM in cooperation with the Technology Transfer and Innovation Centre and the Doctoral School, as well as the Doctoral study programme director and the study department at VeUAS. Since doctoral programmes relate to scientific development of higher education institutions rather than to the study process only, it is beneficial that the programme has an advisory council that ensures quality monitoring.

As part of the student-centered learning, the content of study courses is updated, the dialogue between teaching staff and doctoral students is promoted, etc. The self-assessment report outlines consideration of diversity of the students and their needs, mutual respect, support and feedback from scientific supervisors, etc.

2.2.4. Not applicable

2.2.5. The self-assessment report refers to an agreement with the Latvia University of Life Sciences and Technologies on accepting the doctoral theses from doctoral students of the joint programme for the defense process. The need for this agreement is reasoned with the fact that at the time of preparing the report (October 2022) a joint conferral council of the three consortium universities had not yet been established. According to the described procedure, doctoral theses approved by the joint doctoral programme council may be defended at the Conferral Council. The right to confer the

doctoral degree had been delegated to the council in accordance with the Cabinet of Ministers Regulation Nr 1000.

The decision to include the joint doctoral programme into the accreditation form of the study field was adopted at the meeting of the Study Quality Committee on 14 September 2022, since it was included into the accreditation forms of other partner universities.

Considering the above information, promotion opportunities highly depend on the accreditation process outcomes. In addition, given the data from the Latvian Ministry of Education and Science, the reorganization of higher education institutions is expected in 2023 which directly concerns the consortium. Rezekne Academy of Technology will be merged with the Riga Technical University (according to the Cabinet of Ministers' issued informative note as of February 2021). This change can be either an opportunity or a challenge for the doctoral programme under evaluation (with respective implications for the consortium). Notable that the self-evaluation report does not elaborate on this point.

2.2.6. The doctoral study programme has no theses defended yet. The review of the submitted topics students are working on can be found above (2.2.2. The awarding degree based on the achievements and findings of the field).

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

The joint doctoral programme 'Economics and Business' is a new programme included into the accreditation application as part of the study field. Since doctoral programmes relate to scientific development of higher education institutions rather than to the study process only, the general state of the scientific research development in the institutions has a direct influence on the study process. The current state of the joint doctoral programme might be promising and such a programme or its equivalent can give a lot to the region, once it has a realistic priority – to develop research scientists who are capable of conducting independent internationally-recognized research or rather 'applied researchers, experts and high-level professionals for analytical, research and management work in the public and private sectors'. The programme has several strengths with regard to the content planning and student-centered approach, the number of doctoral students at the moment is sufficient to support the continuation of the programme development, but there are several deficiencies and related needs, such as strengthening the presence of reputable scientific research in the course content. Furthermore, the programme does not have any outputs yet and it was not possible to make conclusions about the quality of student assignments (the sample of research-related assignments prepared by the students was not provided).

Strengths:

1. The general planning of the programme structure is clear and coherent.
2. Relevant content of the study courses.
3. Student-centered approach well-developed (similar to the Master level programme).

Weaknesses:

1. The emphasis on scientific papers from reputable outlets is notably lacking in the study programme's courses. In order to ensure adherence to the international quality standards in science development and start delivering the programme in English as planned at some point in the future, this weakness has to be resolved. It has to be addressed to achieve and maintain the necessary quality level of the programme delivered in Latvian too.
2. The programme is ambitious in setting up the goal to train scientists but at the moment it looks more fitting with the goal to train applied researchers who would work in the industry or public sector.

4. Some of the learning outcomes (specifically in the Competences group) need to be revised to be realistic and measurable.
5. The teaching methods used seem to be quite traditional (lecture, seminar). It might be beneficial to incorporate more innovative teaching elements (visits, case-studies, applied research, project-type, work-based) also at a PhD level to stimulate students' engagement and creativity.
6. As in the other courses and programmes, the information about evaluation and assessment in relation to the learning outcomes is not sufficient to make unambiguous judgments about the constructive alignment and quality.
7. While the theses' topics related to the business and economics fields, many of the assigned supervisors tend to have a limited number of scientific publications in peer-reviewed internationally recognized journals; some supervisors hold doctoral degrees in fields unrelated to business or economics.

