

# Expert group joint opinion

Evaluation Procedure: Assessment of Study Field

Higher Education Institution: Turība University

Study field: Economics

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## Summary Assessment of the Study Field

### Summary Assessment of the Study Field

This report includes the assessment of the study field “Economics” at Turība University (hereinafter TU). TU is a private university, it was founded in 1993 and accredited in May 1997, receiving the right to implement accredited study programmes and issue state recognized diplomas for the acquisition of the higher education. In 2019, total number of students was 3333, 1162 started their studies and 490 graduated. There is a positive balance in admission of new students, but big difference in numbers of newly admitted and graduated students shows a high students drop-off rate.

Study field “Economics” (hereinafter the study field) consists of three study programmes (hereinafter the study programme): the first level professional higher education programme “Finance and Accounting” with professional qualification “Accountant”, the first level professional higher education programme “Marketing and Trading” with professional qualification “Marketing Specialist”, and professional higher education Bachelor study programme “Marketing and Trade Managing” with professional qualification “Marketing Manager”. The above-mentioned programmes were launched in 2002, 2009 and 2008, respectively. All study programmes have previously obtained accreditation for a maximum term of 6 years. The first level professional higher education study programmes allow students to gain or improve competencies and enter the labour market after 2 years and 3 months of studies. Graduates can continue studies in Bachelor level programmes, joining them in the third year of studies.

The first level professional higher education programme “Marketing and Trading” with its teaching staff is essential part of the professional higher education Bachelor study programme “Marketing and Trade Managing” (included in the latter). Therefore, graduates of “Marketing and Trading” can immediately continue their studies in the Bachelor study programme. The existence of the professional Bachelor study programme has a positive effect on the composition of the first level professional study programme, the content of its study courses and the qualification of the teaching staff. Graduates of the Bachelor study programme “Marketing and Trade Managing” can continue their studies at TU in the closely related professional Master study programme “Business Management” in the study field “Management, Administration and Real Estate Management”. The Doctoral study programme “Business Management” in the study field “Management, Administration and Real Estate Management” completes studies in business management field. Graduates of the first level study programme “Finance and Accounting” can continue studies in the professional Bachelor programme “International Financial Management” within the study field “Management, Administration and Real Estate Management”.

Study field “Economics” and its three study programmes have an important place in TU portfolio of the study programmes. All three programmes have already occupied strong niche on the market of local professional education, have close relation to industries. The first level study programmes are also provided in TU regional Branches in Cēsis, Talsi and Liepāja cities. All three study programmes are implemented only in Latvian language.

TU has recently updated its development strategy for the period 2021-2025, stressing out importance of internationalisation, export of higher education, development of sustainability and green thinking. In the Development Plan of the study field “Economics”, as the main objectives are mentioned export of study programmes and increase of domestic market share, enhancement of the quality of studies in branches, further scientific and professional qualification of educators, and cooperation with other higher education institutions and the industry. The study field “Economics” and its related study programmes are not updated yet in accordance with the new priorities of TU strategy, also export of study programmes is not planned in the close future.

Summarizing the key points, as the main strengths of the study field “Economics” the Experts Team can mention the following:

- 1) TU is a well-recognized player on higher education market, with its own niche and strong relation to industry;
- 2) provision of the first level study programmes in TU regional Branches promotes accessibility and ensures positive impact on the offer of higher education study programmes, economic development, development of entrepreneurship, elimination of emigration of human capital in the regions;
- 3) traineeship as a mandatory part of studies is highly appreciated by students and Alumni;
- 4) TU Quality Assurance System allows to collect important feedback from stakeholders and apply it for the improvements needed;
- 5) TU motivates teaching staff to participate in scientific conferences with publications, invest in self-development and obtaining of Doctoral degree;
- 6) TU provides all necessary provisions for the efficient study process: well developed distance studies (complex application of Moodle, Intranet, BATIS and WebEx); hybrid studies opportunities; comfortable study environment, well-developed infrastructure, material, and technical provisions, including Library collection and access to data bases, available also in remote mode; Business Incubator provides comfortable premises, mentoring, technical support and other related services, and is actively used by students and employees;
- 7) TU has clear, merit-based student admission rules, and efficient tuition fee discounts and grant policy;
- 8) TU has strong academic integrity culture and effective plagiarism detection tools and policy, which are actively supported by all stakeholders;
- 9) TU attracts Alumni as a teaching staff in the study field and its study programmes, ensuring connection to the industry and growing its own teaching staff, especially in the regions;
- 10) TU has strong financial position and can compensate decrease in revenues of some study programmes by resources from other study programmes; at the same time, in conditions, when number of potential local students is decreasing year by year, it is important to do financial analysis of each study programme separately to be sure in viability and future sustainability of each study programme.

As the main weaknesses the Experts Team can mention the following:

- 1) study field "Economics" and its related study programmes are not updated yet in accordance with the updated TU strategy for 2021-2025 and Development Plan of the study field "Economics", where higher education export is mentioned as the 1st objective, with internationalisation and sustainability activities;
- 2) low level of research activities of the teaching staff in applied research, small number of publications, as also articles published in scientific journals indexed in Scopus or Web of Science, low international exposure of the research results;
- 3) rather low participation of teaching staff and students in Erasmus+ mobility and similar projects;
- 4) as it was shared by students, Alumni and employers during the on-site visit, results of the surveys were not shared with the respondents, or respondents were not informed where to find them;
- 5) there is no evidence of strong Alumni Association at TU;
- 6) students in TU Branches and students in evening and part-time studies groups are not actively involved in activities of the Student Council, their role in decision-making process of the study field "Economics" might be limited;
- 7) TU did not fulfil requirement of the previous accreditation Experts regarding TU partnership in implementation of high-level joint or double degree study programmes and modules with other higher education institutions, and currently it is not in the agenda of TU management; the Experts Team understands, that it is a serious step and requires investments, but still cooperation with other institutions can be developed in smaller and shorter forms, for example, like joint study modules, joint study courses;
- 8) lack of application of professional terminology in English language in the study courses, descriptions of the study programmes; translation of the Self-Assessment Report of the study field

and its programmes into English language is full of language and terminology deficiencies; taking into account that Latvia is a small open economy, correct application of professional terminology in English language is important for students' professional career;

9) in some TU Branches, how it was shared during the interviews with the Heads of TU Branches, because of some technical limitations of rented premises it is not possible to ensure hybrid studies, but students are interested in this study format also after pandemic.

## **1. Management of the Study Field**

### **Analysis**

1.1. The aims of the study field “Economics” and its three study programmes are clearly defined and attainable. The study field and the relevant study programmes in general comply with the main fields of the strategic development of TU and meet the needs and the development trends of the society and national economy. The worrisome factor is lack of or limited internationalisation. All three study programmes are provided only in Latvian language, teaching staff and students are not very active in international mobility, lack of application of professional terminology in English language, lack of international teaching staff. During the on-site visit, the Experts Team got evidence from students and Alumni, that some of them have participated in Erasmus+ traineeship exchange programme, as also some of them have developed international career (good teaching of English helped to integrate into international business environment), but still majority could not actively participate in international mobility mostly because of being employed and inability to quit the job for semester. Internationalisation is defined as one of TU strategic goals, and the study field should strengthen international activities in its programmes.

TU Self-Assessment Report of the study field and its three study programmes is based on “TU Strategy for 2016-2020”, but TU Strategy is already revised and updated for the period 2021-2025; the updated version of TU Strategy is available on TU website in Latvian and English languages.

Based on “TU Strategy for 2016-2020”, TU vision was defined as: “we are the creative core and driving force behind the future Latvian economy”; TU mission was defined as: “we steer forward business ideas in the world prospering ourselves and teaching others how to prosper”; TU key values were defined as freedom, entrepreneurship, and competence; and TU has set 4 main strategic objectives: “1) our study programmes are the first choice for those who wish to study in Latvia in the fields of TU offer; 2) at the heart of our activity is a student, a comfortable study process and a comfortable environment; 3) the academic staff is knowledgeable, experienced and engaged in practical research work; and 4) TU is the most recognized brand in the Latvian business environment”. To achieve the mentioned strategic goals, TU has defined the following main priorities: improvement of the study content in accordance with new trends in Latvia and the world, effective implementation of studies, maintenance of existing and new accreditations in various local and international organizations, modernisation of customer service, promotion of multicultural tolerance and integration of foreigners, campus development, high quality and interdisciplinarity of academic staff, research and publications in internationally indexed journals, participation of staff in international programmes and projects, and sharing their knowledge in public space.

Considering changes in TU operation environment, especially Covid-19 pandemic influence, TU has revised its vision, mission, key values, and strategic goals. As the main challenges TU has considered economic globalization processes, internationalization of higher education and growing need for export of higher education, necessity to strengthen TU international recognition and cooperation, high dependence of the higher education industry on policy makers, demographic problems in Latvia, growing number of Generation Z representatives among students with their special values and learning style, introduction of sustainability and green thinking in study process; students’ demand for knowledge, not just diploma, and social skills; global move to remote studies

because of Covid-19 pandemic restrictions.

Based on "TU Strategy 2021-2025", TU vision is defined as: "a lifestyle university that is both a flagship of business education and green technology in a world of change"; TU mission is defined as: "we promote a paradigm shift by raising awareness of the business environment and economic processes, sustainable living and the importance of green technologies"; TU key values are defined as freedom, resolve, and competence; main TU goal is defined as: "studies at TU are characterized by interdisciplinarity, internationalization, green technologies, and personality enrichment development experience". TU has re-defined its strategic goals: 1) TU is a leader in the economy, facilitating business development and changing the paradigm of public thinking towards a sustainable lifestyle; 2) TU is a leading higher education institution in the field of green technologies, becoming a supporter and implementer of this idea; 3) TU ensures a close link between business and applied science through topical and meaningful research; 4) In a long term, a stable, sustainably growing and profiting university – an example of a business model in a world of change; 5) professional, labour-related staff with 21st century relevant skills and competences; 6) students are satisfied with the study environment and content. The study field "Economics" and its related three study programmes are not widely involved in internationalisation, introduction of sustainable lifestyle, development of students' personal skills. At the same time, during the on-site visit, the Experts team has received evidence, that students and Alumni are satisfied with study environment and quality, TU plays important role in regional development, move to distance studies via Cisco Webex and BATIS is highly appreciated by teaching staff and students, research activities of teaching staff and students are strongly supported by TU.

To achieve these strategic goals, TU plans to strengthen cooperation with employers and entrepreneurs, to participate in professional and academic ratings, to continue to implement surveys and develop "Turiba Business Index", to motivate students to become business owners or achieve executive positions in the companies, to encourage involvement of entrepreneurial, creative and talented professionals in public administration, to introduce green technologies and sustainability principles in all study programmes, to enforce internationalisation of study programmes and research, to achieve indexation of the scientific journal "Acta Prosperitatis" in Web of Science, to diversify and develop new study fields and study programmes, to increase education export to TU target markets, and to improve digital skills of the teaching staff.

As it is stated in the Self-Assessment Report of the study field, the aim of the study field "Economics" is the following: "to provide comprehensive theoretical and practical knowledge and to develop economic thinking, to develop the student's professionalism in his / her field, promoting the students' competitiveness in the Latvian and foreign labour market". The development of the study field "Economics" is closely related to "TU Strategy for 2016-2020", and its updated version for 2021-2025. The goals and tasks set in TU Strategy promote the development of the study field "Economics" and its three study programmes. To ensure development and sustainability of the study field, the aims and tasks of the study programmes have been aligned with the actions described in the Latvian Sustainable Development Strategy (Latvia 2030), for example, improvement of quality of education in the country, development of human capital and diminishing of inequality in education, cooperation of higher education institutions with employers and entrepreneurs, regional development, and distance learning programmes. As the main tasks for the study field "Economics" can be mentioned acquisition of competitive on EU level knowledge and skills necessary for the chosen profession, student's competitiveness in the changing socio-economic circumstances, self-learning skills, spiritual development, economic thinking, analytical and digital skills, creativity, and awareness development; implementation of research and sharing of the results in economics and trade based on professional practice. The planned learning outcome of the study field "Economics" is defined as the following: "highly qualified professionals, who are competitive in the field of market economy and globalization, and with their knowledge and skills, can promote the development of the regions". The main goals of the related three study

programmes of the study field “Economics” are related to the main goal of the study field, strategic goals of TU and Latvia, as also related professional standards.

The first level professional higher education study programmes “Finance and Accounting” and “Marketing and Trading” are implemented in TU three branches - in Cesis, Liepaja and Talsi cities. The study programme “Finance and Accounting” is also implemented in distance format. Management of all three TU Branches has strong leadership capacity to ensure efficient administration and implementation of the study process at the place, working in close cooperation with TU in Riga. During the on-site visit, all three Heads of TU Branches have confirmed strong support from TU side in solution of problems and introduction of new ideas, for example, events for local entrepreneurs to discuss mistakes in entrepreneurship. Availability of the study programmes of the study field in TU Branches ensure accessibility of higher education in regions, it complies with National Development Plan of Latvia 2021-2027 and Sustainable Development Strategy of Latvia until 2030.

1.2. TU is a private university, in addition to traditional bodies of representation, management and decision making of higher education institution, like Constitutional Assembly, Senate, Advisory Convention, Faculty councils, TU has established the Founder-created Board, which is executive body for managing TU in strategic and financial matters. Structure of the management of the study field “Economics” and its programmes is clear, well-functioning and lets to take efficient and fast decisions. The main positions involved in the management of the study field are Study Programme Directors, Head of the Department of Commerce, Heads of three TU Branches, Vice Dean of the Faculty of Business Administration, Dean of the Faculty of Business Administration, who is also Head of the study field, the Council of the Faculty of Business Administration, and TU Senate. The same person is the Study Programme Director in two study programmes - the 1st level study programme “Marketing and Trading” and the Bachelor study programme “Marketing and Trade Managing”. It is assessed positively by the Experts Team, as Director of the Programmes can eliminate overlapping of the content and can ensure proper integration of the 1st level study programme into Bachelor level programme. During the on-site visit, the Experts Team could see evidence of fast communication and very close cooperation between the Head of the study field, Directors of the study programmes, Head of the Faculty and Head of the Department of Commerce, who is dealing with teaching staff recruitment. Decisions are taken fast and in efficient manner, support from administration and technical staff is received immediately, and it was proved during the Experts' meetings with teaching staff, students, and Alumni. Elected and guest teaching staff could receive support very fast and in efficient way, students and Alumni confirmed, that could always get support from Directors of the study programmes. Students and Alumni have specially praised dedication and willingness of Heads of TU Branches in providing information and technical help during the studies. As a positive factor can be mentioned fast move of TU to remote study mode in pandemic circumstances of Covid19. Teaching staff, students and Alumni have evaluated it positively and consider Webex, BATIS and Moodle comfortable and efficient teaching and learning platforms and tools.

In Self-Assessment Report of the study field, it is mentioned that the Development Plan of the study field “Economics” is based on decisions of the study field accreditation commission, “Sustainable Development Strategy of Latvia 2030” and TU Strategy for the current period. All managerial bodies of the study field are involved in that.

The Experts Team positively assess ability of the management of the study field to introduce top management decision in fast and efficient manner but did not receive evidence of ability of the study field management to influence decisions of the TU top management. For example, in TU strategic goals and goals of the study field, it is stressed that internationalisation is very important, including provision of study programmes in English language, export of education, attraction of international teaching staff, publishing of the research results in international level, participation in

international ratings, provision of double or joint degrees programmes. During the meeting with TU top management, Rector and Head of Financial Department confirmed, that investments in development of TU are analysed, and currently there is no plan to invest in internationalisation of the study programmes of the study field "Economics", and that current TU focus is on newly licenced IT study programme and sustainability. At the same time, in the Development Plan of the study field "Economics" (SAR Field Annex 1), higher education export is mentioned as the 1st objective of the study field. In the Development Plan of the study field, there is no indicated period of implementation, it can cause misunderstanding about priority of objectives and time of their implementation. The Experts' Team considers that level of leadership of the management of the study field to influence changes in strategic development of the study field is limited, all strategic decisions are approved on the higher level.

1.3. TU has established a clear and efficient system and procedures for admission of students, recognition of the study period, professional experience, previously obtained formal and non-formal education, as also evaluation of the achievements and learning outcomes of the students. Procedures are developed for local and international students, are clearly described and available on TU website. The Experts Team can stress out positive role of contest-based tuition fee discounts and further rotation principle, it helps to increase motivation of students to reach higher study goals. During the on-site visit, the Experts team has received evidence from many students and Alumni, that they are satisfied with admission requirements, process, affordable tuition fee and efficient tuition fee discounts, grants and availability of free places.

The enrolment regulations comply with the Law on Higher Education Institutions as well as the regulations of Latvian government on the requirements, criteria, and procedure for enrolment in study programmes.

Learning outcomes achieved through previous education or professional experience are assessed and determined according to the requirements of the study programmes of the study field. If they meet the relevant requirements of the study programmes, they are recognised, and the corresponding credits are awarded. Persons, who are not students of the respective study programme, may enrol in the corresponding study period of this study programme, after the recognition of the study results and, if necessary, the scope of additional study courses or study modules and the corresponding examinations are offered. A list of criteria for recognition of learning outcomes from previous education and/or professional experience has been drawn up. Based on the application and the submitted documents, the specially organised commission makes decisions on the recognition of previous professional experience and its equivalence with specific training courses.

1.4. TU has set clear academic integrity principles and mechanisms, which are shared with all the stakeholders and let to detect plagiarism cases in effective way. During the on-site visit, the Experts Team got an evidence, that there is internal culture, shared by teaching staff and students, oriented on academic ethics and integrity. TU has joined the Unified Computerised Plagiarism Control System (Latvian acronym VDPKS), which was created jointly by Latvian higher education institutions and wherein it is possible to compare the works of students of 16 Latvian higher education institutions. With this system, TU examines all submitted qualification, Bachelor, Master and Doctoral theses. In addition, TU has launched the Turnitin plagiarism system, which is an additional tool to combat plagiarism and can be used by tutors to analyse students' independent research works. If plagiarism is detected, students are not admitted to the defense, are forced to rewrite, and resubmit their work again, and have to pay extra fee for resubmission.

1.5. A list of study programmes implemented at TU is available on the TU website. The information published on TU website regarding the study programmes of the study field "Economics"

corresponds to the information available in official registers. The responsibility for the conformity of the information on the website with the information contained in the official registers rests with each Director of the study programme, for the study field – with the Dean, and for overall accessibility – the Development Department. Information about study programmes of the study field “Economics” is provided only in Latvian language, as the programmes are not available in English language.

## **Conclusions. Strengths and weaknesses**

The main conclusions are the following:

The aims of the study field “Economics” and its three study programmes are clearly defined, attainable and in general comply with TU strategic development goals and priority activities. What is missing, internationalisation and sustainability are not introduced in the study field and its study programmes: study programmes are implemented only in Latvian language, rather low international mobility of students and teaching staff, lack of international teaching staff, study programmes are not updated with sustainability study courses, at least as optional choice.

The structure of the management of the study field and its related study programmes is well-thought and effective, able to take decisions in fast and efficient manner. Administrative and technical support to students and staff meet the needs of the study programmes, is timely and efficient. Management of the study field does not have strong leadership capacity to influence decisions of TU top management, for example, to introduce internationalisation and joint/ double degree cooperation, which were already recommended by the Experts during the previous accreditation.

TU has developed and introduced logical and efficient system and procedures for admission of local and foreign students, recognition of study period and study results previously obtained in professional experience, formal and non-formal education. All necessary information is provided on TU website and internal document system.

TU has set strong academic integrity principles and appropriate plagiarism detection tools, which are effectively applied in study field and its programmes, including TU main campus in Riga and three branches.

Information published on TU website about study field and its programmes complies with information in the official registers, and it provides all the necessary information to students and candidates in Latvian language.

Management of three TU Branches, where are implemented the 1st level programmes of the study field “Economics”, has strong leadership capacity to ensure effective administration of the study process and introduction of new ideas, receiving full administrative and technical support from the management of the study field and TU management.

The main strengths are the following:

- 1) TU has established well-developed management structure of the study field, which is capable to take fast and efficient decisions;
- 2) Management in three TU Branches has strong leadership and capacity to take fast and efficient decisions at the place;
- 3) TU has established clear and efficient admission rules and process, providing merit-based tuition fee discounts, grants and free places, which are highly appreciated and widely used by students;
- 4) TU has a well-established and viable administrative and technical support system in TU main campus and three TU Branches;
- 5) TU has strong academic integrity culture and efficient plagiarism detection tools;
- 6) TU has well-developed website, where all necessary information is provided.

The main weakness is the following:

- 1) Internationalisation (higher education export as objective Nr.1 of the Study Field Development Plan) and sustainability strategic goals are not introduced in the study field “Economics” and its

three study programmes, yet.

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

### **Analysis**

2.1. TU has established a Quality Policy, which is available publicly. It defines the main principles of quality management at TU. The Quality Policy is focused on meeting the requirements of the ESG and shows the implementation of the goals set in the 2016-2020 strategy of TU.

The Quality Management System (hereinafter QMS) has been developed according to the requirements of ESG and standard ISO9001. The basic principles of QMS are customer orientation, leadership and staff engagement, process approach, continued improvement, evidence-based decision making and customer relationship management.

The Chairman of the Management Board is responsible for the QMS at TU. The Chairman of the Management Board ensures the implementation of the QMS at the strategic level, while the Quality Manager ensures the monitoring and improvement of the QMS at the functional and operational level and is also responsible for the maintenance of the measurement system, performs QMS efficiency and effectiveness checks (including QMS internal audits), takes care of the maintenance and updating of internal regulatory documents. During the on-site visit, in the interviews, the TU representatives also confirmed this division of responsibilities, stating that senior management cares about whether students acquire qualitative knowledge and skills, whether students and staff feel good at TU, and whether the QMS is stable. The stability and efficiency of the QMS is assessed by senior management based on the results of student surveys, cooperation with Student Council, student applications (complaints, suggestions) and the efficiency of the decision-making process and usefulness of decisions. Senior management emphasized that everything that is done is done with purpose. Responsibility for quality assurance is divided (cascaded) at all levels.

A Quality Management Handbook (hereinafter the Handbook) has been developed. It has been approved by the TU Senate and contains a description of QMS maintenance. The Handbook is available to all students and staff on the Intranet and the BATIS information system. The Handbook defines 17 processes. Each process has a responsible person who oversees approving and implementing changes, as well as the efficiency of the process. Measurements are defined for each process. The regularity of data collection and measurements is defined. At the end of the study year, the person in charge of the process evaluates the process and prepares a process evaluation report in which the results and necessary improvements are recorded. The Quality Manager compiles the process evaluation reports in the Management Report. According to the Quality Manager, those responsible for the process collect the results of the measurements once a year or even every semester, depending on the specifics of the process. The interviews during the on-site visit with the Directors of the study programmes and teaching staff confirmed that the content and provision of study courses are evaluated and, if necessary, improved every year.

At the same time, there are many process measurements, and they are defined in general terms. It would be advisable to define the measurements of the processes more precisely to be able to trace improvements and assess whether the process is efficient, and the goal is achieved. The process evaluation system can be supplemented with information about the purpose and results of the process. For example, the goal of the Strategic Planning and Control process is to determine the University's strategic goals and performance indicators, to ensure their control and updating. The result of the process is an approved strategy, whereas the process measurements, which allow to assess whether the result of the process will be achieved, can be as follows: the strategy is approved, publicly available and presented to all students and staff of TU; an analysis of the implementation of the results defined in the strategy is performed every year and a report is prepared.

The structure of documents has been developed at TU. Documents are divided into strategic, policy,

process description, planning and support documents. Internal regulatory acts do not use a unified structure and design requirements. The Self-Assessment Report shows a lack of diligence in the preparation of documents. There are duplicates in the list of publications, numbering errors, many typing mistakes, the design of the publications is very different (as opposed to the fact that in the students' final theses the list of publications must be designed in accordance with the uniform requirements). There are sections that contain general statements about compliance with the accreditation requirements, but do not contain enough facts and evidence (for example, 6.1. and Annex 12, as well as 2.1 and 2.2 in all study programmes). Translation of documents into English language in some places is not clear and applies different terminology for the same issues, for example, application of professional terms in the names of study programmes, documents included in the Self-Assessment Report.

During the on-site visit, in the interviews with the teaching staff, students, Alumni, and employers, everyone confirmed that they are satisfied with study process and results. Students are very satisfied with the quality and provision of the study content, professional guest Lecturers from industry, solid practical side in studies and traineeship, friendly communication, strong support from management of the study field. Alumni and employers are satisfied with the acquired knowledge, skills and competence of the Alumni, and their ability to present good results in the work environment. The students of TU Branches indicated that the strengths of TU are teaching staff's competence, short study programmes, affordable tuition fees, motivating discounts, opportunity to study for those who are employed and those who are not, good infrastructure, friendly staff, theory followed by practice, suitable offer of study programmes, positive feedback shared by graduates of previous years, knowledge from industry professionals, new study materials. In the interviews, the teaching staff indicated that they are motivated and supported by TU in professional self-development, participation in scientific conferences, publication of their research results.

The TU quickly responds to demand, for example, by improving the capacity of the Internet in the dormitory or discussing the quality of work with teaching staff, developing a mobile application for BATIS, implementing hybrid teaching during the pandemic, supplementing library resources by the industry literature and others. Employment statistics are analysed in those regions where TU Branches operate.

Students, staff, and employers work as one team. This is also confirmed by the fact that students continue their education at TU until the highest level – Doctoral degree. Students and Alumni associate their careers with TU, they hold the positions of Lecturers and in administration staff.

The effectiveness of QMS is evidenced by the fact that TU representatives of all levels very similarly describe the strengths of TU (studies are useful for labour market, there is individual approach to each student, the study programme is coordinated with further studies, graduates are the most sought-after marketing specialists in Latvia, there is regular cooperation with top-ranking professionals) and are also in line with the recently updated TU Strategy 2016-2020.

2.2. TU has established clear procedures for development and review of its study fields and study programmes, effective feedback mechanism is implemented to improve the study process. The development of study programmes in the study field is specified in "The Regulations for the Development, Change and Approval of Study Programmes". It defines the procedure for the development and approval of a new study programme. The procedure includes not only a description of the process and responsible staff, but also requirements, including the involvement of external experts to ensure the relevance of the programme, and Professors to develop the compulsory and compulsory elective parts. Requirements are also defined for the development of Doctoral and joint study programmes. The procedure for implementing changes in the study programme is specified in detail. "The Regulations for the Development, Change and Approval of Study Programmes" contain references to external regulatory acts – Regulations No.793 of the Cabinet Of Ministers of the Republic of Latvia, without indicating the date and title of these

regulations.

TU has effective mechanisms for receiving feedback. Surveys of employees, students, employers, and graduates are conducted regularly. The procedure of surveying is determined in the "Survey Procedure". The procedure is carefully designed, setting out the objectives of the surveys, responsible staff, and deadlines. The study course evaluation survey has three forms: evaluation of the study courses, evaluation of the traineeship and evaluation of the study work development and management. The survey is conducted using BATIS. In accordance with the procedure, Directors of study programmes inform students and ask them to get involved into the survey. The opinion of employers is obtained both at the end of the traineeship and during the work of various collegial institutions, in the meetings of which representatives of employers participate, for example, in the Faculty Council. However, in the "Survey Procedure", the employer survey is not defined as a separate and very important type of survey.

Students provide their opinion not only on the quality of the study programme, but also on the work of other structural units of TU, a different form of survey has been developed for this purpose and the results are being analysed at the management level. This survey is also conducted using BATIS. Faculties organize Alumni surveys by sending questionnaires to graduates by e-mail. The Alumni survey is organized at least once every two years during the period from September to December. TU also obtains the opinion of potential students by interviewing applicants and Open Day visitors. The human resources department is responsible for organizing employee surveys. The opinion of participants of courses and seminars organized by TU is also obtained. During the on-site visit, in the interviews, students, Alumni and employers indicated that TU asks them to provide their opinions and recommendations. Representatives of the study programmes administration mentioned that the questionnaires are not changed or are changed very minimally. This ensures comparability of results and the opportunity to observe tendencies. They also confirmed that results of the surveys are used to improve the quality of studies, the course of processes, the competence of the staff, and the infrastructure.

The students and administration confirmed that students not only provide assessment of the teaching staff in regular surveys, but also make recommendations on the quality of the work of the teaching staff. The study programmes administration, including the Directors of the study programmes and the Heads of TU Branches first discuss the situation with the students and the teaching person and try to reach a solution without changing the teaching staff member. But there have also been cases where teachers have been replaced.

A very large proportion of students continue their studies at higher levels of studies, choosing to stay at the same university – TU. This indicates not only satisfaction with the acquired education, but also that the processes are defined in an understandable, logical way, information is publicly available. In several interviews, students confirmed that feedback is provided in the amount and quality acceptable to them and meets students' expectations. The opinion of students is also obtained through the Student Council. "The Regulations of Student Council" stipulate that the Student Council represents the interests of students in academic, material, cultural and daily matters within TU and in other state institutions. Members of the Student Council are elected to represent students in TU Constitutional Assembly, the Senate, the Academic Arbitration Court, the Faculty Council, and the Latvian Student Union. According to the information obtained in the interviews, students of TU Branches are not actively involved in the work of the Student Council. This prevents them from participating in the work and decision-making of collegial institutions, but the voice of TU Branches is very important. The similar situation is with the working students, who are studying in the evenings and in part-time and/or extramural mode. During the on-site visit, they confirmed that do not feel the role of the Student Council and think that this TU structure is mainly for day-group students. This category of students should be able to share their opinion and to be more involved in students' activities. During the on-site visit, students, Alumni and employers confirmed, that they were participating in surveys, but surveys' results were not shared with them;

they would be interested to see the results of the surveys. Management of the study field has provided additional information, that the results of the surveys are published on TU information system and accessible to each and every student in [inet.turiba.lv](http://inet.turiba.lv). Considering information obtained during the on-site visit, TU should find the way how to inform the respondents of the surveys where to get acquainted with the results.

2.3. TU collects and analyses information on study field "Economics" and its three study programmes on a regular basis and use the result effectively to improve the study process in the related study programmes. At TU, the statistics are compiled according to the "Personal Data Processing Policy" approved by the Management Board of TU. According to this policy, personal data are stored in a form, which allows the identification of data subjects for no longer than is necessary for the purposes for which the personal data are processed. Personal data may be kept longer insofar as personal data are processed solely for archiving in the public interest, scientific or historical research or statistical purposes, provided that appropriate technical and organisational measures are taken to protect the rights and freedoms of the data subject. TU has developed an internal data processing system that enters and stores the necessary data and can be accessed with a password. Data are regularly collected on student numbers and status (updated monthly), mobility (updated continuously), success rates, traineeships, as well as topics of the final papers - students' qualification and diploma works (as required) and state examination results (twice a year). The data are used to improve study courses, including changes in the number of credit points of study courses, adding new study courses and changing or removing outdated study courses in the study field and its study programmes.

2.4. TU has identified the standards, and its study process complies with Part 1 of the ESG, ensuring broader access to higher education through flexible learning path of students and offer of study programmes in regions of Latvia, proper teaching and learning environment for successful studies, research, and innovation; student-centred approach in teaching and learning; continuous improvement culture and involvement of all the stakeholders into that. According to the Self-Assessment Report of the study field "Economics", TU pays increased attention to its "Quality Assurance Policy". TU has a "Quality Assurance Policy" that supports organisation of quality assurance system; the responsibility for quality assurance of structural units, TU management, individual staff members and students; academic integrity and freedom and intolerance towards academic fraud; combating all forms of intolerance and discrimination against students or staff members; involving external stakeholders in quality assurance by involving employers, social partners and the Faculty Council through their recommendations for improvement.

"The Quality Assurance Policy" is based on the following documents: "Quality Management Handbook", "Regulations of the Faculties", "Student Council Regulations", "Ethics Policy", "Regulations on Academic Integrity and Plagiarism", "Academic Arbitration Regulations", and other TU internal regulations. There are appropriate procedures for resolving student complaints, a "Procedure for Acceptance and Review of Complaints" has been developed, the procedure for contesting the results of the study course is set out in the "Study Regulations", contesting the results of the State Exam in accordance with the "State Examination Regulations". Assessment criteria and methods as well as grading criteria have been made public in advance, "The Study Regulations", "The Examination Regulations", study course descriptions and regulations are available to each student and Lecturer. A commission consisting of two Lecturers evaluates traineeship and study papers, a commission consisting of five (including industry representative) members evaluates works defended in the state examination.

At TU, a lot of attention is paid to the matriculation of students, the study process, the recognition of qualifications and certification. "Enrolment Regulations", which set out the criteria for admission, and procedure for matriculation are available both in TU Internal Information System and on TU

website. The website and the regulatory documents in TU Intranet provide information on student mobility opportunities and criteria. Matriculation, study content and organisation of the study process are determined by the "Study Regulations". The study process of students is monitored through surveys, summary of exam results, and compilation of student statistics. TU also applies the recognition of results achieved in previous education and/or professional experience. Lecture visits are regularly carried out to assess the professional qualifications of Lecturers. After passing the course exam, students can express their opinion about all Lecturers. The surveys are conducted anonymously.

The Self-Assessment Report states: "The academic staff involved in the study programme are highly qualified and competent and provide students with the necessary research skills, theoretical knowledge, skills and competences." Qualification of the teaching staff in three study programmes of the study field differ, more detailed analysis is provided in study programmes-related parts of this Experts' joint report.

The Self-Assessment Report states that teaching staff and students are offered incentives to publish more of their research, paying for translation and publication wherever possible. On Experts' view, in institution of higher education, this should be a matter of course.

Infrastructure provisions at TU are good. They are regularly renewed and modernised. Students are provided assistance during consultations with the teaching staff. They can turn with questions concerning the study process to the Study Information Centre, Directors of the study programmes or TU departments, or faculty. The International Department assists in international mobility issues.

## **Conclusions. Strengths and weaknesses**

The main conclusions are the following:

TU has established efficient Quality Policy, which is publicly available and involves all stakeholders in policy making, Quality Management System, which implements quality principles, including a process approach; ensures continuous improvement, development and efficient performance of the study field "Economics" and the relevant study programmes. The tasks of the organizational structure at all levels are clearly defined, TU can set goals and accurately communicate information to all the stakeholders.

The procedures for the development and review of the relevant study programmes of the study field "Economics" and the feedback mechanisms (including feedbacks of students, employers, and Alumni) have been defined and they are logical, efficient, and available for all stakeholders.

TU has clear and efficient procedures how to collect and analyse data on regular basis, useful for improvement of the study field and its related programmes.

TU Quality Assurance Policy complies with Part 1 of ESG.

Students and Alumni expressed satisfaction with study process, obtained knowledge, skills and competences in the study field and its study programmes.

The main strengths are the following:

- 1) the QMS helps to achieve the goals and results of the study field "Economics" and its study programmes;
- 2) the QMS allows TU to respond quickly to student requests and changes in the external environment;
- 3) the QMS forms the basis for efficient and coordinated operation of TU's structural units and employees;
- 4) the internal regulatory acts define in detail the procedure by which study programmes are developed and reviewed, and feedback is obtained;
- 5) requirements for the composition of the study programme development group are defined, and this contributes to ensuring the quality of the study programmes;
- 6) the feedback obtained from the interviews shows that the procedures work effectively.

The main weaknesses are the following:

- 1) process measurements are defined in general terms, they do not allow to assess whether the process execution is efficient, and the goal is achieved;
- 2) some internal regulations contain references to the previous strategy, for example, in the “Quality Management Handbook” and are not updated to the new strategy, yet;
- 3) as it was shared by students, Alumni and employers during the on-site visit, results of the surveys were not shared with the respondents, or, how the Experts' Team could conclude, respondents were not informed where to look for surveys' results;
- 4) the survey procedure does not specify the procedure for employer surveys;
- 5) the students of TU Branches are not actively involved in the work of collegial institutions;
- 6) in the “Regulations for the Development, Change and Approval of Study Programmes”, references to external regulatory acts do not indicate their date and title;
- 7) the internal Quality Assurance System is only partially effective in the study field, inefficiencies in the first level professional higher education study programme “Finance and Accounting” and professional Bachelor study programme “Marketing and Trade Managing” were not identified timely and brought to the attention of the management (more details in evaluation of respective study programmes in this Experts' joint report).

### **3. Resources and Provision of the Study Field**

#### **Analysis**

3.1. TU has developed a system to determine the financial resources required for the implementation of the study field and its programmes. Directors of Study Programmes, Head of the study field, Heads of Branches describe the need or problem and apply for funds for these specific needs, and how it was confirmed in interviews during the on-site visit, usually get the accept. There is no described separate mechanism or financial analysis done separately and specifically for the study field “Economics” and its study programmes. Considering rather low number of students in each programme of the study field, the Experts find it important to do financial analysis of each study programme separately.

TU has common budget for the whole University, funds are split between study fields based on investment plans, strategic goals and needs of the study fields and study programmes, shared by management of these study fields and study programmes. TU uses only private funds for study provision. TU financial position is stable, TU is profitable since its foundation. TU provides diversified forms of studies, including offer of the first level study programmes in TU Branches, and it allows TU to compensate decrease of income in one study programme with revenues of another study programme or source. Revenues consist of tuition fees for higher education, participation fees for seminars, hotel services and income from other economic activities. Expenditures are planned in the budget proportionally to the revenues, the main expenditure positions are salaries of staff, social security payments, utilities, material expenses for provision of the study process, purchase of new equipment, as well as renovation and repair of premises. Investments in the development of TU are made by forecasting changes in the demographic situation as well as in the European Higher Education Area and Latvian regulatory system.

Sources of funding for research include TU funding, as well as project funds for involvement of TU teaching staff in research and other projects. This funding is used both for participation in conferences with reports and publications, and for translation of publications into English language. TU has developed a special bonus system to stimulate teaching staff to publish their research results in scientific journals indexed in Scopus or Web of Science data bases. During the on-site visit, teaching staff of the study field has confirmed availability of the mentioned stimulation system, they are also supported and motivated to join Doctoral studies and obtain Doctoral degrees. Teaching staff has stressed importance of TU scientific journal "Acta Prosperitatis" to be indexed in Web of

Science, currently this journal is indexed in EBSCO database, but not in Web of Science, yet. TU is active in organization of annual scientific conferences with publication possibilities.

TU Branches, where are implemented the first level study programmes of the study field "Economics", are included in the total budget of TU. During the on-site visit, Heads of the TU Branches have confirmed, that feel comfortable to express their needs and apply to TU for funds; their previous requests were satisfied. As a positive factor, the Experts can mention region-wise tuition fee policy. Studies at TU Branches are with lower tuition fee, and it helps to make studies affordable in the regions, as also attract people from Riga to Cesis Branch, which is the closest to Riga from all three TU Branches.

3.2. TU has identified infrastructure resources, material and technical provision required for the implementation of the study field "Economics" and its related study programmes. TU has at its disposal available all the necessary resources and provisions. TU ensures well-developed premises for studies: new conference halls, lecture rooms, computer classes, and modern library with a spacious reading room. TU has special auditoriums according to the needs of various study programmes (Project Room, Travel Agency Room, Hotel Room), there are rest areas in the corridors, there is a transformable Conference Hall (with a sliding wall in the middle making it possible to divide the hall into two parts). The lecture rooms are equipped with high quality visual equipment – white boards and screens, multimedia projectors, audio, and video equipment. Students have access to computer workstations. Stationary multimedia projectors as well as portable ones are available for teaching staff. There is sports hall which can also be used in the study process. Students can use the whole territory of TU for practical lessons, fostering sustainability concept introduced by TU in its recently updated "TU Strategy 2021-2025". TU Business Incubator has been established for special training of students, and it is actively used by TU students and employees (individual business can be registered with the address of TU Business Incubator). Mentoring services, comfortable office space and guest lectures are highly appreciated by participants of the TU Business Incubator. Students of TU Branches, evening and part time studies groups are not very active in TU Business Incubator, opportunities provided by the TU Business Incubator should be better promoted to these categories of students. The infrastructure provisions at TU are regularly renewed and modernised, TU Library regularly purchases new literature, both in print and in electronic format. Students have free access to the TU Library and other resources. The student can address any questions concerning the study process to the Study Information Centre, Directors of the study programmes, Heads of the study field and other TU departments, faculty, or the International Department (on international mobility issues).

TU provides distance studies, using internet technologies. The Information Systems Department provides technological support to the study process, ensure maintenance and improvement of TU Information System. In 2018/2019, TU has invested in introduction of distance studies, forced by Covid-19 restrictions, providing a complex of Moodle, BATIS, Intranet and Webex e-learning platform. During the on-site visit interviews, all meeting groups – teaching staff, students and Alumni - have positively assessed fast and effective introduction of distance studies, and that complex of Moodle, Intranet, BATIS and Webex is very comfortable and efficient for study needs. TU plans to keep hybrid studies approach also in the future. At the same time, in descriptions of study courses in all three study programmes, there is no evidence of availability of professional, business analytics, statistics (like SPSS) software, there is only one accounting software Zalktis used for accounting course purpose, students are not introduced to other accounting software widely used on the market (short introduction and demo versions might contribute to this point), there is also no evidence of introduction of big data management, AI and modern digital tools for research and analytics in the study process, and there is no evidence of update of the infrastructure and TU technical capacity with the related tools and software.

TU Library offers students a modern automated free-access library with an electronic

subscription/registration system, as well as access to books and periodicals using the electronic catalogue ALISE, which through internet can be accessed from anywhere in the world. Books available in the library are related also to the study field "Economics" and its study programmes. Main part of the books is in Latvian language, but also books and other information sources are available in English language. The library subscribes to periodicals in print and electronic form, for example, online electronic databases as LETA, Nozare.lv, Letonika, Lursoft, EBSCO Academic Search Complete, EBSCO eBooks Academic Subscription Collection, EBSCO Business Source Complete, Scopus, data bases of the National Library of Latvia. The library provides users with a comfortable and work-friendly environment. The total area of the library is 1532 m<sup>2</sup>, extensive collection of free-access books (subscription with user-accessible electronic catalogue) is 708.40 m<sup>2</sup>, library reading room with latest press issues 772.90 m<sup>2</sup>. Currently, 182 workplaces are available for students, 59 of them are computerized, and there is also a quiet reading room and specialized workplaces for group work. During the on-site visit, teaching staff has confirmed, that can receive any needed source form the TU Library. Students and Alumni also have confirmed that books and library materials are available. Despite this information shared by teaching staff and students, the Experts Teams found out that books mentioned in bibliography of study course descriptions in most cases are outdated, majority of books in Latvian language were not updated and published in the latest years, also lack of books in English language is obvious. It lets to doubt up-to date content of the study courses in all three programmes of the study field "Economics". TU invests in library resources, but teaching staff is not active in including the newest books into course content and course descriptions.

Based on the videos about premises of TU Branches, which were shared with the Experts, situation with infrastructure in branches is not so developed, branches are operating in rented premises, have some equipment limitations, but in general are appropriate for studies; classrooms, Administration and Library premises look comfortable and suitable for study process, meetings with students, and work with literature. During the on-site visit, the Experts' Team got evidence, that Heads of TU Branches, students and Alumni are satisfied with the technical provisions of the premises, found it comfortable to study close to place of living and work. At the same time, how it was stressed during the interviews with the Heads of Branches, that hybrid studies are not available in some TU Branches because of insufficient technical capacity of the rented premises, but are very crucial for the students of the branch. In TU Branches, TU Library's offer at the places is limited, but there is a possibility to order books from Riga. Students should order the necessary books at the Branch, then these books are brought from TU Library at TU campus in Riga. During the on-site visit the Experts got the evidence, that this service is actively used by students. Students of TU Branches can also use local libraries in the respective regions.

3.3. TU has developed clear procedures how to attract highly skilled teaching staff to the study field "Economics" and its related study programmes. These procedures are publicly available, clear and are followed by TU. TU ensures attraction of highly skilled teaching staff by regularly - twice each academic year - announcing competitions for vacant academic positions, and by creating strong bonds between its teaching staff, students, and Alumni, who often become teaching staff themselves and bring back relevant expert knowledge and industry experience gained later in life back to TU and its students. TU has developed regulations on procedures for electing and choosing relevant teaching staff; staffing procedures are clear, transparent and merit based. Teaching staff mainly focuses on teaching. However, when research activities are taking place teaching staff has no problems with balancing their workload. Teaching staff carries out prescribed teaching workload, including lectures, practical work, preparations, and evaluations of assignments. The needs of the teaching staff for professional and didactic improvement are identified in a target-oriented manner, TU eagerly and swiftly responds to teaching staff requests for work related material assistance, teaching staff is encouraged to pursue further self-education and self-improvement. Appropriate improvement measures are defined and undertaken. Teaching staff of the study field is invited to

take part in both incoming and outgoing mobility. During the last six years, 28 incoming and 17 outgoing mobility cases have been recorded, for three study programmes in six years these numbers are rather low. Teaching staff is stimulated by TU to participate in scientific conferences, to publish their research results in scientific journals, especially the ones indexed in Scopus and Web of Science data bases, as also to join Doctoral studies and obtain Doctoral degrees. TU organizes annual scientific conferences and have its own scientific journal "Acta Prosperitatis", TU teaching staff is welcome to participate in TU conferences and publish their articles in TU scientific journal. TU attracts teaching staff with strong practical experience in the field of teaching. At the same time, number of applied research and scientific publications of the teaching staff involved in the study field "Economics" is low, especially in finance and accounting fields. Also, number of scientific publications of the teaching staff in scientific journals indexed in Scopus and Web of Science data bases is low. Based on information provided by the Management of the study field, there are 18 elected lecturers in the study field, in 2014-2020, there are 33 Scopus and WoS publications. 1.83 publication per elected lecturer, in addition considering 6 years and 3 study programmes, is quite a low ratio. Taking into account, that there are only professional study programmes in the study field and two of them are the 1st level study programmes, teaching staff can replace their scientific writing with professional experience, still the Experts stress the importance of being more active in applied research, involve students in that and apply the obtained results in the teaching process. During the on-site visit, the Experts Team has received evidence, that teaching staff is satisfied with teaching environment at TU, receives all the necessary administrative and technical support. When TU moved to distance studies because of pandemic restrictions, training in digital teaching was provided to the teaching staff. TU teaching staff involved in the study field "Economics" feels stimulated to be active in advancement of personal professional skills in the field of teaching, as also research, publishing and advancement of further education up to Doctoral level. During the on-site visit, when Experts have asked teaching staff, which methods they use in their study courses, majority did not mention any specific teaching method, the most popular answer was "teaching theory in practice". The Experts Team considers that special training on teaching methods for teaching staff can be useful in this case. During the interviews, the TU staff members were not able to indicate to which professional organizations or associations they belong, while this affiliation is mentioned in the Self-Assessment Report as a strength of the elected teaching staff.