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

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

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

Lack of focus on peer-reviewed scientific outlets in the programme's study courses, some learning outcomes are unclearly formulated (implying measurement challenges)

2.3. Resources and Provision of the Study Programme

Analysis

2.3.1. In SAR report Chapter 3.3.1. VeUAS refers to the description of resources and provisions of the study field without specifying the particular resource situation with the study programme in question, therefore we can deduce that the same analysis applies in this case as with other study programmes in the field.

The overall compliance of the resources and provision - study provision, scientific support, informative provision, material and technical provision, and financial provision - with the necessities for the implementation of the study programmes and the learning outcomes is appropriate. It must be highlighted that VeUAS does not separate infrastructure by its study programmes within the study field of Management, Administration and Management of Real Property. Resources are assessed on the Faculty and University level. During the visit the involved parties confirmed that resources and provisions are adequate for implementation of the study programme and there is clear procedure on how new material or informative resources can be requested, approved and procure (including software licensing and other necessities). In conclusion, during the visit there were no indications from both staff members and students of possible shortcomings regarding material and resource provisions.

2.3.2. This study programme is implemented in a consortium in cooperation with Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences and Rezekne Academy of Technology there infrastructure and services provided by these higher education institutions are available to students to respective. Each partner has appropriate infrastructure and scientific institutions, such as Institute for Social, Economic and Humanitarian Research, different laboratories, Centre for Business, Innovation and Regional Development, The Research Institute for Business and Social Processes etc. In general, informative and study provision is in good standing in each of the involved institutions, however, during the on-site visit it came to experts' attention that students enrolled through different institutions have

different opportunities regarding funding and other research activities, putting some students in a disadvantaged position despite the fact that the programme is joint. The resource sharing and accessibility to students is not integrated fully to ensure equal opportunities.

2.3.3. VeUAS notes in SAR that in 2021/2022, the joint study programme had 20 students in total. Of those 6 are VeUAS affiliated students. The tuition fee of the programme per student is EUR 4550 per year according to information on the public website (<https://www.venta.lv/program/ekonomika-un-uznemejdarbiba>).

Each university decides on the resources available to it to provide state funded places or fee-paying places. The procedure for the distribution of funding among the universities according to the number of students and the number of credit points is established in Section 10.3. and 10.4 of the cooperation agreement. (SAR 3.3.1)

However, it is up to each higher education institution to cover the expenses related to its staff, as well as other expenses necessary for ensuring the study courses that the respective higher education institution is responsible for. VeUAS does not provide actual revenue and expense analysis as in SAR there is only planned revenue and expenditure plan for 2022.

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

In general, it seems that the study provision, scientific provision, informative provision, material and technical provision comply with the conditions for the implementation of the study programme and indicate the possibility to ensure that learning outcomes are achieved. It is not clear how the financial aspect of the study programme is managed as there is no actual information provided in SAR, however during the on-site meeting experts' panel were ensured that VeUAS sees no actual challenges regarding this question. It must be highlighted that students who enrolled through different institutions have different opportunities regarding funding and other research activities, putting some students in a disadvantaged position despite the fact that the programme is joint.

Strengths:

1. Study, technical and informative provisions are in good standing.

Weaknesses:

1. Students do not have same opportunities in regards to funding and other research activities.

Assessment of the requirement [6]

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The study provision, scientific provision, informative provision, material and technical provision and financial provision overall ensures prerequisites for the achievement of the learning outcomes and indicate the possibility to ensure a successful study process, however there has been a case detected (and solved) between the 3 consortium partner HEIs about the problematics for students to access e-studies platform because of different administration systems, different Moodle systems; also the support schemes at each of the 3 HEI must be address jointly and clearly to ensure the potential of the existing study process provisions.

2.4. Teaching Staff

Analysis

2.4.1. A total of 22 teaching staff members are involved in the implementation of the joint doctoral study program, including research seminars and supervising doctoral theses: seven from VeUAS (including one visiting professor), nine from Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences (ViUAS) and six from Rēzekne Technology Academy. All seven teaching staff members from VeUAS have Doctoral degrees. The number of teaching staff members with expert rights of the Latvian Council of Science is: four from VeUAS, four from ViUAS and four from RTA (Annex 7.8 to the SAR). The Law on Higher Education Institutions stipulates that at least five persons with a doctorate degree participate in the implementation of the academic doctoral study program, of which at least three are experts approved by the Latvian Science Council in the relevant field.