3.4. TU has identified and provides necessary support to students. TU Student Council, among other things, represents TU students, manages much of non-academic student life at TU, for example, organizes student events, and identifies student needs, interests, and desires for the improvement of the study process; however, the outreach of TU Student Council has not been visible in TU Branches. Study Information Office is the first communication point for students and can provide maximum of support and solve majority of the students' problems and complains, if they do not require decision of the higher management. TU International office is responsible for managing and supporting international students' needs, including psychological support. In comparison to international students, local students said during the meetings, that do not have access to the same type of support, for example, dedicated psychological support. It was also mentioned that priority to participate in Erasmus+ mobility project can be given to international students because of English as language of instruction in their programmes of studies. Students in TU questionnaires over the last few years have expressed an increasing satisfaction with various TU aspects. During the on-site visit, in meetings with students, students were generally very satisfied with TU support and opportunities but indicated discrepancy in the amount of information provided between day/full time and evening/part time students about additional activities and opportunities offered by TU, which is likely due to more mature student demographic in the evening/part time study groups. A small note about the lack of dedicated gym room or sports classes and issue of Erasmus+ rules which favour foreign students, because of English language, were also mentioned by students as a future

improvement area of TU. Student needs in TU Branches are identified and effectively managed by local Heads of TU Branches.

## **Conclusions. Strengths and weaknesses**

The main conclusions are the following:

TU has strong financial position and policy, providing necessary funds to support study process, research, and innovations. There is one common TU budget for all study fields and study programmes, which also allows to compensate decrease in revenues of one study programme by funds from another study programme or source. Considering small number of students in each of three study programmes of the study field "Economics", it would be useful to do financial analysis of each study programme separately in order to take timely decision regarding sustainability and further development of each programme.

TU ensures necessary infrastructure, material, and technical provision for study process, teaching staff and students are satisfied with that.

TU has invested in development of distance studies during the Covid-19 pandemic restrictions and will continue to benefit from that also in future; students and teaching staff are fully satisfied with Moodle, BATIS and Webex complex in the study process.

Library has good choice of books and other information resources, but at the same time bibliography mentioned in the study course descriptions is outdated and lacks books in English language in all three study programmes of the study field "Economics".

TU sports facilities are limited with big sports hall, basketball team and Cheerleaders team, there is no separate gym and sports possibilities for wider students' groups, for example, yoga, which was suggested by students during the on-site visit.

TU has well-developed procedures how to attract highly skilled teaching staff, there are motivation and compensation mechanisms how to stimulate teaching staff in professional development, research, and publishing, obtaining of Doctoral degrees. During the on-site visit, the Experts did not get any evidence, that TU staff members are affiliated to any professional organizations or associations, while in SAR, it is mentioned as a strength of the elected teaching staff.

TU has established efficient structure how to meet needs and support students during the studies.

The Student Council is very active in representation of students and organization of activities for students but does not reach students in TU Branches and working students in evening/ part time groups.

TU Business Incubator is established and is actively used by TU students and employees.

There is no evidence of active Alumni Association, which could be of greater support to TU, study field "Economics" and related study programmes.

There is no evidence in study course descriptions of all three study programmes, that students are provided with and actively use data management, business analytics, statistics (SPSS) software and tools.

In TU Branches, infrastructure possibilities, material and technical provisions in general meet the needs of students, as the main negative point was mentioned inability to provide hybrid studies in some TU Branches because of technical limitations of rented premises. The Heads of Branches do their best to ensure study process in the most efficient and comfortable way, books are brought from TU Riga campus to TU Branches upon the orders.

The main strengths are the following:

- 1) TU has funds and actively invests in infrastructure, the latest successful investment is in move to distance studies, using the complex of Moodle, BATIS, Intranet, and Webex;
- 2) TU attracts its Alumni as teaching staff and in such a way maintains connections with employers, private sector and professional industry;

- 3) TU swiftly and effectively responds to work-related material assistance requests of the teaching staff;
- 4) students are generally satisfied with TU infrastructure, material and technical provisions, and administrative support both in TU main campus and TU Branches;
- 5) Heads of TU Branches can effectively respond to local resource and provision issues.

The main weaknesses are the following:

- 1) low activity of teaching staff involved in the study field in applied research, as also scientific work and publication of their research results in scientific journals indexed in Scopus and Web of Science;
- 2) low activities of the TU Student Council in reaching TU Branch students and working students of the evening/ part time groups;
- 3) low activity of Alumni Association in fostering cooperation between TU and Alumni;
- 4) during the on-site visit students have mentioned, that gym is not separated from the sports hall, and there are limited sports facilities and opportunities for wider students' groups (yoga was mentioned by students during the on-site visit as a good alternative to basketball and Cheerleaders teams);
- 5) no dedicated psychological support for local students, which is provided to international students;
- 6) provision of books and study resources in TU Library is promoted as up-to date and related to the study field and its study programmes, but the choice of bibliography mentioned in the study course descriptions in all study programmes is outdated, lacks scientific publications and books and sources in English language;
- 7) Some TU Branches cannot ensure hybrid studies because of some technical limitations of the rented premises, but this format of studies was mentioned being important for students;
- 8) During the interviews, the TU staff members were not able to indicate to which professional organizations or associations they belong, while this affiliation is mentioned in the Self-Assessment Report as a strength of the elected teaching staff.

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

### **Analysis**

4.1. Direction of scientific research and/ or artistic creation in the study field "Economics" in general complies with the development aims of TU, teaching staff is motivated to be active in research, participation in scientific conferences and publishing their research results. At the same time, the Experts Team finds it important to ensure applied and where it is possible also scientific research dedicated to the themes related to the study field "Economics" and its study programmes - in marketing and sales, trade management, finance, and accounting in the context of economics. "TU Research Strategy" pointed out the boost of scientific research as one of strategic goals. In the area of scientific research, the goal is to ensure a highly specialised teaching staff that has a strong knowledge of theory and significant involvement in practice with professional experience. According to "TU Research Strategy", the focus is on the increasing the number of teaching staff with Doctoral degrees (target in 2020 was 60%). In Development Plan of the study field "Economics" (SAR Field Annex 1), further scientific and professional qualification of educators is mentioned as the third main objective. The research activities and research topics mostly are related to the fields of marketing and trade, there are only few publications related directly to the fields of finance and accounting. In line with the "TU Research Strategy", a significant number of teaching staff is actively involved in practice and participates in work of state or municipal entities, private entities, or operates own business. In professional study programmes, Doctoral degree for teaching staff with sufficient professional experience is not mandatory but increase of number of the teaching staff with Doctoral degrees and scientific research in the related field can contribute a lot to methodological basis, content and more detailed and advanced mapping of the study courses of the study programmes

and the field. Also scientific research activities of the teaching staff can be replaced with professional experience, more active involvement in applied research would be beneficial to the achievement of the development goals of the study field.

4.2. In the Self-Assessment Report, it is pointed out, that the relation between scientific research and the study process is ensured, and the outputs of scientific work of the teaching staff are integrated in the study process. Teaching staff is active in writing the scientific monographs, and other scientific papers and publications, where the results of their research work are presented. These publications are used as a source of literature in a teaching process for the purpose of mastering the learning outcomes of a particular study course, teaching staff develops new research topics through the study process. In teaching process of several study courses, it is required from students to analyse different scientific papers and reports in order to connect the practical and theoretical knowledge. Teaching staff makes additional efforts to explain students how to prepare independent research work, how to use different databases, and they encourage students to participate with their research work at a conference organized by TU. At the same time, students show very low activity in participation with their research results in TU Students' Conference, also teaching staff has rather low number of applied research and publications in scientific journals, as also the ones indexed in Scopus or Web of Science data bases.

4.3. International cooperation in the field of scientific research within the study field and its study programmes is evident through attending by teaching staff many international scientific conferences that are organized in Latvia or abroad. The results of the research conducted by the TU teaching staff are presented in scientific papers at international conferences. TU organizes an international scientific conference every year and numerous employees, as well as students, participate with their research papers at this conference. Based on the data published in SAR Annex 6, it can be seen that a significant number of conference proceedings are cited in relevant databases (for example, Web of Science, EBSCO). Based on the presented data about the scientific activities of the whole TU, there are 183 original articles published, 38 of them were published in scientific journals cited in Web of Science, SCOPUS, ERIH or Engineering Village. According to the Appendix 6 of the Self-Assessment Report, the number of publications of the study field "Economics" is 155, list of publications can be divided into two parts: indexed publications (50) and other publications (105). List of 50 indexed publications includes 12 duplicates (15 and 141; 16 and 18 and 143; 63 and 138; 64 and 139; 65 and 125; 66 and 127; 68 and 142; 72 and 147 and 149; 73 and 153; 146 and 148). List of other 105 publications includes 2 duplicates (13 and 36; 17 and 38) and at least 2 publications that are not corresponding to the study field "Economics" (LiepU VSZF Metodiskie norādījumi studiju darba un bakalaura darba rakstīšanai un noformēšanai studiju programmas "Biznesa un organizāciju vadība", "Komunikācijas vadība", "Kultūras vadība" un "Tūrisma vadība un rekreācija" studentiem, 2014). As a result, there are 38 indexed publications (see 4.4., too) and 101 other publications in the study field "Economics".

Scientific activity is also visible in the scientific journal "Acta Prosperitatis", published by TU, and the journal is published once a year (since 2010), and is indexed in the EBSCO database (since 2011). Target audience are scientists, researchers, academic staff, students, and professionals of the field. Papers are published in English, and the journal is available in electronic version. International cooperation is also evident through project activities, few international projects are in progress.

4.4. TU truly cares about the teaching staff. Mechanisms for teaching staff involvement have been developed and are working, including support that the teaching staff members can receive for participation in conferences, professional development, purchase of necessary resources, additional payment for publications in indexed journals, lectures for Doctoral students, development and publishing of e-learning materials. TU started to organize online conferences during the pandemic

restrictions. The list of the main publications of the teaching staff involved in the study field "Economics" (Appendix 6 of the Self-Assessment Report) mentions 25 Lecturers and the total number of publications exceeds 100. Six Lecturers have prepared 10-18 publications in the reporting period, others – five on average. Publication topics are closely related to the study field "Economics". A lot of industry professionals and practitioners are teaching in the study field "Economics", therefore research activities are mostly related to solving practical issues. During the on-site visit, all stakeholders mentioned that TU is a truly practice-oriented school. Of the 111 teaching staff members working in the study field "Economics", 34% (38) have been elected to academic positions (Professor, Associate Professor, Docent, Lecturer and Assistant), but 66% (73) are guest Lecturers. Proportion of Lecturers - practitioners in the study programmes is the following:

- in the first level professional higher education study programme "Marketing and Trading", there are 35% (11) elected Lecturers (including 4 with Master's degree and 7 with Doctoral degree) and 65% (20) guest Lecturers (including 1 without degree, 3 with Bachelor's degree, 14 with Master's degree, and 2 with Doctoral degree);
- in the first level professional higher education study programme "Finance and Accounting", there are 28% (14) elected Lecturers (including 8 with Master's degree and 6 with Doctoral degree) and 72% (36) guest Lecturers (including 1 without degree, 2 with Bachelor's degree, 31 with Master's degree and 2 with Doctoral degree);
- in professional higher education Bachelor study programme "Marketing and Trade Managing", there are 43% (13) elected Lecturers (including 5 with Master's degree and 8 with Doctoral degree) and 57% (17) guest Lecturers (including 3 with Bachelor's degree, 12 with Master's degree and 2 with Doctoral degree).

Most of the teaching staff members of the study field "Economics" have Master's degree. In TU Branches, more than 90% of the teaching staff members are from the region. Of the publications mentioned in the report, 38 publications have been indexed in the Scopus, Web of Science and Ebsco databases, of which 9 have been published in scientific journals. Most of these publications have been prepared by 4 Lecturers. Other staff members actively publish their research in conference proceedings and industry journals.

It is important for TU to put together persons with Doctoral degree and practical experience. This will increase the capacity for scientific research, the possibility of conducting topical applied research, obtain larger-scale data, as well as diversify research topics. This is even more important because goals defined in "TU Strategy 2021-2025" are more ambitious than in the previous strategy. Strategic goal Nr.3 is directly related to TU commitment to ensure a close link between business and applied research through relevant and meaningful research.

TU motivates the teaching staff to be actively involved in research and publishing of research results by providing financial support (payment for publications, participation in conferences, translation of publications to English), TU organizes its own annual scientific conference, TU publishes its own scientific journal "Acta Prosperitatis". In the interviews with the teaching staff, it was suggested to index this journal in Web of Science database.

4.5. Students carry out independent research, developing study papers, qualification works, diploma works; acquire the skill to present their opinion when defending their papers and final works, and participating in their discussion. Several study courses include research activities, in the special study course students learn research methods, develop a research project, and present it.

During the on-site visit, in the interviews, students indicated that they are informed about the possibility of attending conferences and participating in them, mostly as listeners. According to TU representatives, students of the Bachelor study programme are involved in scientific research starting with the first year of studies. In the interviews, students could not give examples of their participation in the development of publications, projects, or conferences with reports. The Experts Team must admit that this students' activity is very low.

Student Scientific Conference is held every year. The best research works are published on the website. Publicly available information shows that the number of the best student research is decreasing. In 2015, 17 student researches were published on the website (including 1 in marketing and 1 in economics), in 2016 – 15 (including 2 in marketing and 2 in economics), in 2017 – 17 (including 2 in marketing and 3 in economics), in 2018 – 7 (including 2 in marketing), in 2019 – 2, in 2020 – 5. In the March/April issue and in the May/June issue of the magazine “Tirgotajs”, the results of two studies developed by a student of the Bachelor study programme “Marketing and Trade Managing” were published.

The interviews revealed that students do not have enough knowledge of professional terminology, especially in English language. During the on-site visit, one student expressed the opinion that it would be good to learn and apply professional terminology in Latvian and English languages in all main study courses of the study programmes, not only in "English for Business" study course; some of the Lecturers already do this, some use terms only in the Latvian language. It also would comply with the goals of the study field to "ensure competitiveness of study programmes on foreign market" and "acquisition of competitive on EU level knowledge and skills necessary for the chosen profession by students". Students' insufficient knowledge of professional terminology and insufficient use of literature in foreign languages can create difficulties in participating in scientific research and international labour market.

4.6. TU introduces innovations in the study process. E-resources and their application skills are constantly being improved: new functions have been developed in the existing information system, a mobile application for the use of information system has been prepared, training for e-skills of the teaching staff was organized. TU offers to acquire innovative teaching methods and skills in seminars and competence development studies. This type of training for the teaching staff is organized every year. In TU Business Incubator, students can register their company and receive mentor consultations. This opportunity is currently used by 60 young entrepreneurs. A competition of business ideas was organized for the development of business innovations. In the interviews, the representatives of the study programmes' administration mentioned innovations related to the increase of the impact and role of digitization and software acquisition (such as CRM). A new type of lecture has been introduced – a hybrid lecture, which provides a simultaneous lecture both in the classroom and remotely. The analysis of the study course descriptions shows that the range of teaching methods can be expanded, for example, introducing innovative methods to be applied in face-to-face classes and distance studies.

## **Conclusions. Strengths and weaknesses**

The main conclusions are the following:

The directions of scientific research and/or artistic creation in the study field “Economics” in general comply with the development aims of TU and are relevant to the study field and the relevant industries. It is important to increase applied and where possible scientific research capacity in finance and accounting, as also stress relation of the research to economics. In professional study programmes, Doctoral degree for teaching staff with sufficient professional experience is not mandatory but involvement of the teaching staff into Doctoral studies and scientific research in the related field can contribute a lot to the development of methodological basis and content of the study programmes, and linkage of research and practice in the field.

There is a clear relation between scientific research in the study field and the study process, students are motivated to participate in research activities, be published together with the teaching staff, present results of their research in TU Student Conference. Students know about such possibility, and there are some activities in this context, but not many.

TU teaching staff is supported by TU and is rather active in participation in international scientific

conferences and publishing of their research results; scientific activities of few teaching staff members are highly prevailing the average publication number within the elected teaching staff. TU has developed and implemented mechanisms to promote the involvement of the teaching staff in scientific research. Most scientific publications have been published in conference proceedings. The research topics are related to the study field "Economics" and the study courses led by the teaching staff members; this allows to integrate the research results in the study process. The number of publications is growing.

Students' involvement in applied and scientific research mostly takes place within the framework of study courses. TU holds an annual student scientific conference, but the number of best researches published on TU website is declining. Students' participation in scientific research is not stable.

The TU is introducing innovations in the study process, it is purposefully and effectively.

The main strengths are the following:

- 1) there is a strong focus of teaching staff on attending international scientific conferences with publication possibilities;
- 2) a motivation system for teaching staff to participate actively in research and professional self-development has been developed and is implemented at TU;
- 3) TU employs many teaching staff members with rich and valuable practical experience;
- 4) the topics of qualification and diploma works are very diverse and related to current events in the industry;
- 5) innovations in the study process are purposeful and aimed at fulfilling the tasks of the study programmes and achieving student learning outcomes.

The main weaknesses are the following:

- 1) low level of cooperation with scientists and teaching staff from other countries;
- 2) international cooperation in research activities is not enough represented;
- 3) low number of applied research, as also scientific publications, especially the ones which are published in scientific journals indexed in Scopus and Web of Science;
- 4) very low number of publications in the fields of finance and accounting;
- 5) insufficient involvement of industry professionals and guest Lecturers with valuable practical experience in scientific research;
- 6) high risk that the achievement of strategic goal Nr. 3 of "TU Strategy 2021-2025" will be jeopardized;
- 7) students are insufficiently motivated to develop publications, participate in projects and conferences with reports.

## **5. Cooperation and Internationalisation**

### **Analysis**

5.1. TU cooperates with institutions from Latvia and abroad within the study field "Economics", this cooperation contributes a lot to the achievement of the aims and learning outcomes of the study field and its three study programmes. Content of the study field is considered, selecting the cooperation partners. TU has cooperation agreements and projects regarding traineeship placements for students and graduates, involvement of employers and professionals in the study process and in state examination commissions. Employers' representatives are part of TU Faculty of TU Department of Business Management, Councils of the study field and related study programmes. Students can go on study visits to companies and non-government organizations; teaching staff leverages their involvement in business and professional organizations to get contacts and invite industry professionals, often TU Alumni, as guest Lecturers, and it directly contributes to the aim of the study field "Economics" to provide students with practical knowledge. TU organizes annual

scientific conference and invites representatives of other higher education institutions in Latvia and abroad. TU has more than 100 cooperation agreements with higher education institutions that enable organization of scientific forums and broader scope of student and teaching staff exchanges; however, outgoing student mobilities are meagrely used (from 2016 to 2019, in total only 18 students of the study field "Economics"). TU Branch students are provided traineeship with local companies and public institutions. Heads of TU Branches actively cooperate with the local municipalities. During the Covid-19 induced distance learning process, online traineeship opportunities were provided. TU organizes public events and open lectures in main campus in Riga and TU Branches in cooperation with, for example, entrepreneurs and employers. During the Covid-10 pandemic restrictions, broad choice of on-line lectures is offered to students, Alumni, and other TU stakeholders.

5.2. The attraction of foreign Lecturers mainly takes place within the framework of the Erasmus + Mobility programme. During the period from 2013 to 2019, in total TU received 28 incoming foreign visiting Lecturer mobilities. Generally, no students from abroad are attracted to the study field "Economics", as all study programmes of the study field are taught fully in Latvian. Thus, since 2013, there have been no students from abroad for the study field "Economics". Students from abroad are present on TU main campus as part of other study fields. Indications by TU management of a possible English-taught study programme in the study field of "Economics" were mentioned during the meeting as a possibility at some time in the future, but in the current moment no actions or investments are planned.

5.3. A common system for the provision and organisation of traineeships for students and sometimes also graduates of the study field "Economics" is developed and well-functioning. Traineeship is an important and mandatory part of professional education. Agreements on cooperation in the provision of traineeship are mostly signed by Faculty of Business Management. Students also have possibility to apply for traineeship provided by TU. Traineeship offers, received from local and foreign companies, are published on a bulletin board, in BATIS, and on TU website. Students can apply to traineeship through BATIS. Faculty of Business Management maintains close cooperation with Alumni and the companies they represent, who regularly offer traineeship placements for TU students. Very often students find traineeship placements by themselves, TU evaluates whether it is possible to fulfil the traineeship tasks indicated in traineeship programme, and in positive case signs a standard tripartite traineeship agreement (TU - student - traineeship place). The organization of the traineeship is described in detail in the "TU Traineeship Practice regulations". Students at TU Branches usually get traineeship in regional companies and institutions.

5.4. At this moment, all three study programmes of the study field "Economics" are provided only in Latvian language, there are not any cooperation agreements on implementation of joint degree or double degree study programme with any foreign partner. However, it was one of the Experts' recommendations from the previous accreditation "to develop top-level cooperation with other higher education institution in joint study programmes and modules for student exchange". Also, in "TU Strategy 2021-2025", internationalisation and export of higher education, as also competitiveness of TU students and Alumni on local and global labour markets are mentioned as key strategic activities to achieve strategic goals of TU and study field "Economics". In the context of decreasing number of potential local students and demographic negative trends, introduction of English language, application of professional terminology in English language, attraction of international full-time and part-time (not just exchange) students, international teaching staff and researchers could be a solution how to keep the study field "Economics" financially sustainable and compensate decreasing number of local students with international students. The Experts Team understands, that such decision is a serious step and requires investments and a strong evidence of

viability. Currently, TU Management does not plan any activities in this direction, but would be recommended to consider such activities in future.

## **Conclusions. Strengths and weaknesses**

The main conclusions are the following:

TU is a strong local player, with close cooperation with employers, entrepreneurs, professional mentors, different organisations, and institutions, as also municipalities and other higher education institutions. This cooperation is actively employed and contributes a lot to the achievement of objectives, tasks and learning outcomes of the study field and its related study programmes.

All three study programmes in the study field "Economics" are in Latvian language, that's why cooperation with international partners is not very active in this study field. It also limits necessity to attract foreign teaching staff and it takes efforts to enforce students' and teaching staff's mobility within the study field.

TU is organizing annual international scientific conference and is aimed on internationalisation of the research results and publishing activities.

TU has developed clear and efficient system of provision of traineeship for students in the study field "Economics"; there is a broad number of potential traineeship providers, also TU can offer traineeship places itself, Alumni and regional entrepreneurs are willing to offer traineeship to TU students in their companies.

At this moment, there are not any joint or double degree cooperation agreements, but it was one of the recommendations during the previous accreditation. If currently this solution does not seem viable for TU Management, still it is one of the ways how TU can fulfil internationalisation goals in the study field.

The main strengths are the following:

- 1) TU has strong cooperation with industry and experts in Latvia, often TU Alumni, and actively employ it in improvement of study field "Economics" and its related study programmes;
- 2) employers are represented in TU Faculty of Business Management, Councils of the study field and its study programmes, they contribute a lot to the development of the study field and its related programmes;
- 3) TU actively attracts guest Lecturers, it contributes to the objective of the field "Economics" to provide students with practical knowledge.

The main weaknesses are the following:

- 1) not very active cooperation in applied and where possible scientific research with other higher education institutions, lack of joint applied and scientific research projects and joint publications;
- 2) students of the study field "Economics" have very low academic interaction with international students and teaching staff, although that could contribute a lot to the development of their communication and professional skills on the global labour market.

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

### **Analysis**

6.1. Previous accreditation of the study field "Economics" took part in the year 2013. The recommendations of the Experts group were focused on different areas of action: towards the development of cooperation with other higher education institutions and foreign academic staff, including development of joint or double degree programme or module; towards increasing the number of qualitative and quantitative research publications, according to involvement of more

professionals from the industry in the teaching process, towards ensuring a better feedback communication with all stakeholders, and towards improving the strategy in order to maintain the student enrolment, especially in the study programme "Finance and Accounting".

International cooperation with other HEIs during the reporting period is evident in Erasmus+ project, but there is a strong potential to increase international project activities. On the other hand, there are no plans to run joint study programmes with other higher education institutions. Currently, there is evident a strong regional niche of the study field "Economics" and its study programmes, studies are only in local language and focus is on practical skills.

During the reporting period, the number of professionals from the industry that are involved in the study process has been increased, and there is evident a strong cooperation with industry. On that way, the students have better opportunities to acquire practical skills.

TU encourages the scientific work through financial support. The teaching staff is engaged in research activities, and in the reporting period, the number of published research papers and scientific monographs has been increased. In the research work, focus is still mostly on attending the international conferences, while the representation of papers that are published in scientific journals that are indexed in relevant databases like Web of Science or Scopus is still on low level. Furthermore, the research topics from the field of each study programme are not equally represented in published papers, for example, there is an obvious lack of accounting topics. All three programmes in the study field are professional, and teaching staff can replace scientific activities with practical work experience, still active participation in applied research would be beneficial for the further development of the study field.

To improve feedback from all stakeholders, there are developed questionnaires and surveys for students, and the employers are included in the communication with TU.

Based on provided interviews, it is evident that a positive atmosphere and satisfaction is present within staff, students, Alumni, and employers; there is a well-developed internal information and management structure, but despite of this, there is still a high drop-out ratio of students (30-40%). All stakeholders have confirmed, that were participating in questionnaires, but feedback was not shared back by TU, or they did not know where to look for the results of the surveys.

Based on the presented data, it is seen that TU has conducted efforts in order to fulfil the recommendations of the Expert Group of previous accreditation, but there are still some certain areas that require further improvements.

In the previous assessment procedure, it was recommended to increase the number of quantitative and qualitative research publications in all study programmes of the study field "Economics". The recommendation has been fulfilled. The number of scientific publications has increased during the period from 2014 to 2020. The teaching staff members mostly publish their work in conference proceedings and other publications. From 2014 to 2019, in Scopus there have been 92 publications the authors of which are TU Lecturers, in the Web of Science there have been 91 publication in the same period. In 2020, the Scopus database was supplemented with 11 publications and the Web of Science with 12.

In all study programmes, it was recommended to improve the research capacity, including participation in research, projects, other cooperation with other Latvian and foreign universities' students and teaching staff. The recommendation has been fulfilled. For comparison: in 2012, TU staff participated in 19 projects (including 5 international), in 2013, in 22 projects (including 9 international), but in 2018, in 25 projects (including 20 international), and in 2019, in 22 projects (including 14 international). An overview of scientific activities in 2020 is not yet available.

In all study programmes, it was recommended to implement a strategic approach to the development of personnel policy. The recommendation has been fulfilled. In 2017, TU approved the "Professional Competence Improvement Programme" for the teaching staff (160 academic hours). It is aimed at enabling the teaching staff of TU to improve their pedagogical competence and promote professional growth by acquiring knowledge about the latest trends in educational management,

university didactics, innovations in the specific field, research. The operation and results of the programme are analysed every six months. At the same time, during the on-site visit, the Experts Team has asked representatives of the teaching staff to share which teaching methods they use in their courses, majority did not name any of teaching methods except "teaching theory on practice". Extra training in this field can be a good support for the teaching staff. Also, the range of teaching methods provided in study course descriptions is more traditional than innovative, distance study methods are not included in course descriptions at all.

In all study programmes, it was recommended to strengthen the practical side of studies, also by involving more specialists from the industry in the study process, especially in the first level programs, by attracting more teaching staff with professional experience in sales, by implementing more precise and in-depth practical training. The recommendation has been fulfilled. New study courses have been introduced in the study programmes and teaching staff members - practitioners have been attracted.

In professional Bachelor study programme "Marketing and Trade Managing", it was recommended to improve feedback communication with all involved parties. The recommendation has been fulfilled. The interviews confirmed that feedback in most cases is being obtained and that it is also regulated in detail in regulatory documents (about the implementation of feedback, see also Part 2 of Section 2 "Efficiency of the Internal Quality Assurance System" of the Experts' Joint Report). According to TU, there is co-operation with employers' organizations and associations.

In the first level professional higher education study programme "Marketing and Trading" and in the professional Bachelor study programme "Marketing and Trade Managing", it was recommended to strengthen the connection of the teaching staff's scientific research with the study courses they teach. The recommendation has been fulfilled. The publications of the academic staff confirm this.

In the first level professional higher education study programme "Marketing and Trading", it was recommended to develop higher level cooperation with other universities regarding joint or double degree study programmes. The recommendation was not fulfilled. Currently, it is not planned to create a joint or double degree study programme, and TU supposes it a reasonable decision, taking into consideration the focus of the study programme on preparing specialists for the local labour market, and the short period of studies. The development of joint or double degree study programmes is more useful in higher level of education, for example, at Bachelor's level. At the same time, there are plenty possibilities in development of joint modules, for examples, joint applied research, international project, business game or specific set of lectures and practical works with other higher education institutions in Latvia or abroad to enrich content of the study programmes and share experience in application of innovative teaching methods. In the newly updated "TU Strategy 2021-2025", there is a clear focus on internationalisation and export of higher education, and professional Bachelor study programme "Marketing and Trade Managing" could be the object for development of a joint product.

## **Conclusions. Strengths and weaknesses**

The main conclusions are the following:

TU has contributed to the analysis of the recommendations and their implementation in view of the specific features of the study field "Economics" and the relevant study programmes. There is still a necessity to increase number of applied research , as also scientific publications on the topics related to the study field "Economics" and its three study programmes in the journals indexed in databases like Scopus and Web of Science, as also search for cooperation in provision of joint or double degree programmes or modules in the study programmes of the study field "Economics".

The main strengths are the following:

1) study field "Economics" and its study programmes have a strong regional niche;

- 2) study field "Economics" and its study programmes have a strong cooperation with industry;
- 3) there is a significant number of research papers published by teaching staff in conference proceedings;
- 4) TU has shown willingness for improvements, as also targeted action, and meaningful implementation of recommendations of the Experts from the previous accreditation.

The main weaknesses are the following:

- 1) still low number of applied research, scientific papers, especially the ones published in international scientific journals indexed in Scopus and Web of Science databases;
- 2) lack of finance and accounting topics in the research papers of the teaching staff;
- 3) low level of cooperation with other higher education institutions;
- 4) lack of international project activities
- 5) there is no any joint or double degree study programme or module with other higher education institutions in Latvia or abroad; TU Management does not consider any broad activities in this direction, but it is possible to start with small activities for shorter period;
- 6) there is a high drop-out ratio of students in the study field.

## 7. Assessment of the Requirements for the Study Field

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** TU internal Quality Assurance System is developed in compliance with Section 5, Paragraph 21 of the "Law on Higher Education Institutions", and is targeted on continuous improvement, development and efficient performance of the study field "Economics".

- 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

**Justification:** TU has established and implements a well-developed system of internal policies and procedures. All necessary documents are publicly available on TU website and/or internal document system. TU actively collects data on students' opinions, satisfaction, study progress, traineeship results and use it for further improvements of the study process. Surveys' feedback should be better communicated to the respondents.

- 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:** Partially compliant

**Justification:** TU has established clear mechanism for the development, internal approval, supervision, and inspection of the study programmes in the study field "Economics". All the stakeholders - management of the study field, Directors of the study programmes, Heads of Branches, representatives of faculty, students, Alumni, and employers are involved in this process.

At the same time, the shortcomings identified in the analysis of the study programmes (mismatch in content and names of the first level professional higher education study programme "Finance and Accounting" and professional higher education Bachelor study programme "Marketing and Trade Managing", low quality of the study course descriptions) indicate that there are problems in implementing this mechanism in practice.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Partially compliant

**Justification:** Learning outcomes are defined for study programmes in the study field "Economics", and there is a matrix provided, in which study courses these learning outcomes can be obtained. The criteria, conditions, and procedures for the evaluation of students' results, which enable reassurance of the achievement of the anticipated learning outcomes are generally described in the descriptions of the study field and related study programmes, but are not clearly developed in study course descriptions, it is not clearly specified how student's achievement of specific learning outcome is tested and assessed.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** TU has developed and implements clear procedures and mechanisms for attraction of highly qualified staff, assessment of the work and progress of the teaching staff, as also motivation to be more involved in research and publication of results, and personal further development and obtaining of Doctoral degrees. These procedures and mechanisms have led to the increase of number of scientific publications in total. TU introduced teaching staff motivation tools, like extra remuneration and coverage of publication and translation costs, might be efficient to improve the targeted indicators in the future.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Partially compliant

**Justification:** TU ensures collection and analysis of the information on the study achievements of students, satisfaction with the study courses (assessment of the study course), statistics of study results, feedback from traineeship companies. At the same time, there is no evidence of surveys about employability of students and Alumni. As it was mentioned by students, Alumni and employers during the on-site visit, TU takes into consideration results of the surveys but does not share the feedback with the participants of the relative surveys, but they showed interest in such feedback. Based on information provided by Management of the study field, results of surveys are available for students in internal IT system, but students looked like were not aware of that. More clear communication is required in this point. As students have indicated during the meeting, in case of problems or students' complains, more informal communication is applied, and in most cases leadership and capacity of the Director of the study programme or the study field is enough to solve the issue. But more formal procedures could be promoted and applied in such cases.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Partially compliant

**Justification:** TU is willing to and invests funds and forces to ensure continuous improvement, development, and efficient performance of the study field "Economics" through implementation of its Quality Assurance System. There are not clearly defined process improvement measurements to analyse situation before and after, and be used as evidence of the improvement. Processes' measurement indicators need to be defined more clearly to assess how effective and efficient are the implemented improvements.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** TU has strong cooperation with employers, entrepreneurs, representatives of different organizations and institutions on the local, including regional, level. Separately can be stressed out TU strong relations with the industry. All three study programmes of the study field are in Latvian language, local partnerships are prevailing upon international ones.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** All three study programmes are professional, two of them are the first level programmes, and are mostly oriented on applied research. At the same time, there is enough and broad variety of scientific publications of the teaching staff in the fields related to marketing and trade, but still rather limited number of scientific publications related to finance and accounting. Relation to study field of economics can be more stressed in all the research works. On Experts' opinion, TU should continue to enforce applied and scientific research in the study field to enforce linkage between research and practice.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** TU has done improvement activities in all the recommendations of the Experts from the previous accreditation, and there is clear evidence of the progress. The only recommendation, which was ignored, is finding cooperation opportunities with other higher education institutions in development of joint or double degree study programmes and modules. As it was clarified during the on-site visit, currently it is not in the agenda of TU management, but in future, TU can consider joint or double degree study programme cooperation with another higher education institution abroad in professional Bachelor study programme "Marketing and Trade Managing".

## 8. Recommendations for the Study Field

### Short-term recommendations

To supplement the "Survey Procedure" with the procedure by which the opinion of employers is obtained.

To use the dates and titles of the documents in references to external regulations in TU procedures and policies.

To define the measurements of the processes more precisely to be able to assess whether the process is efficient, and the goal is achieved.

To motivate students of the TU Branches to get involved in the work and activities of the Student Council, thus ensuring a more active involvement of the branches in students' life and decision-making process of the study field.

To motivate students of the evening and/or part-time groups to get involved in the work and activities of the Student Council, thus ensuring a more active involvement of all groups of students in students' life and decision-making process of the study field.

To enforce promotion of services and possibilities provided by TU Business Incubator to TU Branch students, and students of evening and part-time groups.

To review and correct translation into English language of names of the study programmes in the study field "Economics", terminology related to the content of the study programmes used in the Self-Assessment Report, study course outlines, and study programme descriptions; enforce application of professional terminology in English language on majority of profession-related study courses.

To activate participation of teaching staff in Erasmus+ mobility and similar international projects to enforce internationalisation of the study field and its programmes, broaden international cooperation networking in teaching and research, establish strong partnerships for future development of the joint research projects and publication, joint higher education products and export of higher education.

To activate participation of students, including TU Branch students, and students of evening and part-time studies groups, in Erasmus+ mobility and similar international projects to enforce internationalisation of the study field; if working students cannot move to another country for the whole semester, to find opportunity to offer participation in international business weeks, international business games, e-mobilities (available in pandemic conditions).

To organize training of teaching staff of the study field about diversity of teaching methods, including innovative teaching methods and approaches, which can be successfully applied in economics, marketing, trade, finance, and accounting.

To diversify sports facilities and opportunities for broader groups of students, for example, students have mentioned Yoga; separate gym from the sports hall; continue to offer sports activities led online for students.

To broaden the choice of optional courses in the study programmes of the study field "Economics" with advanced study courses in legal basis for accounting and business organization, data analysis, data management, AI (Artificial Intelligence), sustainability and green thinking, as also development of social skills of the students; to provide sufficient provisions for that.

To update study courses descriptions with precise learning outcomes of each study course in the context of knowledge, skills and competences; precise applied teaching and students' assessment methods used in the course; how teaching staff member can test achievement of each learning outcome by each student; update bibliography mentioned in each study course description with the newest books, articles, and information sources in Latvian and English languages.

To supplement study courses with innovative teaching and learning methods in face-to-face and distance study modes; application of student-centred teaching and learning methods should be explained also in the descriptions of the study courses; separate attention to be paid to development of transferable skills of the students of the study field.

To organize discussion within the study field to discuss mapping of the study programmes within the study field "Economics" and future opportunities for the graduates; discuss key differences between the study programmes, key selling points, and unique value proposition of each study programme; define and share the final conclusions with all the stakeholders.

To continue to encourage teaching staff to involve more in applied research and scientific activities, publication of scientific results and obtaining of Doctoral degrees; ensure joint research groups/ projects involving teaching staff with strong research experience, representatives of the industry, Alumni, students, representatives of international and local organizations and institutions in order to obtain broader data and do meaningful research for the needs of the industry, regions, and the whole country.

To involve students in the research carried out by the teaching staff, joint development of publications, especially in the Bachelor's study programme; it can be done by introducing development of individual and collective research as one of the learning methods in study courses; offer special benefits like prizes or grants for high-quality research works of students.

## Long-term recommendations

Look for possibility to develop top-level cooperation with other higher education institutions in Latvia and/or abroad in implementation of joint or double degree study programmes and/or modules in the future; this recommendation was provided by the Experts during the previous accreditation of the study field “Economics”; taking into account small number of students in all three study programmes, it is even more actual today to advance quality and diversity of the study programmes of the study field, and to attract more local and international full-time or part-time students (not just exchange students); at the same time, TU should assess this decision from financial and sustainability point of view.

To develop tools how to eliminate high students’ drop-off ratio (30-40%), invest more time and funds during the admission process - interviews, motivation letters, self-check tests; or search for compensation possibilities in case of very low number of students in the study programme or per group.

To organize training and discussion to all involved counterparts and develop key selling points and unique value proposition of each study programme to promote and sell them successfully on local and later on international higher education markets.

To do financial analysis of the study field and each of its study programmes separately to ensure profitability of each study product and future sustainability of each study programme.

To broader application to EU or similar project funds for staff development, research, and development of infrastructure.

In accordance with the updated "TU Strategy 2021-2025", to look for possibility to introduce internationalisation activities into the study field: to offer full-time studies also in English language in Bachelor’s level (professional Bachelor study programme “Marketing and Trade Managing”) and some modules together with international students for the first level study programmes' students; to develop partnerships with international higher education institutions in implementation of joint or double degree study programmes or modules (programme for Bachelor’s level programme, modules or business games for the first level study programmes); and professional certification organizations (for example, ACCA for accountants) to attract more full-time or part-time international students and enforce export of higher education also in the study field “Economics”.

In accordance with the updated TU Strategy 2021-2025, to introduce sustainability issues into content and administration principles of the study field “Economics” and its related study programmes; it can be done through addition of the related optional study courses; paper usage policy and printing habits of the students and staff; participation in HackTheWaste or similar hackathons widely organized and promoted in Latvia; add sustainability issues into qualification and diploma works of students and research of the teaching staff.

Look for possibility to ensure hybrid studies also in TU Branches.

To continue to increase the number of quantitative and qualitative research publications done by the teaching staff.

To ensure inclusion of TU scientific journal “Acta Prosperitatis” in Web of Science database

To improve survey organisation procedures with sharing the feedback of the survey with the participants of the related surveys.

To enforce and promote activities of TU Alumni Association, increasing its role in communication with the Alumni and the industry, promotion of TU, the study field “Economics” and its study programmes, potential fund-raising and other kind of support to TU and the study field, development of strong “TU-related network/ club” for enforcing TU brand, its local and international recognition.

To improve quality of study documents and content of the study programmes in accordance with TU strategic goal to provide top-level education on the local and global markets; poor quality of study course descriptions; wrong and misleading use of professional terminology in English language, outdated literature offered to students in the study course descriptions, lack of methodological concept behind the study programmes (no study courses mapping) – all that should be improved to be in compliance with the strategic goals and priorities of TU and study field “Economics”.

## **II. "Marketing and Trading" ASSESSMENT**

### **II. "Marketing and Trading" ASSESSMENT**

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

##### **Analysis**

1.1. The name of the first level professional higher education study programme is “Marketing and Trading”. The translation of the programme’s name into English language is misleading, term “trading” is used in AIKA e-platform, term “Sales” is used in TU Self-Assessment Report of the study field “Economics”. Names of the study courses and direct translation from Latvian language of the name of the study programme are closer to “Marketing and Trade”. TU should choose one correct translation and use the same name of the study programme in English language in all information sources. The study programme provides LKI 5th level qualification level and the 4th level professional qualification “Marketing Specialist”, no degree is provided at the end of studies. The scope of the study programme is 80 CP (120 ECTS), studies are organised in part time extramural mode, duration is 2 years and 3 months, the programme is provided only in Latvian language. The programme is implemented in TU main campus in Riga, but also in three TU Branches in Cesis, Liepaja and Talsi cities.

Enrolment requirements are based on previous secondary education and competition based on centralised examination results in study subjects “Latvian language” and “Foreign language (English, German, French or Russian)” or, in specific cases, based on the final grades in the above-mentioned study courses in the document certifying secondary education of the applicant. The main objectives of the study programme are to educate and train the student for the profession of marketing specialist, promoting his or her development as a mentally and physically developed, free, responsible, and creative personality; to ensure the acquisition of knowledge and skills (including self-study skills related to the 4th level professional qualification, and to provide motivation for further education. Formulation of the main objectives and tasks is rather general, it makes sense to review and precise them, for example, define one main goal and up to five main tasks. There are 25 learning outcomes defined for the study programme (Nr.22 is mentioned twice), which are too many to be easily comprehended by any third person, as also are not divided into knowledge, skills, and competences. As the main learning outcome can be stressed out graduates’ ability to perform the duties of a marketing and sales specialist responsibly and independently in compliance with the laws and regulations of the Republic of Latvia and the legal norms of the European Union; to communicate in the official language and at least two foreign languages; to work independently and in teams; be oriented on problem solving; to use information technologies and

carry out market research, to follow professional ethics principles. In general, the name of the study programme, LKI and professional qualification levels, main objectives, tasks, learning outcomes of the study programme and its enrolment requirements are interrelated and lead to achievement of the 1st level professional higher education with professional qualification "Marketing Specialist". The main objectives and learning outcomes of the study programme comply also with the updated version (accepted on 02.06.2020.) of requirements to the mentioned professional qualification. As a positive factor can be mentioned, that Director of the study programme was one of the Experts in professional standards' update/ development group.

The study programme is implemented in three TU Branches, all the parameters of the study programme are totally equal in Riga and regional TU Branches. Graduates of the study programme can continue their studies in the professional higher education Bachelor's study programme "Marketing and Trade Management", joining in the 3rd year of studies and obtain 5th level professional qualification "Marketing Manager". Students and Alumni have shared high satisfaction with the study programme, its content, learning outcomes and study environment.

## **Conclusions by specifying the strengths and weaknesses**

The main conclusions are the following:

The name of the first level professional higher education study programme "Marketing and Trading", its professional qualification, main objectives, learning outcomes, and admission requirements in general are interrelated and provide general information about the programme and its learning outcomes to potential and existing students. Translation of the name of the study programme into English language is different in AIKA e-platform, the Self-Assessment Report, and information provided in descriptions of the study courses. It is misleading for existing and potential students what are the key study courses and which fields learning outcomes will be obtained. Main objectives, tasks and learning outcomes of the study programme are too general, should be reviewed and reformulated in more concentrated way.

The main strengths are the following:

- 1) the study programme provides opportunity to obtain professional qualification "Marketing Specialist" in 2 years and 3 months;
- 2) the study programme provides opportunity to join professional higher education Bachelor's study programme "Marketing and Trade Management" in the 3rd year of studies and obtain the 5th level professional qualification "Marketing Manager";
- 3) students and Alumni are satisfied with the study environment, knowledge, skills and competences obtained during the studies.

The main weaknesses are the following:

- 1) too many learning outcomes defined in the study programme, for the reader difficult to comprehend;
- 2) there are several main objectives and several main tasks, some of them are very similar; there is a need to review and reformulate in more concentrated way.

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

### **Analysis**

2.1. The content of the study programme "Marketing and Trading" in general corresponds to the defined learning outcomes: students acquire skills to use regulatory acts, plan their work, work individually and in a team, work with clients, work according to professional requirements and professional ethics, use foreign languages, think critically, analyse internal and external

environmental factors, solve problem situations, use technology and various sales promotion tools, work creatively and generate ideas.

The study programme “Marketing and Trading” corresponds to the Regulations Nr.141 of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Latvia of 20/03/2001 “Regulations on the National Standard for the First Level Professional Higher Education”. The programme includes a compulsory module for the development of professional entrepreneurial competencies (Entrepreneurship (3 CP / 4.5 ECTS), Management (3 CP / 4.5 ECTS), Accounting in Trade (3 CP / 4.5 ECTS), Business Process Regulations (3 CP / 4.5 ECTS), Integrated Marketing Communication (4 CP / 6 ECTS)), as well as the study course Civil Defence and Environment Protection (2 CP / 3 ECTS).

According to the Self-Assessment Report, the volume of the study programme “Marketing and Trading” is 80 CP / 120 ECTS: Part A study courses 74 CP / 111 ECTS and Part B courses 6 CP / 9 ECTS. Acquisition of part A is compulsory, while part B offers a wider choice of study courses and the student must choose study courses in the volume of 6 CP / 9 ECTS. The study programme includes general education study courses (20 CP / 30 ECTS), field-specific study courses (36 CP / 49 ECTS), traineeship (16 CP / 24 ECTS) and qualification work (8 CP / 12 ECTS).

The programme is implemented in Riga and all three TU Branches.

The study content is focused on practical application. Meetings and discussions with students and graduates revealed their satisfaction with provided opportunities, communication, attitude, the opportunity to apply the theoretical knowledge in a practical way. The opportunity to do practical things and to meet practitioners were mentioned the most often. Meetings and discussions with representatives of employers showed that the knowledge and skills acquired by students meet the professional requirements and organizations’ needs, employers are satisfied with students’ practical skills. Practical skills are gained in accordance with labour market requirements. However, the importance of transferable skills is growing. Transferable skills give the opportunity to think widely, to analyse deeper, to work interdisciplinary.

The descriptions of the study courses in general include information in accordance with the requirements of Appendix 10 of the Guidelines for the Preparation of the Self-Assessment Report of a Study Field: the requirements for starting the study course, the goal of the study course implementation and the planned learning outcomes, content of the study course, content acquisition calendar, description of the organization and tasks of students’ independent work, criteria for learning outcome evaluation. Each study course contains Regulations with more detailed information on evaluation criteria, forms of assessment, calendar plan and final examination. However, learning outcomes are described in very limited way, there are not clearly defined methods of assessment of achievement of learning outcomes by students. It must be noted that in most descriptions of study courses the list of literature is not divided into compulsory and additional. There are long lists of literature (e.g., in Marketing (EKO1163K), The Normative Regulation of Entrepreneurship (JUR1516K), Customer Behaviour in the Market (VAD1462K), Entrepreneurship (VAD1558K), Civil and Environmental Protection (VAD1641K), Study Paper (VAD1694K), Integrated Marketing Communication (VAD1737P)) and it is not possible to determine which of the literature sources students have to study and which are optional. It must be mentioned that some descriptions contain mostly books and a few publications. Although the topics of the study courses correspond to modern trends, in several study courses the literature and other sources are outdated, for example, in Information technologies (DAT1004K), Business Mathematics (MAT1008K), Microeconomics (EKO1198K), International Marketing (EKO1205K), Business Etiquette (VAD1245K), Research Methods in Trade (VAD1434K), Entrepreneurship (VAD1558K), Study Paper (VAD1694K).