VeUAS involves 3 professors and 1 associated professor, the ViAUS - 3 professors and 4 associated professors, RTA - 4 professors and 2 associated professors (Annex 7.9 to the SAR). According to the Law of Higher Education Institutions, section 55, the minimum number of elected professors or associated professors should be five.

The VeUAS, ViUAS and RTA Joint Council of Professors has been established and approved by the decision of the Council of Higher Education of 3 October (Decision No. 1.10/32) for election of academic staff to the positions of professor and associate professor in Economics and Business, incl. Management Sciences (SAR, 3.4.1).

The English language skills of teaching staff are sufficient to fulfill the requirements and to meet the programme objectives. The documents provided certifies that the English language proficiency level of the teaching staff is at least B2. The interviews confirmed that the overall English language proficiency was good.

Considering the above mentioned, the VeUAS doctoral study program fulfills the formal requirements for the qualifications of teaching staff by a large margin. However, the review panel would like to emphasize that in order to achieve the aims and learning outcomes of the academic doctoral study program, the research activity of the teaching staff is of great importance. The most reliable and internationally recognized indicator of a high level of research results is peer-reviewed publications in internationally recognized journals with high impact. As mentioned in 2.4.4. criterion, there are few such publications for the teaching staff of the doctoral study programme.

2.4.2. Changes have been made in the composition of the teaching staff since the beginning of implementing the study programme. The most significant changes are related to the inclusion of several new potential scientific supervisors of Doctoral theses in the faculty, as well as the change of heads (the main responsible teaching staff) and teaching staff of the study courses "Business and Economic Trends" and "Quantitative Research Methods" (SAR, 3.4.2). All changes are discussed and the study plans for each semester are approved at meetings of the Joint Doctoral Programme Council. The review panel does not have any concerns regarding changes made and believes that they rather ensure improvements in the programme.

2.4.3. Teaching staff carry out scientific work in research areas related to the subject of the study course they teach and/or the Doctoral thesis under their supervision. The SAR provides information about involvement of 4 VeUAS teaching staff members in research projects (table 7.5, 3.4.4).

The VeUAS teaching staff have publications indexed in the internationally recognized databases Scopus and Web of Science. According to the information provided in the SAR, 7 teaching staff members prepared 43 research publications during the period 2020-2022, out of which 23 were included or submitted for indexing in Scopus or Web of Sciences (based on the table 7.4, 3.4.3). Experts would like to point out that despite meeting the formal legal requirement, there is also an evident lack of peer-reviewed publications in internationally recognized outlets among the academic staff involved; having such publications are a crucial determinant of quality in any doctoral-level

programme. The lack of such publications has direct implications for quality of the programme not only from the viewpoint of formal requirements to the doctoral programme, but also for students who view their supervisors/academic staff delivering the programme as exemplars.

2.4.4. As described previously (see criteria 2.4.3), all seven teaching staff members are actively engaged in preparing scientific publications. Each member of the academic staff of VeUAS in the last six years has published in peer-reviewed editions, including international editions, and thus the requirement of the Law on Higher Education Institutions is fulfilled. However, based on the detailed information provided in the Appendix 2.13 to the SAR about the publications, the review panel noted that the majority of scientific publications are conference proceedings, and only few publications are published in international peer-reviewed academic journals. Having such publications is also a prerequisite of receiving a satisfactory external assessment of science development, which is determined by the Law on Higher Education Institutions and is required for universities of applied sciences (HEIs) registered in the Registry of Science Institutions (Sciencelatvia.lv) (<https://likumi.lv/ta/id/37967-augstskolu-likums>). The study direction of VeUAS hasn't undergone such evaluation yet.

2.4.5. The mechanisms for cooperation between teaching staff members within one university and among involved universities are in place and operational:

- Cooperation of teaching staff in the development and implementation of the content of study courses to coordinate the interconnection, sequence of topics, assignments and evaluation (lecturers meet before the beginning of each study semester and also at the end of the study course);
- Cooperation of teaching staff in developing the content of the study program and its implementation (the joint program council examines the results of the doctoral students' surveys and approves the study plans - before each study semester);
- Cooperation of teaching staff in the supervision of doctoral theses (one doctoral thesis can have two scientific supervisors, participation of teaching staff at the research seminars);
- Joint scientific activity and publications of teaching staff.

According to the Analysis of the results of student surveys provided by the VeUAS (Annex 2-6 to the SAR), the student satisfaction with the responsiveness of teaching staff is very high, but few suggestions refer to working as a team. At the same time students confirmed the capacity and effectiveness to address the problematic issues.

In the academic year 2021/2022, student-teaching staff ratio was $20/18=1.1$ allowing for an individual approach during the study process.

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

The joint doctoral study programme is implemented by VeUAS teaching staff members all of whom hold doctoral degrees, mainly by professors and associate professors. Four VeUAS teaching staff members have expert rights of the Latvian Council of Science. Thus, the qualification of the teaching staff members comply with the legal requirements. The vast majority of publications are conference proceedings (though indexed in Scopus and Web of Science) and there is an evident lack of peer-reviewed publications in internationally recognized outlets related to the fields of business and economics. Having such publications is a prerequisite of receiving a satisfactory external assessment of science development, which VeUAS study direction hasn't undergone yet.

That said, the teaching staff does carry out research in the areas related to the study courses they teach and/or the Doctoral thesis under their supervision.. There are clear mechanisms in place to facilitate mutual cooperation of the teaching staff. Cooperation takes place de facto to support the achievement of the aims of the study programme and interconnection of study courses,

demonstrated by implemented improvements in the short period of time.

Strengths:

1. Many professors, associated professors, doctoral degree holders and teaching staff members with expert rights of the Latvian Council of Science are involved, thus the legal requirements on the teaching staff qualification are fulfilled by a large margin.
2. Very low student - staff ratio allowing for an individual approach during the study process.
3. Various mechanisms for cooperation among teaching staff of VeUAS and with other two cooperating higher education institutions have been developed and successfully work to ensure necessary adjustments and mutual cooperation.

Weaknesses:

1. The number of publications in the internationally acknowledged peer-reviewed scientific outlets remains low, having such publications are a crucial determinant of quality in a doctoral-level programme.

Assessment of the requirement [7]

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Legal requirements have been fulfilled, however, there is an evident lack of peer-reviewed publications in internationally recognized outlets among the academic staff involved; having such publications are a crucial determinant of quality in any doctoral-level programme.

2.5. Assessment of the Compliance

Requirements

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Attached study course descriptions (" 7-7_appendix_All study course descriptions_doct.prec.pdf") are prepared in latvian and english. Descriptions complies with regulations set forth in Law on Higher Education Institutions.

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The provided Diploma sample ("7-1_appendix_phd diploma example_preciz.pdf") complies with the procedure by which state-recognised documents of higher education are issued in accordance with Cabinet Regulation No. 202 "Kārtība, kādā izsniedz valsts atzītus augstāko izglītību apliecinošus dokumentus". Issued diploma is a joint diploma of VeUAS, Rezekne Academy of Technologies and Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences .

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Attached confirmation ("7-9_pielik_Akad pers atbilst prasibam_5prof_LV_preciz.pdf") indicates involvement in the joint study programme of 10 professors and 7 associated professors. From VeUAS side - 3 professors and 1 associated professor.

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Attached confirmation ("7-8_pielik_Akad pers atbilst prasibam_LZP ekspertu_LV_preciz.pdf") indicates involvement of 12 Latvian Science Council experts of social sciences, economics and entrepreneurship. From VeUAS side - 4.

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Attached resumes of staff and VeUAS confirmation letter 30.12.2022. Nr. 1-10.1/81 (2-10_apliecinajums par valsts valodu.pdf) verifies that state language proficiency is compliant with Cabinet Regulation No. 733 "Noteikumi par valsts valodas zināšanu apjomu, valsts valodas prasmes pārbaudes kārtību un valsts nodevu par valsts valodas prasmes pārbaudi".