Several study courses mention the Emerald Insight database (for example, International Marketing (EKO1205K), Logistics in Commerce (EKO1223K), Planning in Trade (EKO1247K), Direct Sales (EKO1261K), Accounting in Trade (EKO1310K), Research Methods in Trade (VAD1434K), Customer Behaviour in the Market (VAD1462K), Integrated Marketing Communication (VAD1737P)), but it is not available TU Library.

The tables of evaluation criteria in the descriptions of study courses differ. In most study courses the table consists of two columns, in some – of four (for example, in Information Technologies (DAT1004K), Business Mathematics (MAT1008K)). The level of detail in which the evaluation criteria are described varies. In most study courses, the table starts from 10, but in some from 1 (for example, Planning in Trade (EKO1247K), Business Mathematics (MAT1008K)). Many study courses copy-paste information about study methods and independent studies.

Description of practice implementation is provided for the whole TU in "Practice Regulations", approved by TU Senate on 28.02.2018. More detailed description is provided in study course descriptions "Practice", "Pre-qualification Practice". Content of the practices is relevant to the study programme and professional qualification. Requirements for qualification paper are provided for the whole TU in "Regulations on Compilation and Layout of Independent Research Papers" approved by TU Senate on 27.08.2020. More detailed requirements in relation to the study programme are not provided.

2.2. In the study programme "Marketing and Trading", according to the study course descriptions, teaching staff uses the following teaching methods: lecture, active dialogue, practical work, independent work, seminar, presentation, situation analysis, problem solving, discussion, individual work, group work, practical research, problem analysis, role play. Among the methods, not only methods are mentioned, but, for example, a form of studies – lecture. In the descriptions of study courses, study methods are described in two ways: in the form of a short list and in the form of long descriptions. The descriptions do not always give an answer as to which methods are used (for example, Normative Regulation of Entrepreneurship (JUR1516K)). In the study course Communication Psychology and the Skill of Communication (KOM1065K), no methods are mentioned at all.

In the interviews, the teaching staff could not name any of the teaching methods they use, the only answer was "teaching theory on practice".

Evaluation criteria and methods are made public. Students confirmed that at the beginning of each study course they are introduced to the requirements and evaluation criteria, they receive feedback, students have the right to submit an appeal. Student evaluation in examinations takes place in accordance with the Examination Regulations. Evaluation in study courses takes place in accordance with certain evaluation criteria.

The principles for implementing the student-centred approach are set out in the "Quality Management Handbook". Students are involved in the study process and content development (see also Section 2 "Efficiency of the Internal Quality Assurance System" in the Experts' Joint Report). Full-fledged implementation of study results is taking place. This is also confirmed by the students, the question "What will I acquire?" is one of the topical issues, and students are satisfied with the result. The TU takes into consideration the needs and diversity of students, including respecting the student's learning path and offering suitable learning options. Equal opportunities are provided for all groups of students.

There are no foreign students in the study programme "Marketing and Trading", but TU has experience in integrating foreign students and, according to TU management, TU respects different cultures and traditions, for example, it is the only University in Riga to celebrate one of the Indian holidays - Diwali. During the study process, students can always have individual consultations with the teaching staff, however, there is lack of methods that allow students to evaluate and learn from each other, situation simulations; development of transversal skills is insufficient.

The learning environment is at a high level (see also Section "Resources and Provision of the Study Programme" in the Report). A programme for the enhancement of the academic staff competences has been developed, and a motivation system is in place. Students are provided with the opportunities for extracurricular activities.

2.3. Generally, outcomes of the surveys conducted among the students of the first level professional higher education programme „Marketing and Trading” seem to indicate their usage to improve quality of studies as the survey results regarding studies and other aspects of student life at TU have been improving over the years, for example, the "work of the lecturers" from 4.91 to 5 (4.34 to 4.81 in previous study years). Employer surveys are mainly conducted as part of traineeship process, TU admits that criteria with the lowest score of 4.2/5 for "Argumentation of professional opinion" and "Solving of professional problem situations" are possible areas for improvement. TU conducts graduate survey once every two years and it is taken into account when revising content and quality of studies.

2.4. No incoming student mobilities have been reported for first level professional higher education programme „Marketing and Trade” as it is conducted only in Latvian language. Outgoing study mobility has decreasing trend over the last few years reaching only one student in 2018/2019. In total from 2013 to 2019, 20 students used mobility opportunities out of whom 19 used Erasmus+ traineeships. TU justifies low activity with the fact that the first level education is available in limited number of countries and that studies are part-time and most of the students are already working. Students did not mention problems with recognition of outcomes achieved during mobility, TU has developed "Regulations on Mobility and Recognition of Study Courses Undertaken During Mobility". Study programme and its provided mobility opportunities are the same in Riga and TU Branches. TU Branches' students are less active in Erasmus+ mobility and decision-making process of the study field. Heads of TU Branches ensure fast and effective solution of daily issues at the place. Students also can be informed about and be motivated to participate in country-level projects like Hackathons, Demola to diversify teaching and learning methods for students, as also to promote TU and its study programmes on local and international level.

## **Conclusions by specifying the strengths and weaknesses**

The main conclusions are the following:

The thematic content of the study programme “Marketing and Trading” corresponds to the needs and trends of the industry.

The study programme “Marketing and Trading” provides a link between the goals of the study programme, the content of study courses and the learning outcomes.

The tasks and structure of the study programme are designed so that students obtain the 4th level professional qualification (corresponds to the 5th LQF).

The descriptions of study courses are not in compliance with the legal requirements.

Teaching staff does not regularly update the list of literature sources in the descriptions of the study courses.

The study implementation methods, including the evaluation methods, contribute to the achievement of the aims and learning outcomes of the study courses and the study programme. Student-centred learning and teaching principles are taken into consideration.

The outcomes of the conducted surveys are considered by management of the study programme and study field and are used for improvement of the study process but are not shared with the participants of the relative survey.

Students of the study programme have opportunity to participate in Erasmus+ mobility project, learning outcomes achieved during such mobility are recognised, but interest to go out for the whole semester is very limited.

The main strengths are the following:

1) the thematic content of the study programme corresponds to the topicalities and trends of the industry;

- 2) the principles of a student-centred approach are defined and used in the study programme;
- 3) students, employers and graduates are regularly surveyed, and their opinions are taken into account;
- 4) student surveys generally portray a positive trend and are close to the highest evaluation;
- 5) high potential for traineeship mobility for the interested students in the study programme.

The main weaknesses are the following:

- 1) the descriptions of the study courses do not fully comply with the legal requirements: defined learning outcomes are very limited and too general, there are not defined testing and assessment methods of students' achievement of the learning outcomes of the study course;
- 2) the lists of literature contain outdated information;
- 3) the descriptions of the study courses mention mostly books and a few scientific publications;
- 4) the structure and design of the study courses is not uniform;
- 5) the descriptions of the study courses indicate sources that are not available at TU (Emerald data base);
- 6) the range of teaching methods used is not diverse in the study programme;
- 7) lack of student international exposure as a result of limited mobility opportunities;
- 8) lack of promotion of traineeship mobility to reach previous levels of outgoing mobility;
- 9) overall low mobility of students and staff in the study programme.

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

#### **Analysis**

3.1. TU premises correspond to the requirements of the study process. The auditoriums are tidy, bright, and attractive. Epidemiological requirements are observed. The auditorium furniture can be arranged in different ways, which allows to easily use a variety of teaching methods and forms. The auditoriums are equipped with whiteboards, screens, multimedia projectors, audio, and video equipment. A CRM (Customer Relation Management) system for customer relationship management has been purchased. TU management notes that students are taught to work remotely not only to meet the study requirements, but also to acquire remote work skills for further work in the profession, as the basic principles of marketing remain, but due to remote work methodologies and tools may change. TU provides an appropriate information base. The library has a wide range of literature for the study programme "Marketing and Trading". According to the e-catalogue, at least 344 literature sources in the field of marketing are available in Latvian and English languages. Books are purchased every year. The range of book topics corresponds to the needs of the study programme "Marketing and Trading". Online access to TU Library is ensured through internet and can be reached from any place in the world.

Departments are allocated funding for the purchase of literature every year. The list of required literature is updated annually in accordance with the wishes of the teaching staff and students. In the interviews, Director of the study programme, teaching staff and Heads of TU Branches indicated that purchase of books, magazines and subscription to e-resources are supported by TU. In TU Library, several databases are available, including scientific ones, which are necessary for the operation of the study field "Economics": Lursoft, Statistics Latvia, Ebsco, Scopus, ScienceDirect, OpenAccess and others. Open access databases (including SpringerOpen), e-books and journals (including the Baltic Journal of Economics, SAGE, Taylor & Francis, DOAJ) are available. All the databases can be accessed remotely. The e-catalogue of TU library and the joint catalogue of other Latvian universities libraries are available. Newspapers and magazines in Latvian and English languages are subscribed to. There are copying facilities in TU Library.

In TU Branches, each student can order the necessary literature sources and receive them in the branch within three days. In the regions, students also use municipal libraries.

TU has several information systems: Intranet, BATIS and Moodle. One password is used for accessing all of them. Internal regulatory acts are stored on the Intranet. BATIS contains publicly accessible and password-protected sections. The most important regulatory acts are published in the publicly accessible section. The password-protected section is used to ensure the study process. The teaching staff has access to all information about student groups, their study courses, assignments, and student evaluations. The teaching staff can send information and messages, post materials for students, can post materials for a specific group of students. Diploma paper Supervisors and Reviewers have access to the feedback form and the review form in the BATIS system. The members of the qualification work defence commission – to the evaluation form.

Students have access to full information about their studies, about study courses (syllabus and requirements), timetables, materials, evaluations. In BATIS, students can submit their papers, prepare traineeship agreement, and print it out. The Moodle environment provides all opportunities to effectively implement study courses. In the interviews, students indicated that in some study courses detailed study materials are not available and this creates problems in preparing for exams. Some graduates mentioned that they also use study materials after graduating from the TU.

During the previous year, several new features were introduced in BATIS to improve the quality of remote studies. In the interviews, the students stated that they are satisfied with BATIS, emphasizing that a mobile application is available and that students use it a lot.

Computerized workplaces are available for students, computer classrooms are set up. Computer equipment and photocopying equipment are available in TU Branches, too. Even though distance learning programmes were part of TU study programme portfolio already for some time, some investments had to be done to improve technical support of the distance studies in all study programmes. TU has chosen Webex solution for distance teaching and learning, as well as video conferencing, online meetings, screen sharing, and webinars.

TU has an adequate financial base. It is used not only to provide minimum requirements, but also to create added value. There is a staff motivation system for the teaching staff and Heads of TU Branches, also a professional growth centre was established. TU has an appropriate level of information systems provision, extracurricular facilities are offered (sports facilities and equipment), dormitory, security system, and a parking lot (for the separate fee).

According to the Heads of TU Branches, TU is very responsive to reasonable resource requirements, including the organization of events, such as “Entrepreneurs can be wrong”, that bring together industry professionals, current students, residents, and prospective students. The activities of the Student Council are financed from total TU budget, making up at least 1/200 of the total TU budget.

The study, informative and technical provision comply with the features and the conditions for the implementation of the study programme and create the prerequisites for the achievement of the learning outcomes. Informative provisions include TU Library in TU main campus, which is open 6 days a week and offers books in Latvian, English, German and Russian; and large amount of computers and other office equipment. TU is planning to implement CRM programme for student use. For scientific research TU provides access to EBSCO, ScienceDirect, Scopus and various other online databases. Lectures at TU main campus take place in bright and renovated premises, lecture halls are equipped with white boards, multimedia projectors and their screens, audio equipment. Lectures in TU Branches take place in rented premises with some library books available locally, students can order books from TU main library. Students have access to a business incubator on TU main campus with additional business mentoring and other services available to students, if needed. Students and teaching staff have access to and use TU information system (BATIS) to see study materials, assignments, grades, TU internal documentation. Students appreciate BATIS mobile accessibility. TU organizes open lectures freely available to TU students; however, their timing can be inaccessible for working/part time studies students. Distance learning is done through BATIS system and Cisco Webex platform, switch to online studies in student and teaching staff view has been successful, teaching staff has received the necessary technical support for distance learning

from TU. Application of professional, data management, business analytics, and statistics software (for example, SPSS) is not evident in study course descriptions and is not available or actively used by students.

TU has recently updated its strategy with internationalisation and sustainability goals; infrastructure, material and technical provisions of the study programme are not updated yet in accordance with these goals.

## **Conclusions by specifying the strengths and weaknesses**

The main conclusions are the following:

The study provision, informative provision (including TU Library), material and technical provision, and financial provision comply with the specific features and the conditions for the implementation of the study programme “Marketing and Trading”, create the prerequisites for the achievement of the learning outcomes, and indicate the possibility to ensure a high-quality study process also in the future. At the same time, application of professional, data management, business analytics, and statistics software (for example, SPSS) is not evident in study course descriptions and is not available or actively used by students.

TU has recently updated its strategy with internationalisation and sustainability goals; infrastructure, material and technical provisions in professional Bachelor’s study programme “Marketing and Trading” are not updated yet in accordance with these strategic goals.

The main strengths are the following:

- 1) bright and relatively modern study premises on main campus in Riga;
- 2) TU Business Incubator provides its services to the students on main campus in Riga;
- 3) TU organizes regular open online lectures for a broader audience;
- 4) TU has proved successful adaptation to online studies;
- 5) students of TU Branches benefit from aggregate resources of TU scale and size, for example, open lectures, TU Library books and scientific databases.

The main weaknesses are the following:

- 1) students of TU Branches have limited accessibility to main TU campus perks due to objective reason of physical distance;
- 2) internationalisation and sustainability issues are not implemented yet in infrastructure, material, and technical provisions of the study programme;
- 3) application of professional, data management, business analytics, and statistics software (for example, SPSS) is not mentioned in study course descriptions, is not available or actively used by students.

## **4. Teaching Staff**

### **Analysis**

4.1. TU undertakes measures in a target-oriented manner to avoid negative effects on the quality of the implementation of the study programme and the compliance of the study programme with the requirements set forth in the regulatory enactments, as a result of the changes in the composition of the teaching staff. TU is active in attraction of TU Alumni as a teaching staff. Every year since 2013 the number of teaching staff has been increasing, for example, in 2018/2019 by 6%. It is mainly caused by attraction of new guest Lecturers and professionals. The number of teaching staff elected to full-time positions has been stable during the reporting period, two elected Lecturers have terminated their employment relations, but two new Lecturers have been elected, one of whom was previously a guest Lecturer. Based on annual assessments as well as feedback from the labour

market and students, the quality of teaching has improved. Stability of the elected teaching staff and attraction of professionals to teach in the study programme, TU has managed to maintain good quality of teaching and high level of students' and employers' satisfaction with the study results.

4.2. The qualification of the teaching staff members involved in the implementation of the study programme complies with the main goals and learning outcomes of the study programme and its study courses, as also with the legal requirements for the teaching staff.

31 members of the teaching staff is involved in the study programme, including 11 teaching staff members elected at TU as Professor (2 persons), Associate Professor (3 persons), Assistant Professors (2 persons), and 4 Lecturers. 20 guest Lecturers have joined the teaching team, including 1 guest Assistant Lecturer, 2 guest Professors, and 17 guest Lecturers. Qualification of all teaching staff members corresponds to the prerequisites for the implementation of the study programme. The teaching staff has acquired appropriate education in communication sciences, economics, entrepreneurship, law, etc. Guest Lecturers represent industry professionals, who are closely involved in the day-to-day business activities with business, marketing, and sales processes. The elected teaching staff is active in membership in different professional associations and stay in touch with employers by providing consultations and cooperation within the framework of implemented research and projects. During the on-site visit, the Experts have asked representatives of the teaching staff, in which organizations they are members, but there was no evidence of such membership. The qualification of the teaching staff contributes to the achievement of the learning outcomes and development of student competences appropriate for work as marketing specialists. TU teaching staff is strongly supported by TU in participation in scientific conferences in Latvia and abroad with publications, participation in mobility projects and obtaining of Doctoral degrees. In the first level study programme, Doctoral degree for teaching staff with sufficient professional experience is not mandatory but increase of number of the teaching staff with Doctoral degrees and scientific research in marketing, sales and trade can contribute a lot to methodological basis and content of the study programme, linkage of practice and research.

4.3. Not applicable

4.4. TU teaching staff involved in implementation of the study programme, is actively involved in scientific research in the fields related to the content of the study programme and its study courses, both at national and international level. Research results are broadly used in the study process. TU organizes annual international scientific conference with publishing possibilities, attracting researchers from Latvia and abroad. Students are also encouraged to participate in TU annual conference, regular students' works are presented in TU students' conference. TU teaching staff is active in participation in international scientific conferences in Latvia and abroad. TU has defined research directions and topics of the researchers in the study programme as the following: specifics of pricing, business environment, and its competitiveness; competitiveness factors, economic cooperation in the context of Latvia-China; Risk and Crisis Communication - impact on Latvian Enterprises; effectiveness of quality management system in organizations, business problems; customer relationship management systems in retail companies in the Baltics; problems of harmonization of tax rates, practical aspects of accounting; identification, optimization and forecasting of complex economic and technical systems, information technologies opportunities in business; public relations and intercultural communication; SME development in Latvia. The majority of these research directions is related to the study programme and the study field "Economics", and can be used in the study process. Despite the increase of publications of the teaching staff in the last year, the number of scientific articles published in scientific journals indexed in Scopus or Web of Science is still rather low.

4.5. TU has a strong mechanism for mutual collaboration between the teaching staff members, which contributes to the improvement of the study courses/ modules and their correlation in the study programme. TU considers cooperation among Lecturers to be successful. Implementation of the study programme involves Lecturers from different faculties, cooperation among lecturers is promoted in various seminars organized by TU.

Annual strategic seminars are organized, where Lecturers work in groups to find solutions for different situations and to discuss possibilities of study process development and improvement. The Lecturers' cooperation is strengthened by annual scientific conferences, which provide an opportunity to discuss different issues, to find common interests. The Lecturers' cooperation also allows to ensure better link between the study courses.

## **Conclusions by specifying the strengths and weaknesses**

The main conclusions are the following:

TU has developed strong network of the teaching staff, including elected teaching staff members and guest Lecturers. Number of permanently employed teaching staff members is not changing in the last years, professionals from the industry join the teaching team every year. Teaching staff is strongly motivated by TU to be active in applied and scientific research, development of personal professional skills, publication of research results, and obtaining of Doctoral degrees. TU teaching staff complies with the legal requirements. TU teaching staff collaborates with each other, participate together in training seminars. In the first level study programme, Doctoral degree for teaching staff with sufficient professional experience is not mandatory but can contribute a lot to methodological improvement of the study programme and enforcement of applied research.

The main strengths are the following:

- 1) TU has stable teaching staff team;
- 2) TU is active in attraction of professionals from the industry to join the TU teaching team and share their experience with students.
- 3) TU teaching staff is active in participation in international scientific conferences with publications;
- 4) TU organizes training seminars for all teaching staff members.

The main weaknesses are the following:

- 1) there is still low number of applied research and scientific articles of TU teaching staff published in the scientific journals indexed in Scopus or Web of Science;
- 2) TU teaching staff is not active in participation in joint scientific research projects.

## **5. Assessment of the Compliance of the Study Programme "Marketing and Trading"**

### **Requirements**

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** The sample of the diploma to be issued in the study programme is provided in SAR Programme Annex 8; the document fully complies with the procedure by which state-recognised documents of higher education are issued.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** Cooperation agreement with Albert College from 10.12.2019. is attached in SAR Programme Annex 9; the document complies with the legal requirement.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** Document providing evidence of fulfilment of this requirement is attached in SAR Programme Annex 15, in case of TU inability to provide studies in the programme, students can continue their studies at Albert College. In case, if students do not agree to continue their studies at Albert College, there is no document providing information about any monetary compensation for these students. At the same time, Management of the study field has provided additional document - new version of TU study agreement (amended in February 2020), the added clause 6.1.9. indicates compensation for student's losses if study programme is discontinued because of TU fault.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** The teaching staff of the study programme is proficient in the official language, evidence can be found in CVs of the teaching staff in SAR Annex 4.2., and letter from TU Management of the field, SAR Annex 13.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

**Justification:**

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

**Justification:**

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

**Justification:**

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** The sample of the study agreement is provided in SAR Annex 14, the document complies with the legal requirements.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Partially compliant

**Justification:** Descriptions of the study courses if the study programme are provided in SAR Annex 7. The study course descriptions partially comply with the legal requirements: the learning outcomes are not precisely defined, only one knowledge, skill and competence mentioned; there are not clearly stated testing and assessment methods of the learning outcomes, also teaching methods are described in a limited way. Lists of literature in study course outlines are outdated.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** The study programme complies with the 4th level professional qualification "Marketing Specialist", comparison is provided in SAR Annex 4.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

**Justification:**

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** The study programme provides the first level professional higher education, it fully complies with the professional higher education standard; evidence is provided in SAR Annex 3.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

**Justification:**

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** Each member of TU teaching staff has either publications published in reviewed editions within the last six years, or a five-year practical work experience in accordance with the Law on Higher Education Institutions. The evidence is provided in CVs of the teaching staff, which are available in SAR Annex 4.2.

- 15 P5 - Overall rating

**Assessment of compliance:** Partially compliant

**Justification:** The overall rating of the study programme is partially compliant because of inefficiencies in descriptions of the study courses of the study programme.

## Requirements (R6-R8)

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Partially compliant

**Justification:** TU has ensured well-developed infrastructure, good material, and technical provisions for the study process, and in general it leads to the achievement of learning outcomes of the study programme. Evidence is available in SAR of the study field, and part 3 of this Experts' Joint Report. As main deficiencies can be mentioned: outdated literature is still available in TU Library and used in the study courses; study course descriptions are not updated with the newly purchased books; statistics software like SPSS is not mentioned in related study courses and is not used in the study process; data analytics tools and introduction to AI are not included in the programme and related applications and software are not introduced into study process. Emerald Insight database is mentioned in the study course descriptions, but is not available at TU.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** The qualification of TU academic staff members and guest teaching staff complies with the conditions for the implementation of the study programme and the provisions set out in the respective regulatory enactments. Evidence can be obtained from CVs of the teaching staff, which are available in Annex 4.2.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

**Justification:**

## Conclusions by specifying the strengths and weaknesses

The main conclusions are the following:

The name of the first level professional higher education study programme "Marketing and Trading", its professional qualification, main objectives, learning outcomes, and admission requirements in general are interrelated and provide sufficient information to potential and existing students about the programme. At the same time, learning outcomes are too many and rather general. Translation of the name of the study programme into English language is different in AIKA e-platform, the Self-Assessment Report, and information provided in descriptions of the study courses.

The thematic content of the study programme "Marketing and Trading" in general corresponds to the needs and trends of the industry. The study programme "Marketing and Trading" provides a link between the goals of the study programme, the content of study courses and the learning outcomes.

The tasks and structure of the study programme are designed so that students obtain the 4th level professional qualification (corresponds to the 5th LQF). The descriptions of study courses are not in compliance with the legal requirements.

Teaching staff does not regularly update the list of literature sources in the descriptions of the study courses.

The study implementation methods, including the evaluation methods, contribute to the achievement of the aims and learning outcomes of the study courses and the study programme. Student-centred learning and teaching principles are taken into consideration.

The outcomes of the conducted surveys are considered by management of the study programme and study field and are used for improvement of the study process.

Students of the study programme have opportunity to participate in Erasmus+ mobility project, learning outcomes achieved during such mobility are recognised.