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Attached resumes of staff and VeUAS confirmation letter 11.10.2022. Nr. 1-10.1/52 ("2-11_pielikums_apliecinajums_par_anglu_val_LV_ENG.edoc") verifies that language proficiency in English is at least B2.

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Sample of attached study agreement ("2-5_appendix_stud_liguma_paraugs_ENG.pdf") complies with Cabinet Regulation No. 70 "Studiju līgumā obligāti ietveramie noteikumi"

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Attached contracts ("2.3._pielikums_sadarbības_līgumi_LV.pdf") indicates that institution provides opportunities to continue studies in Latvia University of Life Sciences and Technologies doctoral study programme "Agrarian and Regional Economics"

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

VeUAS confirmation letter 30.12.2022. Nr. 1-10.1/80 states, that students are guaranteed compensation for losses if the study programme is not accredited or the license of the study programme is revoked due to the actions of the college (actions or failure to act) and the student does not wish to continue the studies in another study programme.

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Annex 7.3. ("7-3_appendix_Compliance of the joint doctoral studies programme_ENG_preciz.docx.pdf") confirms that the doctoral study programme complies with joint programme requirements.

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

Assessment of the requirement [8]

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Study programme complies with regulatory requirements.

General conclusions about the study programme, indicating the most important strengths

and weaknesses of the study programme

The study programme's title, aim, learning outcomes, and admission requirements are logically interrelated. The joint component of the programme is definitely a plus, but the fact that the joint study programme is carried out by three different institutions would require more coherence between the three units in regard to information provided about the program as well as the coordination between the HEIs enabling all students to have equal learning opportunities. The joint doctoral programme 'Economics and Business' is a new programme included into the accreditation application as part of the study field. Since doctoral programmes relate to scientific development of higher education institutions rather than to the study process only, the general state of the scientific research development in the institutions has a direct influence on the study process and reflects the overall level of science development at the institution. The programme has several strengths with regard to the content planning and student-centered approach, the number of doctoral students at the moment is sufficient to support the continuation of the programme development, but there are notable deficiencies related to the need to strengthen the presence of reputable scientific research in the course content and to increase the publishing activity in internationally recognized peer-reviewed outlets by the teaching staff. Furthermore, the programme does not have any outputs yet and it was not possible to make conclusions about the quality of student assignments. The qualification of the teaching staff members complies with the requirements, given the amount of papers (predominantly conference proceedings) indexed in Scopus and WoS. However, publications in reputable journals related to the fields of business and economics are crucial for a positive evaluation from an external assessment of science development (the institution does not have such an assessment at the moment). At the same time, the material, informative and technical provision is in good standing. Yet, students enrolled through different institutions have different opportunities regarding funding and other research activities, putting some students in a disadvantaged position despite the fact that the programme is joint. Teaching staff does carry out scientific work in research areas related to the study courses they teach and/or the Doctoral thesis under their supervision. All seven teaching staff members have published in peer-reviewed editions, including international editions, however, the majority of publications are conference proceedings and the number of publications in international academic journals remains low.

Evaluation of the study programme "Economics and Business"

Evaluation of the study programme:

Good

2.6. Recommendations for the Study Programme "Economics and Business"

Short-term recommendations

1. To achieve the coherence between the three consortium members regarding the information provided about the program as well as the coordination between the HEIs enabling all students to have equal learning opportunities.
2. To develop a clear marketing strategy in regard to attracting prospective students by also determining clearer doctoral student and thus the graduate profile to ensure more targeted and realistic market audience for the doctoral programme
3. To consider the implementation of a part-time study option.
4. To make an explicit emphasis on scientific papers from reputable outlets in all the study programme's courses revising its lists of bibliography.