The study provision, informative provision (including libraries), material and technical provision, and

financial provision comply with the specific features and the conditions for the implementation of the study programme "Marketing and Trading", create the prerequisites for the achievement of the learning outcomes, and indicate the possibility to ensure a high-quality study process also in the future. Infrastructure and provisions of the study programme are not updated in accordance with the new strategic goals of TU - internationalisation and sustainability (broader application of English language for attraction of international and foreign students to the programme, sustainability issues included into study process).

TU has developed strong network of the teaching staff, including elected teaching staff members and guest lecturers. Number of permanently employed teaching staff members is not changing in the last years, professionals from the industry join the teaching team every year. Teaching staff is strongly motivated by TU to be active in research, development of personal professional skills, publication of research results, and obtaining of Doctoral degrees. TU teaching staff complies with the legal requirements. TU teaching staff collaborates with each other, participate together in training seminars.

The main strengths are the following:

- 1) the study programme provides opportunity to obtain professional qualification "Marketing Specialist" in rather short period 2 years and 3 months;
- 2) the study programme provides opportunity to join professional higher education Bachelor's study programme "Marketing and Trade Management" in the 3rd year of studies and obtain the 5th level professional qualification "Marketing Manager";
- 3) students and Alumni are satisfied with the study environment, knowledge, skills, and competences obtained during the studies;
- 4) students, employers and graduates are regularly surveyed, and their opinions are taken note of;
- 5) TU ensures sufficient and well-developed infrastructure for students;
- 6) TU ensures extra curriculum opportunities to students like business incubator, regular open lectures;
- 7) TU has ensured successful adaptation to online studies;
- 8) TU Branches' students benefit from aggregate resources of TU scale and size, for example, open lectures, main library books, scientific databases;
- 9) TU is active in attraction of professionals from the industry, mostly small-scale enterprises, to join the TU teaching team and share their experience with students;
- 10) TU supports teaching staff to participate in international scientific conferences with publications;
- 11) TU organizes training seminars for all teaching staff members;
- 12) the study programme is provided in TU Branches and has high importance for regional economic development, development of local human capital and entrepreneurship in the regions.

The main weaknesses are the following:

- 1) too many learning outcomes defined in the study programme, difficult to comprehend;
- 2) the descriptions of the study courses do not fully comply with the legal requirements: defined learning outcomes are very limited and too general, there are not defined testing methods how to assess achievement of the learning outcomes by students, the lists of literature contain outdated information, some indicated sources are not available at TU (Emerald database), the structure and design of the study courses is not uniform;
- 3) the descriptions of the study courses mention mostly books and a few scientific publications;
- 4) the range of teaching methods used is not diverse in the study programme;
- 5) overall low mobility of students and staff in the study programme, as a result limited student international exposure and traineeship exchange;
- 6) there is still low number of applied research and scientific articles of TU teaching staff published, especially in the scientific journals indexed in Scopus or Web of Science;
- 7) TU teaching staff is not active in participation in joint scientific research projects;

8) internationalisation and sustainability issues are not implemented yet in infrastructure, material, and technical provisions of the study programme.

### **Evaluation of the study programme "Marketing and Trading"**

Evaluation of the study programme:

Good

### **6. Recommendations for the Study Programme "Marketing and Trading"**

#### **Short-term recommendations**

To supplement study courses with the acquisition of transferable skills.

To update the list of literature and sources in study course descriptions with the latest book editions and publications in Latvian and English languages; increase number of scientific publications to be read by students during the study course; divide the list of literature and sources into two parts: compulsory/mandatory literature and additional/recommended; in the compulsory part, there can be 5-7 important books or chapters of books, the most recent publications, databases, while the additional part of the list of literature can give Internet sources, other books, latest publications.

To develop a unified structure and design requirements for the description of the study course and the regulations; precise and update with the innovative methods teaching methodology, testing and assessment methodology of the achievements of learning outcomes by students.

To organize training of teaching staff in teaching methods, application of innovative methodology in face-to-face and distance studies.

To consider the possibility of providing students with a wider range of study materials in the Moodle environment.

To provide broader offer of the optional study courses, for example, study courses in advanced digital marketing, data analytics, data management, AI (Artificial Intelligence); find the opportunity to share optional courses with other study programmes.

#### **Long-term recommendations**

To increase number of students in the programme and ensure sustainability of the study programme in a long term, focusing not only on local students, but also introduce export of the study programme.

To discuss and define the key selling points and unique value proposition of the study programme, use this information for promotion and sales of the programme.

To find top-level partnership in implementation of joint study modules, for example, joint course or business game, with other higher education institution(s) in Latvia and abroad to attract more students.

To promote more traineeship opportunities abroad through participation in Erasmus+ mobility project.

To provide students with internationalisation activities like participation in international business weeks, virtual mobility.

To update infrastructure, material and technical provisions of the study programme in accordance with internationalisation and sustainability strategic goals of TU.

## **II. "Finance and Accounting" ASSESSMENT**

### **II. "Finance and Accounting" ASSESSMENT**

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

##### **Analysis**

1.1. The name of the study programme "Finance and Accounting" is not appropriate, because in the list of study courses is evident a significant lack of courses in the area of finance (there is no "Finance" in the content of the study programme) and cost accounting. The first level professional higher education study programme "Finance and Accounting" envisages the acquisition of the professional qualification "Accountant". The study programme partly complies with the professional qualification standard "Accountant", but at the same time is missing cost accounting related course. Student acquires a professional qualification "Accountant" after the completion of study by passing the qualification paper. Professional qualification awarded corresponds to the 4th professional qualification level. The scope of the study programme "Finance and Accounting" is 80 CP (120 ECTS), it is performed as part time study, only in Latvian language, with duration of two years and three months.

In order to enrol to the study programme "Finance and Accounting", the student has to have a secondary education. The enrolment for this study programme is based on the competition (results of exams) in two study subjects, and they are Latvian language and foreign language (English, German, French or Russian). The exemption applies to persons who completed secondary education prior to 2004, persons who have completed secondary education abroad or persons with special needs.

Existing study programme is mostly focused on gaining practical skills of students, but the knowledge in methodology of accounting as well as theoretical terminology is underestimated, and it is not in focus of teaching process.

The learning outcomes of the study programme are comprehensive, and they are formulated mostly as skills and competencies, but there is a lack of learning outcomes formulated as knowledge. Almost all the learning outcomes are derived from the courses in accounting.

Number of the students enrolled in the study programme "Finance and Accounting" is increasing in the reporting period (except in 2015), in Riga and in all branches. Also, the number of graduates of the study programme is gradually increasing during the reporting period (except in 2016 and 2018). The drop-out rate of the study programme ranges from 10-25% (the highest rate was in 2017). According to the provided analysis, the main reasons for drop-out are personal reasons, problems in fulfilment of financial obligations, or termination of academic leave period.

#### **Conclusions by specifying the strengths and weaknesses**

The main conclusions are the following:

The attractiveness of study programme "Finance and Accounting" is evident during the reporting period through the increasing number of enrolled and graduated students. The enrolment of study programme "Finance and Accounting" is based on the knowledge of native and one foreign language, but in further education the presence of terminology in any foreign language is underused. The study programme partly complies with professional qualification "Accounting" as it does not contain cost accounting-related course

The main strengths are the following:

- 1) there is strong focus on gaining practical skills and competencies;
- 2) there is a continuous interest about the study programme "Finance and Accounting".

The main weaknesses are the following:

- 1) there is not any course in finance and cost accounting in the study programme;
- 2) there is a lack of learning outcomes formulated as knowledge;
- 3) the name of the study programme "Finance and Accounting" is incorrect and misleading, as it contains mostly bookkeeping-related study courses;
- 4) absence of study courses on business finance and investments in the study programme;
- 5) cost accounting - related study course is not included in the study programme.

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

### **Analysis**

2.1. The study programme "Finance and Accounting" is unbalanced. It contains 10 accounting subjects, but no business finance subjects. It should either be renamed (new name "Accounting") or business finance courses ("Principles of Finance", "Basic Financial Management", "Fundamentals of Financial Management", "Introduction to Financial Management", "Managerial Finance", "Essentials of Corporate Finance", "Principles of Corporate Finance", "Investments", etc.) should be added. Also "Cost Accounting" study course is not included in the programme, while in the name of the programme, there is Accounting, not just Financial Accounting. This means that the professional qualification acquired by graduates cannot be considered satisfactory.

One of the tasks of the study programme is "to educate students for the profession of accountant in the EU and globally". It is too ambitious at the lowest professional level. The composition of the curriculum, the professional literature used, and the level of the Lecturers do not allow achieving this task. The Experts will add to recommendations to bring these indicators into line with reality. The list of desirable results of study programme is too long and detailed, with 19 objectives, some of which are strange and/or artificial. For example, it is difficult to understand such an outcome as "ability to track, record and control working capital".

The first level professional higher education study programme "Finance and Accounting" corresponds to the Regulations No.141 of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Latvia of 20/03/2001 "Regulations on the National Standard for the First Level Professional Higher Education". The programme includes a compulsory module for the development of professional entrepreneurial competencies (Entrepreneurship (3 CP / 4.5 ECTS), Management and Office Work (3 KP / 4,5 ECTS); Business Communication (2 KP / 3 ECTS), Business Process Regulations (3 KP / 4,5 ECTS)), as well as the study course Civil Defence and Environment Protection (2 KP / 3 ECTS).

According to the Self-Assessment Report, the volume of the study programme "Finance and Accounting" is 80 CP / 120 ECTS: Part A study courses 68 KP / 102 ECTS, Part B courses 8 KP / 12 ECTS and Part C courses 4 CP / 6 ECTS. Acquisition of Part A is compulsory, while Parts B and C offer a wider choice of study courses. The study programme includes general education study courses (20 CP / 30 ECTS), field-specific study courses (36 CP / 49 ECTS), internship (16 CP / 24 ECTS) and qualification work (8 CP / 12 ECTS).

The programme is implemented in Riga and all three TU branches. The study programme is also offered in the form of distance learning.

The study content is focused on practical application. Director of the study programme actively participates and follows the changes in external regulatory acts that are expected in the field of accounting in 2022.

Meetings and discussions with students and graduates revealed their satisfaction with provided opportunities, communication, attitude, the opportunity to apply the theoretical knowledge in a

practical way. The opportunity to do practical things, to meet practitioners is mentioned the most often. Meetings and discussions with representatives of employers showed that the knowledge and skills acquired by students meet the professional requirements and organizations' needs, employers are satisfied with students' practical skills. Practical skills are gained in accordance with labour market requirements. However, the importance of transferable skills is growing. Transferable skills give the opportunity to think widely, to analyse deeper, to work interdisciplinary.

The descriptions of the study courses include information in accordance with the requirements of Appendix 10 of the Guidelines for the Preparation of the Self-Assessment Report of a Study Field: the requirements for starting the study course, the goal of the study course implementation and the planned learning outcomes, content of the study course, content acquisition calendar, description of the organization and tasks of students' independent work, criteria for learning outcome evaluation. Each study course contains Regulations with more detailed information on evaluation criteria, forms of assessment, calendar plan and final examination. It must be noted that in most descriptions of the study courses, the list of literature is not divided into compulsory and additional. There are long lists of literature (for example, in Entrepreneurship (VAD1558K), The Normative Regulation of Entrepreneurship (JUR1517K), A Practical Guide to Accounting (EKO1240K), Taxes (EKO1238K)) and it is not possible to determine which of the literature sources students have to study and which are optional. It must be mentioned that some descriptions contain mostly books and a few publications. Although the topics of the study courses correspond to modern trends, in majority of study courses, the literature and other sources are outdated, for example, in The Art of Presentation (VAD1296K), Business Mathematics (MAT1008K). The description of the study course Financial Mathematics (EKO1263K) does not mention the years of publication of literature sources.

Several study courses mention the Emerald Insight database (for example, Entrepreneurship (VAD1558K), Pre-qualification Practice (VAD1411K), The Analysis of Financial Information (EKO1267K)), but it is not available at TU Library. Many study courses copy-paste information about study methods and independent studies. The descriptions of the study courses (at least in English language) are of low quality and poor in English. Some examples of strange, incorrect course names with strange content: The Record-keeping of Commercial Activity; Record-keeping for a Medium-Size Business; Planning of a Budget (should be Budgeting); Finance and Credit (should be Public Finance and Banking).

Description of practice implementation is provided for the whole TU in "Practice Regulations", approved by TU Senate on 28.02.2018. More detailed description is provided in study course descriptions "Practice", "Pre-qualification Practice". Content of the practices is relevant to the study programme and professional qualification. Requirements for qualification paper are provided for the whole TU in "Regulations on Compilation and Layout of Independent Research Papers" approved by TU Senate on 27.08.2020. More detailed requirements in relation to the study programme are not provided.

2.2. In the study programme "Finance and Accounting", according to the study course descriptions, teaching staff uses the following methods: tasks, communicative approach, problem solving, role play, group work, pair work, presentation, independent work, student-centred approach, individual work, demonstration, self-control questions. Among the methods, not only methods are mentioned, but also student-centred approach, tasks, self-control questions. In some descriptions of the study courses, the descriptions of methods are long, but they do not always give an answer as to which methods are used (for example, The Normative Regulation of Entrepreneurship (JUR1517K)). In one of the study courses (Business Communication (KOM1132K)) instead of the study methods the forms and scope of the course are indicated. In the interviews, the teaching staff could not name any of the teaching methods they use. Evaluation criteria and methods are made public. Students confirmed that at the beginning of each study course they are introduced to the requirements and evaluation criteria, they receive feedback, students have the right to submit an appeal.

Distance learning students are subject to the same requirements and equal opportunities as full-time students. Distance learning students can receive face-to-face consultations, attend face-to-face lectures (outside the restrictions due to the pandemic). Student evaluation in examinations takes place in accordance with the "Examination Regulations". Evaluation in study courses takes place in accordance with certain evaluation criteria.

The principles for implementing the student-centred approach are set out in the "Quality Management Handbook". Students are involved in the study process and content development (see also Section "Efficiency of the Internal Quality Assurance System" in the Report). Full-fledged implementation of study results is taking place. This is also confirmed by the students, the question "What will I acquire?" is one of the topical issues, and students are satisfied with the result. TU takes into consideration the needs and diversity of students, including respecting the student body and offering suitable learning options. Equal opportunities are provided for all groups of students.

There are no foreign students in the study programme "Finance and Accounting", but TU has experience in integrating foreign students and, according to TU management, TU respects different cultures and traditions, for example, it is the only University in Riga to celebrate one of the Indian holidays Diwali.

During the study process, students can always have individual consultations with the teaching staff, however, there is lack of methods that allow students to evaluate and learn from each other, situation simulations, the development of transversal skills is insufficient.

The learning environment is at a high level (see also Section "Resources and Provision of the Study Programme" in the Report). A programme for the enhancement of the academic staff competences has been developed, and a motivation system is in place. Students are provided with opportunities for extracurricular activities. An extremely important study course, without which the study programme cannot be taken seriously - Cost Accounting - is not included in the study programme. Lack of this relevant and voluminous course (which would be more appropriate to call a field, just like Financial Accounting) in the study programme, allows to state that the requirement "the content is relevant and complementary, and it complies with the aims of the study programme, ensures the achievement of the learning outcomes, and meets the needs of the relevant industry and the scientific trends" is not met.

2.3. Generally, outcomes of the surveys conducted among the students of the first level professional higher education programme „Finance and Accounting” seem to indicate their usage to improve quality of studies as the survey results regarding studies and other aspects of student life at TU have been improving, all results provided are above 4 out of 5. Employer surveys are mainly conducted as part of traineeship process, TU admits that criteria with the lowest score of 4.2/5 and 4.3/5 for "Argumentation of professional opinion" and "Solving of professional problem situations" respectively are possible areas for improvement. TU conducts graduate survey once every two years and it is taken into account when revising content and quality of studies.

2.4. No incoming student mobilities have been reported for first level professional higher education programme „Finance and Accounting” as it is conducted only in Latvian language. Outgoing study mobility is low over the last few years reaching only one student in 2018/2019, in total from 2013 to 2019 only 6 students used mobility opportunities for Erasmus+ traineeships. TU justifies low activity with the facts that the first level/college education is available in limited number of countries, studies are part-time and most of the students are already working, and the specificity of the study contents is related to specific country. Students did not mention problems with recognition of outcomes achieved during mobility, TU has developed "Regulations on Mobility and Recognition of Study Courses Undertaken during Mobility".

Students of the study programme do not avail themselves the incoming and outgoing mobility opportunities. Students also can be informed about and be motivated to participate in country-level

projects like Hackathons, Demola to diversify teaching and learning methods for students, as also to promote TU and its study programmes on local and international level.

## **Conclusions by specifying the strengths and weaknesses**

The main conclusions are the following:

The thematic content of the first level professional higher education study programme “Finance and Accounting” corresponds to the needs and trends of the industry, however, the volume of study courses in the fields of finance and accounting is not balanced.

The first level professional higher education study programme “Finance and Accounting” in general provides a link between the goals of the study programme, the content of study courses and the learning outcomes. The tasks and structure of the study programme are designed so that students obtain the 4th level professional qualification Accountant (corresponds to the 5th LQF).

The descriptions of study courses do not comply with the legal requirements and should be improved: outdated literature, assessment of students learning outcomes is not clearly defined.

The study implementation methods, including the evaluation methods, in general contribute to the achievement of the main objectives, tasks and learning outcomes of the study courses and the study programme “Finance and Accounting”. Student-centred learning and teaching principles are taken into consideration.

The main strengths are the following:

- 1) the thematic content of the study programme corresponds to the topicalities and trends of the industry;
- 2) the descriptions of the study courses are developed in detail;
- 3) the descriptions of the study courses indicate very diverse sources of information;
- 4) the principles of a student-centred approach are defined and used;
- 5) students, employers and Alumni are regularly surveyed and their opinions are taken into account;
- 6) student surveys generally portray a positive feedback.

The main weaknesses are the following:

- 1) the volume of study courses in the fields of finance and accounting is not balanced;
- 2) the lists of literature contain outdated information;
- 3) the study course descriptions mention mostly books and a few publications;
- 4) the structure and design of the study course and their descriptions are not uniform;
- 5) the descriptions of the study courses indicate sources that are not available at TU Library (for example, Emerald Insights);
- 6) the range of teaching and learning methods used in the study programme is mentioned in study course descriptions, but could not be named by the teaching staff during the interviews, it is doubted that teaching staff is really using these methods;
- 7) lack of student international exposure as a result of limited mobility opportunities of the study programme;
- 8) low mobility as a result of specificity of the study content;
- 9) it is clear from the study course descriptions that the Lecturers as well as the authors of the study course descriptions have never actually used any English-language source, both electronic and paper;
- 10) lack of Cost Accounting study course in the study programme;
- 11) students do not avail themselves the incoming and outgoing mobility opportunities;
- 12) assessment of students' achievement of the learning outcomes of the study courses is not clearly defined in course descriptions.

### 3. Resources and Provision of the Study Programme

#### Analysis

3.1. TU premises correspond to the requirements of the study process. The auditoriums are tidy, bright, and attractive. Epidemiological requirements are observed. The auditorium furniture can be arranged in different ways, which allows to easily use a variety of teaching methods and forms. The auditoriums are equipped with whiteboards, screens, multimedia projectors, audio, and video equipment. The accounting programme Zalktis is used in the study process. There is no evidence, that students get acquainted with other accounting software widely applied on the market (at least short introduction and demo version can help in this point).

TU provides an appropriate information base, including TU Library. TU Library has a wide range of literature for the study programme "Finance and Accounting". According to the e-catalogue, at least 263 literature sources in English language and 194 sources in Latvian language are available in the field of economics. Books are purchased every year. The range of book topics corresponds to the needs of the study programme "Finance and Accounting". Departments are allocated funding for the purchase of literature every year. The list of required literature is updated annually in accordance with the wishes of the academic staff and students. In the interviews, Director of the study programme, teaching staff and Heads of TU Branches indicated that purchase of books and magazines, and subscription to e-resources are supported. In TU Library, several databases are available, including scientific ones, which are necessary for the operation of the study field "Economics": Lursoft, Statistics Latvia, Ebsco, Scopus, ScienceDirect, OpenAccess and others, Open access databases (including SpringerOpen), e-books and journals (including the Baltic Journal of Economics, SAGE, Taylor & Francis, DOAJ) are available. All the databases can be accessed remotely. The e-catalogue of the TU Library and the joint catalogue of other Latvian universities' libraries are available. Newspapers and magazines in Latvian and English languages are subscribed to. There are copying facilities in TU Library.

In TU Branches, each student can order the necessary literature sources and receive them in the branch within three days. In the regions, students also use municipal libraries.

The TU has several information systems: Intranet, BATIS and Moodle. One password is used for accessing all of them. Internal regulatory acts are stored on the Intranet. BATIS contains publicly accessible and password-protected sections. The most important regulatory acts are published in the publicly accessible section. The password-protected section is used to ensure the study process. The academic staff have access to all information about student groups, their study courses, assignments, and student evaluations. The teaching staff can send information and messages, post materials for students, can post materials for a specific group of students. Diploma paper Supervisors and Reviewers have access to the feedback form and the review form in the BATIS system, members of the State Examination Commission – to the evaluation form. Students have access to full information about their studies, about study courses (syllabus and requirements), timetables, materials, evaluations. Students can submit their papers, prepare a traineeship agreement in BATIS.

The Moodle environment provides all opportunities to effectively implement study courses. In the interviews, students indicated that in some study courses, detailed study materials are not available, and this creates problems in preparing for exams. Some graduates mentioned that they also use study materials after graduating from TU.

During the previous year, several new features were introduced in BATIS to improve the quality of remote studies. In the interviews, the students stated that they are satisfied with BATIS, emphasizing that a mobile application is available and that students use it a lot.

Computerized workplaces are available for students, computer classrooms are set up. Computer equipment and photocopying equipment are available in TU Branches, too. Because distance learning programmes are also implemented at TU, good provision was always made for the

implementation of remote learning. During the pandemic, the TU was able to easily switch to remote learning mode in all study programmes. TU has chosen Webex solution for remote teaching and learning, as well as video conferencing, online meetings, screen sharing, and webinars.

TU has an adequate financial base. It is used not only to provide minimum requirements, but also to create added value. There is a staff motivation system for the teaching staff and Heads of TU Branches, there is established a professional growth centre. Students of the study programme “Finance and Accounting” have access to the business incubator, which is currently used by 60 young entrepreneurs. A mentoring system has been developed and currently 12 mentors are advising young entrepreneurs. At the same time, students of TU Branches are not very active in activities of the TU Business Incubator, its services should be more promoted to the students of TU Branches, as also students of evening and part time study groups.

The TU has an appropriate level of information system provision, extracurricular facilities are offered (sports facilities and equipment), dormitory, security system, and a parking lot.

According to the Heads of TU Branches, TU is very responsive to reasonable resource requirements, including the organization of events, such as “Entrepreneurs can be wrong”, that bring together industry professionals, students, residents, and prospective students. The activities of the Student Council are financed from the total TU budget, making up at least 1/200 of the total budget of TU.

Lectures in TU Branches take place in rented premises with some library books available locally, students can order books from TU main Library. Students highly appreciate the complex of Moodle, Intranet, BATIS and Webex for efficient distance studies. TU organizes open lectures freely available to TU students; however, their timing can be inaccessible for working/part-time students. Distance learning is done through BATIS system and Cisco Webex platform, switch to online studies in student and teaching staff view has been successful, teaching staff has received the necessary technical support for distance learning from TU.

The study, informative and technical provision comply with the features and the conditions for the implementation of the study programme and create the prerequisites for the achievement of the learning outcomes. The satisfaction of students with the existing systems is ascertained by the annual students' survey and if necessary, improvements already were done to TU information system BATIS, computer and LAN connection in the lecture halls as well as to the quality of the Wi-Fi internet access.