5. To revisit the programme's goals and align them with the main focus – to train scientists who would continue developing in the academic path and/or applied researchers who would work in the industry or public sector. In case both goals are pursued, the scientific development aspect of the programme must be strengthened (both through the content/delivery of the courses and increasing the staff qualifications).
6. To revise the learning outcomes (specifically in the Competences group) to make sure each outcome is realistic and measurable.
7. To make explicit connections between the information provided on evaluation and assessment in relation to the learning outcomes and the information provided on teaching methods (thus, clarifying that the constructive alignment is present).
8. To support the teaching quality, consider using a range of teaching methods that are more innovative, e.g. interactive lecturing, students' lectures, experience exchange with international experts in business and economics, and make sure the use of such methods is visible in the course syllabi.
9. Make sure that the assigned supervisors (both internal and external) are well-versed in academic publishing and preferably hold doctoral degrees in fields related to business or economics (or have a good track record of publishing in these fields); consider inviting internal co-supervisors who are experts in business and economics research.
10. To ensure sustainability of the doctoral programme, consider developing a clear pathway of development after one of the consortium partners, Rezekne Academy of Technology is merged with the Riga Technical University (the Cabinet of Ministers Decision as of 1 February 2022) – how will the promotion opportunities change, what will happen to the students enrolled from the merging partner, etc.

Long-term recommendations

1. To strengthen the research profile of the academic staff involved in teaching the doctoral programme. This includes purposefully developing a portfolio of thematic publications that are published in internationally acknowledged peer-reviewed scientific outlets.
2. In order to ensure the adherence to the international scientific standards and start delivering the programme in English as planned at some point in the future, the overall scientific development of the programme has be prioritized in: a) revising the content of the study courses and making them more geared towards the latest science-based discoveries; b) reviewing the qualifications of the academic staff and making a more rigorous selection of teachers who adhere to the international-level standards with regards to research outputs. This is equally important to augment the quality level of the programme delivered in the Latvian language.

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 2.1 of the Law on Higher Education Institutions, the higher education institution/ college shall ensure continuous improvement, development, and efficient performance of the study field whilst implementing its internal quality assurance system:	Fully compliant		The VeUAS has procedures in place to ensure continuous improvement, development and efficient performance of the study field which are de facto being implemented and facilitate improvement of the study programmes. Although 1.4 is evaluated as “Partially compliant”, the overall evaluation of P1 remains “Fully Compliant”, since identified deficiency is rather limited as it concerns only doctoral study programme in relation to well-recognized and largely applied international scientific excellency but does not violate the minimum requirements specified in the national regulation.
R2 - Compliance of scientific research and artistic creation with the level of development of scientific research and artistic creation (if applicable)		Partially compliant	Low level of international scientific networking and collaboration with other HEIs and social partners, low level of publications in academic journals with high impact factors,
R3 - The cooperation implemented within the study field with various Latvian and foreign organizations ensures the achievement of the aims of the study field.	Fully compliant		Generally compliant since the institution cooperates with both local and foreign institutions, especially in the realm of teaching; the third criterion on the system and procedures for attracting foreign teaching staff and students still needs considerable attention and consecutive actions.
R4 - Elimination of deficiencies and shortcomings identified in the previous assessment of the study field, if any, or implementation of the recommendations provided.		Partially compliant	The institution has not implemented 3 short- and 8 long-term recommendations for the study field from 2020; 2 of the former require immediate action and there have not been any noticeable change in the direction of changes regarding the latter.

No.	Study programme	R5	R6	R7	R8	Evaluation of the study programme (excellent, good, average, poor)
1	Business Management (42345)	Not relevant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Good
2	Start-up Management (42345)	Not relevant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Good
3	Business Administration (43345)	Not relevant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Good
4	Business Administration (47345)	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Good
5	Economics and Business (51345)	Partially compliant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Good

The Dissenting Opinions of the Experts

Collective dissenting opinion by the experts` team:

JDStP is essentially evaluated as "Average" in view of the identified shortcoming and deficiencies that can be eliminated within the term of accreditation of the study field. Simultaneously, due to legal consequences of the evaluation 'Average' received by the JDStP for the other study field's programmes that received the evaluation 'Good', the experts made a decision to mark the evaluation of the JDStP as 'Good'. This comes with a series of recommendations that, upon fulfillment, can help the JDStP to receive a more favorable de facto evaluation in the next accreditation period.

This decision was deemed necessary due to the fact that if the JDStP programme received the evaluation "Average", the whole study field would have to be evaluated as "Average". This, in turn, would result in limiting the delivery of other study programmes in the English language (while not affecting the JDStP programme as a joint programme).