TU has recently updated its strategy with internationalisation and sustainability goals; infrastructure, material and technical provisions of the study programme are not updated yet in accordance with these goals.

## **Conclusions by specifying the strengths and weaknesses**

The main conclusions are the following:

The study provision, informative provision (including libraries), material and technical provision, and financial provision comply with the specific features and the conditions for the implementation of the study programme “Finance and Accounting”, create the prerequisites for the achievement of the learning outcomes, and indicate the possibility to ensure a high-quality study process also in the future.

It seems that in general, the study foundation, information base including premises, TU Library, information systems and bases, technical base and financial foundation correspond to the specifics of the study programme. At the same time, there is a necessity for teaching staff to update study course descriptions with the newest literature and scientific articles, wider range of study materials available in TU Library, or initiate purchasing of the newest literature in Latvian and English languages. Application of professional, data management, business analytics, and statistics software (for example, SPSS) is not evident in study course descriptions and is not available or actively used by students.

TU has recently updated its strategy with internationalisation and sustainability goals; infrastructure, material and technical provisions in professional Bachelor's study programme "Finance and Accounting" are not updated yet in accordance with these strategic goals.

The main strengths are the following:

- 1) bright and relatively modern study premises on main campus;
- 2) TU Business Incubator provides services to students on main campus;
- 3) TU organizes open lectures to broader audience on the regular basis;
- 4) TU has managed successful adaptation to distance studies;
- 5) students of TU Branches benefit from aggregate resources of TU scale and size, for example, open lectures, main Library books, scientific databases; access to TU Business Incubator;
- 6) TU has established a staff motivation system for the teaching staff and Heads of TU Branches;
- 7) some graduates mentioned that they have used study materials even after graduating from TU.

The main weaknesses are the following:

- 1) some students noted that detailed study materials are not available for some study courses in Moodle, and this causes problems in preparing for exams;
- 2) the analysis of course descriptions showed that professional literature in English language is available in TU Library but is not used in study courses and mentioned in study course descriptions;
- 3) internationalisation and sustainability issues are not implemented yet in infrastructure, material, and technical provisions of the study programme.

## **4. Teaching Staff**

### **Analysis**

4.1. During the reporting period, the number of teaching staff has been increased, which is mainly related to attraction of new visiting Lecturers and professionals from industry. Teaching staff that is elected to full-time positions is stable during the reporting period.

According to the data presented in the Self-Assessment Report, currently there are 48 members of the teaching staff of which 40 are educators of the faculty implementing the study programme, and 8 members of teaching staff are from other faculties. 10 members of the teaching staff are involved in teaching of accounting study courses. Only 8 members or 16.67% of the teaching staff have Doctoral degree. During the assessment it has been confirmed that many of them are loyal to TU for a long period.

4.2. The qualification of the teaching staff members involved in the implementation of the study programme "Finance and Accounting" complies with the requirements for the implementation of the professional study programme and the requirements set forth in the regulatory enactments. The composition of teaching staff members enables the achievement of the aims and learning outcomes of study programme.

The Self-Assessment Report states: "the academic staff involved in the study programme are highly qualified and competent and provide students with the necessary research skills, theoretical knowledge, skills and competences." This statement raises serious doubts. There are serious shortcomings in the study programme "Finance and Accounting", as well as in the descriptions of accounting study courses. The Experts Team includes two members with Doctoral degrees, both foreigners, who base their evaluation on English-language materials. Unfortunately, the descriptions of accounting courses are in poor English language. Instead of English terminology, there are mostly meaningless translations of Latvian and/or Russian words. Some examples of strange, incorrect course names with strange content: The Record-keeping of Commercial Activity; Record-keeping for a Medium-Size Business; Planning of a Budget (should be Budgeting); Finance and Credit (should be

Public Finance and Banking). Regardless of the level of English (B1-B2) indicated to some Lecturers in the CVs, it is obvious that majority of the teaching staff is not even familiar with English-language study literature, let alone more serious professional literature. Some examples of incorrect basic terms: account plan (correct is chart of accounts), balance (correct is balance sheet), accountancy accounts (completely meaningless), prime price (meaningless), critical point (correct is break-even point), date of balance (until 2007 the correct term was balance sheet date, which was changed to reporting period), individual commercial agent (correct is sole proprietor). This is not surprising. Many (if not most) accounting Lecturers have work experience in local (not large) companies or various local institutions and organisations, and have had very few (if any) professional contacts with foreign colleagues. One more example. The Lecturer who has compiled description of the study course "Accounting Standards", dealing with the International Financial Reporting Standards, has indicated her English language level in her CV as "below basic". Just to note, the only official language of International Financial Reporting Standards is English language. One of the tasks of the study programme has been declared: "to educate students for the profession of accountant in the EU and globally." One of the results of the study programme has been declared: "ability to be orient oneself in the laws and regulations of the Republic of Latvia and international legal norms in the field of accounting ...". It is very difficult (rather impossible) to educate students for the profession of accountant in the EU and globally as well as to orientate oneself in the international legal norms in the field of accounting without knowing accounting terminology in English.

Modern accounting is a very complex field, characterised by complex theoretical underlying concepts; a large number of professional terms, definitions and methods; close connection with legal documents (laws, standards, guidelines etc.). This requires the participation of a high-level specialist with good professional English and up-to-date professional knowledge (preferably with a Doctoral degree) at least as a consultant also when building up the first level professional higher education study programme. Unfortunately, there are no such specialists among accounting Lecturers of the study programme. In the first level study programme, Doctoral degree for teaching staff with sufficient professional experience is not mandatory but increase of number of the teaching staff with Doctoral degrees and scientific research in marketing, sales and trade can contribute a lot to methodological basis and content of the study programme, linkage of practice and research.

#### 4.3. Not applicable.

4.4. According to the Self-Assessment Report, the involvement of the academic staff at study programme "Finance and Accounting" in applied and scientific research is evident through attending the scientific conferences in Latvia and abroad, publishing of scientific monographs, as well as through participation in scientific and practical projects. However, the topics of the published scientific articles and monographs mostly are focused on other scientific areas (for example, marketing, trade, or management), while the research topics in the area of accounting are insufficiently presented. Based on the provided data, the scientific productivity during the reporting period has been increased, and the results of the research activities are integrated in the study process. Students are required to analyse current business problems, and to propose the solutions for them. Furthermore, TU stimulates student to participate with their own scientific work in TU annual international scientific conference.

Academic staff has a relatively high teaching load, which, of course, leads them away from doing research. Most of the Lecturers are practitioners whose main job is not in TU. Lecturers of specialised (for example, Accounting) study courses are mainly practitioners with different educational backgrounds and work experience, whose main job is not in TU and who are not interested in research. Their main work does not require or encourage research, so they are not interested in it. Examples of the involvement of the teaching staff in research include (with one exception) only those members of the teaching staff, who do not teach the specialised study courses

of the study programme (for example, accounting or finance). These Lecturers teach general business and economics study courses or specialised study courses in marketing study programmes. Therefore, the sample list of scientific publications does not include publications related to accounting and finance.

4.5. Mutual collaboration between the teaching staff members is ensured on few ways. Teaching staff at the study programme “Finance and Accounting” consists of full-time employees, visiting Lecturers from other institutions, and professionals from the industry. To improve the qualifications of the teaching staff, TU organizes various seminars, where the teaching staff shares their experiences. Further way for enhancing the collaboration of teaching staff is related to participation in the ESF project No. 8.2.0/18/A019 where they gain digital skills. Also, there are organised different seminars for teaching staff to discuss real practical problems and to find a solution. Collaboration of teaching staff is evident in attending the international conferences. The description of the cooperation between the teaching staff members is very general. The mechanisms used to promote the cooperation and ensure the interrelation between the study courses/modules are not specified and illustrated by examples.

### **Conclusions by specifying the strengths and weaknesses**

The main conclusions are the following:

The study programme “Finance and Accounting” is performed by qualified teaching staff, which is loyal to TU for a long period of time. The qualifications of the teaching staff members differ but are at satisfactory level, and they enable the achievement of the objectives and learning outcomes of the study programme. Teaching staff members are not very active in applied or scientific research, number of scientific publications of the teaching staff in the fields of finance and accounting must be increased significantly. Mutual collaboration between the teaching staff exists, but there is no internal act that regulates procedures of these activities.

Some members of the teaching staff are quite elderly, graduating from institution of higher education up to 30 years ago, and some in other fields. The professional English of accounting Lecturers is poor, which probably does not help to update their knowledge. There is a lot of outdated literature in the descriptions of the study courses. The content of some accounting study courses raises the question of the extent to which the Lecturer is proficient in the subject. In the first level study programme, Doctoral degree for teaching staff with sufficient professional experience is not mandatory but can contribute a lot to methodological improvement of the study programme and enforcement of applied research.

The main strengths are the following:

- 1) TU has established strong mechanism to motivate the teaching staff being active in applied and scientific research, professional self-development, publication of research results in scientific journals indexed in Scopus or Web of Science databases; and obtaining of Doctoral degrees;
- 2) teaching staff of the study programme is loyal and stable, no significant changes in the last years;
- 3) there is a high proportion of professionals from the industry involved in teaching in the study programme.

The main weaknesses are the following:

- 1) accounting topics are insufficiently presented in the applied and scientific research output;
- 2) guest teaching staff is not actively involved in research;
- 3) many members of the teaching staff are not fluent in English language and are not active in application of specialised literature in English language.

## 5. Assessment of the Compliance of the Study Programme "Finance and Accounting"

### Requirements

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** The sample of the diploma to be issued in the study programme is provided in SAR Programme Annex 8; the document fully complies with the procedure by which state-recognised documents of higher education are issued.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** Cooperation agreement with "Accounting and Finance College" Ltd from 11.04.2008. is attached in SAR Programme Annex 9; the document complies with the legal requirement.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** Document providing evidence of fulfilment of this requirement is attached in SAR Programme Annex 15, in case of TU inability to provide studies in the programme, students can continue their studies at Riga Entrepreneurship College, which currently does not exist (see the previous point Nr.2).

In case, if students do not agree to continue their studies at Riga Entrepreneurship College, and which currently does not exist, there is no document providing information about any monetary compensation for these students. At the same time, Management of the study field has provided additional document - new version of TU study agreement (amended in February 2020), the added clause 6.1.9. indicates compensation for student's losses if study programme is discontinued because of TU fault.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** The teaching staff of the study programme is proficient in the official language, evidence can be found in CVs of the teaching staff in SAR Annex 4.2., and letter from TU Management of the field, SAR Annex 13.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

**Justification:**

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

**Justification:**

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

**Justification:**

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** The sample of the study agreement is provided in SAR Annex 14, the document complies with the legal requirements.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Partially compliant

**Justification:** Descriptions of the study courses of the study programme are provided in SAR Programme Annex 7. The study course descriptions partially comply with the legal requirements: the learning outcomes are not precisely defined, in majority of study courses only one knowledge, skill and competence are mentioned; there are not clearly stated testing and assessment methods of students' achievements of the learning outcomes, also teaching methods are described in a limited way. Lists of literature in study course descriptions are outdated, scientific publications and foreign literature are not used, or used in a very limited way.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** The study programme complies with the 4th level professional qualification "Accountant", comparisson is provided in SAR Annex 4.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

**Justification:**

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** The study programme provides the first level professional higher education, it fully complies with the professional higher education standard; evidence is provided in SAR Annex 3.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

**Justification:**

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** Each member of TU teaching staff has either publications published in reviewed editions within the last six years, or a five-year practical work experience in accordance with the Law on Institutions of Higher Education. The evidence is provided in CVs of the teaching staff, which are available in SAR Annex 4.2. It is important to continue to increase number of scientific and professional publications of the teaching staff in the fields of finance and accounting.

- 15 P5 - Overall rating

**Assessment of compliance:** Partially compliant

**Justification:** The overall rating of the study programme is partially compliant because of significant inefficiencies in descriptions of the study courses, lack of publications of the teaching staff in the field of finance and accounting; name of the programme contains both finance and accounting, but finance-related courses are not present in the programme.

## Requirements (R6-R8)

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Partially compliant

**Justification:** TU has ensured well-developed infrastructure, good material, and technical provisions for the study process, and in general it leads to the achievement of learning outcomes of the study programme. Evidence is available in SAR of the study field, and part 3 of this Experts' Joint Report. As main deficiencies can be mentioned: outdated literature available in TU Library and used in the study courses; students are introduced only to one accounting software Zalktis, but are not introduced to other accounting software available and widely used on the market (short introduction, acquaintance with demo version could be provided); statistics software like SPSS are not mentioned in related study courses and are not used in the study process; data analytics tools and introduction to AI are not included in the programme and related applications and software are not introduced into study process. Emerald Insight database is mentioned in the study course descriptions, but is not available in TU.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** The qualification of TU academic staff members and guest teaching staff complies with the conditions for the implementation of the study programme and the provisions set out in the respective regulatory enactments. Evidence can be obtained from CVs of the teaching staff, which are available in Annex 4.2.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

**Justification:**

## Conclusions by specifying the strengths and weaknesses

The main conclusions are the following:

The name of the study programme “Finance and Accounting” is misleading, the programme is mostly oriented on professional qualification “Accountant” (by content closer to bookkeeping). The volume of study courses in the fields of finance and accounting is not balanced; study courses on cost accounting, business finance, investments are missing. TU should update content to comply with the name of the programme or rename the programme to “Accounting”. The tasks and structure of the study programme are designed so that students obtain the 4th level professional qualification (corresponds to the 5th LQF). Goals, tasks and learning outcomes of the study programme in general are interrelated and are linked to the programme content, but the name of the study programme and its content are inconsistent.

The descriptions of study courses are not properly developed: learning outcomes are very limited and too general, teaching methods are too general, there are not defined testing methods how to assess achievement of the learning outcomes by students (there is a separate document - regulations but should be included in the study course description), outdated literature, the structure and design of the study courses is not uniform.

The qualification of the teaching staff involved in the study programme in general is sufficient for implementation of the study programme, majority has practical experience in the field, mostly in small-scale enterprises, and cooperates with TU already for many years. At the same time, limited English language skill of most of the teaching staff questions their ability to read up-to-date literature (books and publications) in the field in English language, it also looks like a reason to limited application of foreign literature in the study courses, limited or wrong application of professional terminology in English language, translation of study course descriptions into English language, low interest for mobility, limited number of international publications, professional networking with colleagues abroad. Mutual collaboration between the teaching staff exists, but there is no internal act that regulates procedures of these activities. TU supports teaching staff to participate in international scientific conference with publications, but still number of scientific publications in accounting and finance is rather low, there is also lack of scientific publications published in journals indexed in Scopus or Web of Science databases.

In the first level study programmes, Doctoral degree for teaching staff with sufficient professional experience is not mandatory but increase of number of the teaching staff with Doctoral degrees and applied and scientific research in accounting and finance can contribute a lot to methodological basis and content of the study programme, linkage of practice and research.

TU has ensured well-developed infrastructure, good material, and technical provisions for the study process, and in general it leads to the achievement of the goals, tasks and learning outcomes of the study programme. At the same time, outdated literature available in TU Library and used in the study courses, students are introduced only to one accounting software Zalktis, but are not introduced to other accounting software available and widely used on the market, statistics software like SPSS are not mentioned in related study courses, data analytics tools and introduction to AI are not included in the programme and related applications and software are not introduced into study process. Infrastructure and provisions of the study programme are not updated in accordance with the new strategic goals of TU - internationalisation and sustainability (broader application of English language for attraction of international and foreign students to the programme, sustainability issues included into study content).

Graduates of the first level study programme “Finance and Accounting” can continue studies in the professional Bachelor programme “International Financial Management” within the study field “Management, Administration and Real Estate Management”. This study programme is in another study field and might not be so obvious for students, who are searching for career in finance and accounting starting with the first level of education in the study field “Economics”. TU does not offer Master or Doctoral level education in the field of finance and accounting.

The main strengths are the following:

- 1) the study programme provides opportunity to obtain professional qualification "Accountant" in rather short period 2 years and 3 months;
- 2) the study programme provides opportunity to join professional higher education Bachelor's study programme "International Financial Management" within the study field "Management, Administration and Real Estate Management";
- 3) students and Alumni are satisfied with the study environment, knowledge, skills, and competences obtained during the studies;
- 4) students, employers and graduates are regularly surveyed, and their opinions are taken note of;
- 5) TU ensures sufficient and well-developed infrastructure for students;
- 6) TU ensures extra curriculum opportunities to students like business incubator, regular open lectures;
- 7) TU has ensured successful adaptation to online studies;
- 8) TU Branches' students benefit from aggregate resources of TU scale and size, for example, open lectures, main library books, scientific databases;
- 9) TU is active in attraction of professionals from the industry, mostly small-scale enterprises, to join the TU teaching team of the study programme and share their experience with students;
- 10) TU supports teaching staff to participate in international scientific conferences with publications;
- 11) TU organizes training seminars for all teaching staff members;
- 12) the study programme is provided in TU Branches and has high importance for regional economic development, development of local human capital and entrepreneurship in the regions.

The main weaknesses are the following:

- 1) the name of the study programme "Finance and Accounting" is misleading, the volume of study courses in the fields of finance and accounting is not balanced, study courses on business finance and investments, cost accounting (there is a course Management Accounting, but it does not cover all the issues) are missing;
- 2) the descriptions of the study courses are not well developed and do not fully comply with the legal requirements: defined learning outcomes are very limited and too general, there are not defined testing methods how to assess achievement of the learning outcomes by students, the lists of literature contain outdated information, some indicated sources are not available at TU (Emerald database), the structure and design of the study courses is not uniform, only few scientific publications are mentioned, the range of teaching methods used is not diverse;
- 3) overall low mobility of students and staff in the study programme, as a result, limited student international exposure and traineeship exchange;
- 4) there is still low number of scientific articles of TU teaching staff in accounting and finance, as also lack of articles published in the scientific journals indexed in Scopus or Web of Science;
- 5) teaching staff is not active in participation in joint applied and scientific research projects;
- 6) poor application of terminology in English language in study course descriptions shows that the teaching staff is not using foreign literature (books, papers) in study courses' implementation; despite the fact that this literature is available in TU library, and competitiveness of study programmes on foreign market and "EU level knowledge" are mentioned as the main goals of the study field;
- 7) some students noted that detailed study materials are not available for some study courses and this causes problems in preparing for exams;
- 8) there is a limited application of professional software in the study programme.

### **Evaluation of the study programme "Finance and Accounting"**

Evaluation of the study programme:

## 6. Recommendations for the Study Programme "Finance and Accounting"

### Short-term recommendations

The name of the study programme should be brought into line with the content: study courses in finance, cost accounting should be added or the programme should be renamed to "Accounting".

To update the list of literature and sources used in the study courses: obsolete literature should be removed from the list of literature in the study course descriptions and new, fresh sources must be constantly added.

To add literature and sources in English language to be used in profession-related study courses; study course is taught in Latvian language, but students are using international bibliography sources and obtain terminology in both languages.

To divide the list of literature and sources into two parts: compulsory/mandatory literature and additional/recommended. In the compulsory part, there can be 5-7 important books or chapters of books, the most recent publications, databases, while the additional part of the list of literature can give Internet sources, other books, latest publications.

To develop a unified structure and design requirements for the description of the study course and the regulations.

To update information on independent studies, teaching and learning methods, including the introduction of more interactive methods and innovative methods that can be used in remote studies.

To organize training for teachers on teaching methods and learning outcomes evaluation methods, and their practical application.

To consider the possibility of providing students with a wider range of study materials in the Moodle environment.

To involve guest Lecturers from international and local audit firms, and larger companies, including industrial companies.

To update provision of professional, statistics, business analytics software: to introduce students to broader choice of accounting software popular on the market (introduction and demo version); SPSS software or similar tools for statistical analysis, for example, in Study Paper course; business analytics software and tools, basics of AI (Artificial Intelligence) applications.

### Long-term recommendations

To increase number of students in the programme and ensure sustainability of the study programme in a long term, focusing not only on local students, but also introduce export of the study programme.

To discuss and define the key selling points and unique value proposition of the study programme, use this information for promotion and sales of the programme.

To find top-level partnership in implementation of joint study modules, for example, joint course or business game, with other higher education institution(s) in Latvia and abroad to attract more students.

To promote more traineeship opportunities abroad through participation in Erasmus+ mobility project.

To provide students with internationalisation activities like participation in international business weeks, virtual mobility.

To update infrastructure, material and technical provisions of the study programme in accordance with internationalisation and sustainability strategic goals of TU.

## **II. "Marketing and Trade Managing" ASSESSMENT**

### **II. "Marketing and Trade Managing" ASSESSMENT**

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

##### **Analysis**

1.1. The name of the 2nd level professional higher education Bachelor's study programme is "Marketing and Trade Managing". The translation of the programme's name into English is misleading, term "trade" is used in AIKA e-platform, term "sales" is used in TU Self-Assessment Report of the study field "Economics" and descriptions of study courses; also, term "Managing" in some documents is referred as "Management". Names of the study courses and direct translation from Latvian language of the name of the study programme are closer to "Marketing and Trade Management", but by content the study programme is mostly about marketing, selling, sales, trade, and especially trade management are not covered at all or covered only in few courses. TU should choose one correct translation and use the same name of the study programme in English language in all information sources. The study programme provides LKI 6th level qualification and the 5th level professional qualification "Marketing Manager", professional Bachelor's degree in marketing is provided in the end of studies. The scope of the study programme is 160 CP (240 ECTS), studies are organised in full time 4 years mode, part time 4 years and 3 months, and part time extramural 4 years and 3 months mode. The study programme is provided only in Latvian language and implemented only in TU main campus in Riga. In the end of studies, students should write and defend diploma paper. Enrolment requirements are based on previous secondary education and competition based on centralised examination results in study subjects "Latvian language" and "Foreign language (English, German, French or Russian)" or, in specific cases, based on the final grades in the above-mentioned study courses in the document certifying secondary education of the applicant. Enrolment requirements do not contain any profession-specific results, any person, willing to apply for the study programme, can be enrolled.

The main objectives of the study programme are defined by TU as the following: to provide professional studies based on theoretical concepts of marketing, professional standard of Marketing Manager, that is applicable in practice, corresponding to the economic, cultural, national defence and security, as well as social needs; to provide the opportunity to acquire knowledge and develop the skills necessary for a Marketing Manager in order to promote the development of enterprises and promote their competitiveness in the active business environment in the Latvian and international market. As the main tasks of the study programme are mentioned the following: to provide high quality competitive higher education at EU level, participate and conduct professional research in economics and trade; provide students with opportunity to gain qualification in close relation to their future profession, stimulate student's interest in the processes taking place in society, promote students' analytical, problem-solving skills, educate and train highly professional Marketing Managers; to contribute to enhancement of the quality of private higher education. The main objectives and tasks of the study programme are rather general, not clearly defined, are too

many, some replicate already mentioned information, like “high quality competitive higher education at EU level”, “highly professional Marketing Managers”, “enhancement of the quality of private higher education”. It is recommended to review and formulate one main goal and few main tasks in clear and concentrate way.

There are 30 “study programme results” defined (assumed to be considered as main learning outcomes), which are rather general, and too many to be easily comprehended by any third person, as also are not divided into knowledge, skills, and competences. It is recommended to review, formulate in more precise way, and decrease the number of learning outcomes, for example to five knowledge learning outcomes, five main skills and 5 main competence.

In general, the name of the study programme, LKI and professional qualification levels, main objectives, tasks, learning outcomes of the study programme and its enrolment requirements are interrelated and lead to achievement of the professional Bachelor’s level higher education with professional qualification “Marketing Management”. Main objectives and learning outcomes of the study programme, in general, comply with the updated version (accepted on 18.09.2019.) of requirements to the mentioned professional qualification. As a positive factor can be mentioned, that Director of the study programme was one of the Expert in professional standards’ update/development group.

Students and Alumni have shared high satisfaction with the study programme, its content, achieved learning outcomes and study environment.

## **Conclusions by specifying the strengths and weaknesses**

The main conclusions are the following:

The name of the study programme, provided degree and professional qualification, main objectives, tasks, learning outcomes, and enrolment requirements are interrelated. At the same time, name of the programme in English language is used differently in AIKA e-platform, the Self-Assessment Report, descriptions of the study courses; all that is misleading and can cause difficulties in comprehension of the key fields of the study programme - is it about marketing, sales, and/or trade, also relation to the study field "Economics" is not obvious, study programme looks more related to business administration and management.

The main strengths are the following:

- 1) the latest requirements to the professional qualification Marketing Manager are taken into account in the study programme;
- 2) students and Alumni have shown high satisfaction level with the content of the programme, study process and the obtained skills.

The main weaknesses are the following:

- 1) main objectives and tasks of the study programme are too many, repeat the same things and are not clearly formulated;
- 2) learning outcomes of the study programme are too many, not split by knowledge, skills and competences; rather general and it is not clear, how to assess their achievement, what indicators should be used and tested;
- 3) application of different terms in English language - sales and trade, management and managing - complicated the clear comprehension of the content and main fields of the study programme.

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

### **Analysis**

2.1. The content of the study programme “Marketing and Trade Managing” in general complies with

the legal regulation, the defined main objectives, tasks and learning outcomes of the study programme: students are prepared for work in the field of marketing in accordance with the professional standard Marketing Manager. At the same time, it should be stressed out, that content of the study programme is mostly about marketing, but selling, sales, trade and trade management are not covered or in a rather limited way and only in few study courses. Names and content of the current study courses should be revised to include relation to sales, trade, and trade management; additional optional courses can be offered in the mentioned missing fields. If not, then the name of the programme should be changed to "Marketing" only. There are many study courses which include the term "marketing", and there is a risk of content overlapping. Content-based mapping of the study programme would be of a help in this case.

The study programme "Marketing and Trade Managing" corresponds to the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Latvia Regulations No.512 of 26/08/2014 "Regulations on the National Standard for the Second Level Professional Higher Education" and 5th level professional qualification Marketing Manager.

According to the Self-Assessment Report, the volume of the study programme "Marketing and Trade Managing" is 160 CP / 240 ECTS. The study programme includes general education study courses (22 CP / 33 ECTS), branch study courses (38 CP / 57 ECTS), branch professional specialization study courses (62 CP / 93), optional courses (58 CP / 87), internship (26 CP / 39 ECTS) and diploma thesis (12 CP / 18 ECTS). The program is implemented in Riga, full-time and part-time.

Meetings and discussions with students and Alumni revealed their satisfaction with the provided opportunities, communication, attitude, the opportunity to apply the theoretical knowledge in a practical way. The opportunity to do practical things, to meet practitioners is mentioned the most often. Meetings and discussions with representatives of employers showed that the knowledge and skills acquired by students meet the professional requirements and organizations' needs, employers are satisfied with students' practical skills. Practical skills are gained in accordance with labour market requirements.

The descriptions of the study courses in general include information in accordance with the requirements of Appendix 10 of the Guidelines for the Preparation of the Self-Assessment Report of a Study Direction: the requirements for starting the study course, the goal of the study course implementation and the planned learning outcomes, content of the study course, content acquisition calendar, description of the organization and tasks of students' independent work, criteria for learning outcome evaluation. The descriptions are logically structured. Each study course contains Regulations - with more detailed information on evaluation criteria, forms of assessment, calendar plan and final examination. At the same time, it must be noted, that in most descriptions of study courses the list of literature is not divided into compulsory and additional. There are long lists of literature (e.g., in Innovation management (VAD1616P), Integrated marketing communication (KOM1074P)) and it is not possible to determine which of the literature sources students must study and which are optional. It must be mentioned that some descriptions contain mostly books and a few publications. As a positive feature can be mentioned offer of the literature in English language in majority of study courses in the programme. At the same time, almost in all study courses (for example, Management of competitiveness (VAD1615P), Formation of a team (VAD1609P)), most of the literature and other sources are outdated; taking into account fast development of marketing, there is a risk that students will not get the latest updates and trends. Some study courses have misleading names, for example study course "Terminology" contains description of the study course of Russian language, it makes sense to rename this course as "Russian language", also study course "Foreign language" should be split into two study courses "English" and "German", then also literature choice can be defined in a clear way.

Several study courses mention the Emerald database (e.g., Entrepreneurship (VAD1610P), Management (VAD1471P), Logistics (EKO1195P)), but it is not available at TU Library. Content of study programme is missing courses related to the newest trends, like business and marketing

analytics, big data management, marketing metrics, application of AI tools in marketing and sales, statistical methods in marketing research, application of the professional, analytical, statistics (like SPSS) software. The Experts Team did not find any evidence of that in course descriptions and meeting during the on-site meeting.

The tables of evaluation criteria in the descriptions of study courses differ. In most study courses, the table shows consecutive evaluations from 10 to 1, but in Strategic management (VAD1467P) evaluations are grouped. In most study courses the table starts from 10, but in some from 1 (e.g., Information technologies I (DAT1015P)).

Several study courses copy-paste information about study methods and independent studies, and it coincides with the descriptions in the 1st level study program "Marketing and Trading". Descriptions of study courses are not formatted in one style: structure, fonts, professional terminology, formulation of learning outcomes, teaching and assessment methods differ in all descriptions. Descriptions of the study courses are missing linkage between the defined learning outcomes and the ways of assessment of their achievements; as also innovative teaching and learning methods.

Description of practice implementation is provided for the whole TU in "Practice Regulations", approved by TU Senate on 28.02.2018. More detailed description is provided in study course descriptions "Practice", "Pre-qualification Practice". Content of the practices is relevant to the study programme and professional qualification. Requirements for Bachelor thesis are provided for the whole TU in "Regulations on Compilation and Layout of Independent Research Papers" approved by TU Senate on 27.08.2020. More detailed requirements in relation to the study programme are not provided.

2.2. In the study programme "Marketing and Trade Managing", according to the study course descriptions, teaching staff use the following methods: seminar, lecture, demonstration, pair work, discussion, self-control questions, independent studies, problem solving, group work, presentation, test.

Among the methods, not only learning methods are mentioned, but also evaluation method – test. In the study course Cross-cultural communication (KOM1188P), no methods are mentioned.

In the descriptions of study courses, study methods are described in two ways: in the form of a short list and in the form of long descriptions. The descriptions do not always give an answer as to which methods are used (e.g. Entrepreneurship (VAD1610P)). During the on-site visit, in the interviews, the teaching staff could not name any of the teaching methods they use. All participants of the meeting with teaching staff could name only one method "to teach theory on practice".

Evaluation criteria and methods are made public. Students confirmed that at the beginning of each study course they are introduced to the requirements and evaluation criteria, they receive feedback, students have the right to submit an appeal. Student evaluation in examinations takes place in accordance with the Examination Regulations. Evaluation in study courses takes place in accordance with certain evaluation criteria.

The principles for implementing the student-centred approach are set out in the Quality Management Handbook. Students are involved in the study process and content development (see also Section "Efficiency of the Internal Quality Assurance System" in the Report). Full-fledged implementation of study results is taking place. This is also confirmed by the students because the question "What will I acquire?" is one of the topical issues, and students are satisfied with the result. TU takes into consideration the needs and diversity of students, and offering suitable learning options. Equal opportunities are provided for all groups of students. Students can combine work and studies, choosing appropriate mode of studies – full-time, part-time, or part-time extramural.

There are no foreign students in the study programme "Marketing and Trade Managing", but TU has experience in integrating foreign students and, according to the management, TU respects different cultures and traditions, for example, it is the only University in Riga to celebrate one of the Indian holidays Diwali.

During the study process, students can always have individual consultations with the teaching staff, however, there is lack of methods that allow students to evaluate and learn from each other, situation simulations, case study analysis; development of transversal skills is insufficient.

The learning environment is at a high level (see also Section “Resources and Provision of the Study Program” in the Experts’ Joint Report). A programme for the enhancement of the teaching staff competences has been developed, and a motivation system is in place. Students are provided with opportunities for extracurricular activities.

2.3. Generally, outcomes of the surveys conducted among the students of the professional Bachelor's study programme "Marketing and Trade Managing" seem to indicate their usage to improve quality of studies as the survey results regarding studies and other aspects of student life at TU have been improving over the years, for example, the "work of the Lecturers" from 4.55 to 4.69 (in the previous study years 4.5 to 4.67). Employer surveys are mainly conducted as part of internship process, TU admits that criteria with the lowest score of 4.3/5 for "Argumentation of professional opinion" and "Solving of professional problem situations" are possible areas for improvement. TU conducts graduate survey once every two years and it is considered when revising content and quality of studies.

2.4. No incoming student mobilities have been reported for professional bachelor's study programme "Marketing and Trade Managing " as it is conducted only in Latvian language. Outgoing study mobility has been very low over the last few years with no students in 2018/2019, in total from 2013 to 2019 13 students used mobility opportunities, it is low even when compared to the first level professional higher education programme „Marketing and Trading” in the same study field of "Economics", which has 20 outgoing mobilities during the same period. Students did not mention problems with recognition of outcomes achieved during mobility, TU has developed regulations on mobility and recognition of study courses undertaken during mobility.

Students also can be informed about and be motivated to participate in country-level projects like Hackathons, Demola to diversify teaching and learning methods for students, as also to promote TU and its study programmes on local and international level.

## **Conclusions by specifying the strengths and weaknesses**

The main conclusions are the following:

The thematic content of the study programme “Marketing and Trade Managing”, in general, corresponds to the needs and trends of the industry. The study programme provides a link between the goals of the study programme, the content of study courses and the learning outcomes. The tasks and structure of the study programme are in compliance with the requirements of the 5th level professional qualification Marketing Manager (corresponds to the 6th LQF). At the same time, the study programme is not well-balanced in its content, marketing courses are prevailing, and offer of the study courses related to sales, trade and trade management is very limited or close to zero (for example, in sales). There are many study courses with the term “marketing” in their names, there is a risk of content overlapping. The descriptions of study courses must be improved: they are not developed in the same style, are missing up-to-date literature, learning outcomes are not linked to their achievement assessment forms; limited teaching, learning and assessment methods are mentioned; there is an obvious lack of application of innovative teaching methods. Student-centred principles are followed in administration of the study programme, as also in teaching and learning.

The main strengths are the following:

1) content of the study programme corresponds with the needs, topicalities and trends of the industry;

- 2) wide and diverse literature is provided in descriptions of study courses, many courses include variety of sources in English language;
- 3) the principles of a student-centred approach are defined and followed in programme administration, teaching and learning;
- 4) students, employers, and graduates are regularly surveyed, and their opinions are considered in improvement of the study programme;
- 5) students and Alumni have shared high satisfaction with the study programme, its content and study environment, obtained knowledge and skills;
- 6) there is a high potential for traineeship mobility.

The main weaknesses are the following:

- 1) in majority of study courses, study course descriptions contain outdated literature and lack scientific and professional publications; some courses indicate sources which are not available in the library (emeraldinsight.com);
- 2) structure and design of study course descriptions are not uniform, lack of linkage between learning outcomes and their achievement assessment forms;
- 3) teaching and learning methods used in the study programme are not diverse, there is lack of innovative teaching methods, and methods targeted on transferable skills of students;
- 4) lack of student international exposure because of low incoming mobility opportunities and very low number of outgoing mobilities.

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

#### **Analysis**

3.1. The auditoriums are tidy, bright, and attractive; equipped with whiteboards, screens, multimedia projectors, audio, and video equipment. The auditorium furniture can be arranged in different ways, which allows to easily use a variety of teaching methods and forms. Students can use computer-based workplaces. There are also computerized classes. TU premises fully correspond to the requirements of the study process.

A CRM (Customer Relation Management) system for customer relationship management has been purchased. TU management notes that students are taught to work remotely not only to meet the study requirements, but also to acquire remote work skills for further work in the profession, as the basic principles of marketing remain, but due to remote work methodologies and tools may change. Students have free access to the library and other resources; online access is available 24/7. The library regularly purchases new literature, both in print and in electronic format. The list of required and provided literature is updated annually according to the wishes of the teaching staff and students. Books are purchased every year. Newspapers and magazines are ordered both in Latvian and English languages. In the library, several databases are available, including scientific ones, as well as open access databases. The library has sufficient range of literature for the study programme "Marketing and Trade Managing". According to the e-catalogue, at least 344 literature sources in the field of marketing are available in Latvian and English language. The list of required literature is updated annually in accordance with the wishes of the academic staff and students. In the interviews, administration of the study programme and teaching staff indicated that purchase of books and magazines and subscription of e-resources are supported. In the library, several databases, including scientific, are available and correspond to the needs of the study field "Economics": Lursoft, Statistics Latvia, Ebsco, Scopus, ScienceDirect, OpenAccess, open access databases (incl. SpringerOpen), e-books and journals (incl. the Baltic Journal of Economics, SAGE, Taylor & Francis, DOAJ). Access to data bases of the National Library is also provided. All the provided databases can be accessed remotely. On several study courses, Emerald Insight data base is mentioned in the list of literature, but is not available at TU. There are copying facilities in the

library. It is important for teaching staff to include newly-purchased book in study course descriptions.

TU has several information systems: Intranet, BATIS and Moodle. One password is used to access them all. Students are regularly updated through BATIS with the latest information about their deadlines, changes in normative documents. Students also have access to study course descriptions and study materials. The satisfaction of students with the existing systems is ascertained by the annual students' survey; based on survey results, TU had improved TU information system BATIS, computer and LAN connection in the lecture halls, and quality of the Wi-Fi internet access. Internal regulatory acts are stored on the Intranet. BATIS contains publicly accessible and password-protected sections. The most important regulatory acts are published in the publicly accessible section. The password-protected section is used to ensure the study process. The academic staff have access to all information about student groups, their study courses, assignments, and student evaluations. Teaching staff can send information and messages, post materials for students, can post materials for a specific group of students. Diploma paper supervisors and reviewers have access to the feedback form and the review form in the BATIS system, members of the State Examination Commission – to the evaluation form. Students have access to full information about their studies, about study courses (syllabus and requirements), timetables, materials, evaluations. Students can submit their papers, prepare an internship agreement, and print it out. The Moodle environment provides all opportunities to effectively implement study courses. In the interviews, students indicated that in some study courses detailed study materials are not available and this creates problems in preparing for exams. Some graduates mentioned that they also use study materials after graduating from the TU. During the previous year, several new features were introduced in BATIS to improve the quality of remote studies. In the interviews, the students stated that they are satisfied with BATIS, emphasizing that a mobile application is available and that students use it a lot. During the pandemic, TU was able to easily switch to remote study mode in all study programs. TU chose the Webex solution for remote teaching and learning, as well as video conferencing, online meetings, screen sharing, and webinars. The complex of Intranet, BATIS, Moodle and Webex platform for remote studies is highly appreciated by students, Alumni and teaching staff as a study environment.

TU has an adequate financial base to implement study process in the study programme in a highly qualitative way. It is used not only to provide minimum requirements, but also to create added value. There is a staff motivation system for the teaching staff, including professional growth centre. The activities of the Student Council are financed from TU budget, making up at least 1/200 of the total budget of TU. The TU has an appropriate level of information system provision, extracurricular facilities are offered, sports facilities and equipment, dormitory, security system, parking lot. Students have access to a business incubator on TU main campus with additional business mentoring and other services available to students if needed. TU organizes open lectures freely available to TU students; however, their timing can be inaccessible for working part-time students.

The study, informative and technical provision comply with the main objectives, tasks and learning outcomes and needs of the study programme and create the prerequisites for the achievement of the defined learning outcomes. At the same time, application of professional, data management, business analytics, and statistics software (for example, SPSS) is not evident in study course descriptions and is not available or actively used by students. TU has recently updated its strategy with internationalisation and sustainability goals; infrastructure, material and technical provisions of the study programme are not updated yet in accordance with these goals.

## **Conclusions by specifying the strengths and weaknesses**

The main conclusions are the following:

The study provision, informative provision (including libraries), material and technical provision, and

financial provision comply with the specific features and the conditions for the implementation of the study program “Marketing and Trade Managing”, create the prerequisites for the achievement of the learning outcomes, and indicate the possibility to ensure a high-quality study process also in the future.

At the same time, there is a necessity for teaching staff to update study course descriptions with the newest literature and scientific articles, wider range of study materials available in TU Library, or initiate purchasing of the newest literature in Latvian and English languages.

Application of professional, business analytics, and statistics software (for example, SPSS) is not evident in study course descriptions and is not available or actively used by students.

TU has recently updated its strategy with internationalisation and sustainability goals; infrastructure, material and technical provisions in professional Bachelor’s study programme “Marketing and Trade Managing” are not updated yet in accordance with these strategic goals.

The main strengths are the following:

- 1) bright and relatively modern study premises on main campus;
- 2) business incubator on main campus;
- 3) regular open lectures;
- 4) successful adaptation to online studies;

The main weakness is the following:

- 1) internationalisation and sustainability issues are not implemented yet in infrastructure, material, and technical provisions of the study programme.

## **4. Teaching Staff**

### **Analysis**

4.1. TU undertakes measures in a target-oriented manner to avoid negative effects on the quality of the implementation of the study programme and the compliance of the study programme with the requirements of the regulatory enactments, because of the changes in the composition of the teaching staff. TU is active in attraction of TU Alumni as a teaching staff. Every year since 2013 the number of teaching staff in the study programme has been increasing, for example, in 2018/2019 by 9%. It is mainly caused by attraction of new guest Lecturers and professionals. Based on annual assessments as well as feedback from the labour market and students, the quality of teaching has improved. Stability of the elected teaching staff and attraction of professionals are the key factors of good quality of teaching at TU and high level of students' and employers' satisfaction with the study results.

4.2. The qualification of the teaching staff members involved in the implementation of the study programme complies with the main goals and learning outcomes of the study programme and its study courses, as also with the legal requirements for the teaching staff. TU elected teaching staff (Professors, Associate Professors with Doctoral degree, and Lecturers with Master’s degrees), guest Lecturers from other Latvian higher education institutions and professionals from the industry are involved in implementation of the study programme. 30 members of the teaching staff are involved in the study programme, including 13 teaching staff members elected at TU as Professor (3 persons), Associate Professor (3 persons), Assistant Professors (2 persons), and 5 Lecturers. 17 guest Lecturers have joined the teaching team, including 2 guest Professors, 12 guest Lecturers, 3 guest Assistant Lecturers. Ratio number of students per teaching staff member is 4.8 in the programme. Qualification of all teaching staff members corresponds to the prerequisites for the implementation of the study programme. The teaching staff has acquired appropriate education in communication sciences, economics, entrepreneurship, law. Guest Lecturers represent industry

professionals, who are closely involved in the day-to-day business activities with business management, marketing, public relations, sales management, as well as project managers and business consultants. The elected teaching staff is active in membership in different professional associations and stay in touch with employers by providing consultations and cooperation within the framework of implemented research and projects. The qualification of educators contributes to the achievement of the learning outcomes and development of student competences appropriate for work as marketing managers. TU teaching staff is strongly supported by TU in participation in scientific conferences in Latvia and abroad with publications, participation in mobility projects and obtaining of Doctoral degrees.

During the on-site visit, in the meeting with teaching staff, teaching staff members could not mention which teaching methods they are using in their study courses, the only answer was “teaching theory application on practice”, it indicates lack of knowledge about teaching and learning methods in professional higher education. Some teaching staff members have shown very limited English language skills, it questions their ability to read the newest international literature and scientific publications in the field of their teaching interests.

#### 4.3. Not relevant

4.4. TU teaching staff involved in implementation of the study programme, is actively involved in applied and scientific research in the fields related to the content of the study programme and its study courses, both at national and international level. Research results are used in the study process. TU organizes annual international scientific conference with publishing possibilities, attracting researchers from Latvia and abroad. Students are encouraged to participate in TU annual conference and present their research works in TU students' conference, but still activity is rather low. TU teaching staff is active in participation in international scientific conferences in Latvia and abroad. TU has defined research directions and topics of the researchers in the study programme as the following: marketing destinations and regional development; specifics of pricing, business environment, its competitiveness; competitiveness factors, economic cooperation in the context of Latvia-China; effectiveness of quality management system in organizations, business problems; foreign language teaching process; supply chains; customer relationship management systems in retail companies in the Baltics; problems of harmonization of tax rates, practical aspects of accounting; identification, optimization and forecasting of complex economic and technical systems; information technologies opportunities in business; public relations and intercultural communication; psychological aspects, problems in the society; business ethics, philosophy; cultural, historical and legal aspects; SME development in Latvia. Some research directions are similar or the same with other study programmes of the study field “Economics”. The defined research directions are related to the study programme and its study courses and can be used in study process. However, clear relation to the field of economics is missing in the defined research directions and publications of the teaching staff. Despite the increase of publications of the teaching staff in the last years, number of scientific articles published in scientific journals indexed in Scopus or Web of Science is still rather low.

4.5. TU has a strong mechanism for mutual collaboration between the teaching staff members, which contributes to the improvement of the study courses/ modules and their correlation in the study programme. TU considers cooperation among Lecturers to be successful. Implementation of the study programme involves Lecturers from different faculties, cooperation among lecturers is promoted in various seminars organized by TU. Annual strategic seminars are organized, where Lecturers work in groups to find solutions for different situations and to discuss possibilities of study process development and improvement. The Lecturers' cooperation is strengthened by annual scientific conferences, which provide an opportunity to discuss different issues, to find common

interests. The Lecturers' cooperation also allows to ensure better link between the study courses. At the same time, lack of study courses mapping, unbalanced content of the study programme (many study courses in marketing, lack of study courses in sales and trade management), ununified format of study course descriptions indicate lack of methodological cooperation among teaching staff. Analysis of the information provided in the Self-Assessment Report and its Annexes shows, that Professors and Associate Professors are involved in both – 1st level higher education study programme “Marketing and Trading” and Bachelor study programme “Marketing and Trade Managing”, often basic courses. This level of the teaching staff is overqualified for the 1st level of programme and should be involved more in research and teaching of more advanced subjects to doctoral and postgraduate students, to supervise Doctoral and Master theses, establish contacts, and develop cooperation with other universities, both in Latvia and abroad. As a positive feature can be mentioned, that the same Director is managing both the 1st level and the Bachelor programme and has capacity to supervise content and eliminate the overlapping risk of study courses.

### **Conclusions by specifying the strengths and weaknesses**

The main conclusions are the following:

TU has developed strong network of the teaching staff, including elected teaching staff members and guest Lecturers. Number of permanently employed teaching staff members is not changing in the last years, it proves high loyalty to TU. Professionals from the industry join the teaching team every year. TU teaching staff complies with the legal requirements. Teaching staff is strongly motivated by TU to be active in applied and scientific research, development of personal professional skills, publication of research results, and obtaining of Doctoral degrees. At the same time, number of applied research and scientific publications, especially the ones published in scientific journals indexed in data bases Scopus or Web of Science is rather low, and willingness to participate in international mobility projects also is very low. TU teaching staff collaborates with each other, participate together in training seminars. At the same time, unbalanced content of the study programme, ununified structure and formatting of the study course descriptions indicate inefficiency of methodological cooperation among the teaching staff.

The main strengths are the following:

- 1) TU has stable and loyal teaching staff team;
- 2) TU is active in attraction of professionals from the industry to join TU teaching team and share their experience with students;
- 3) TU teaching staff is active in participation in international scientific conferences with publications;
- 4) TU organizes training seminars for all teaching staff members on regular basis.

The main weaknesses are the following:

- 1) there is still low number of applied research and scientific articles of TU teaching staff, especially the ones published in the scientific journals indexed in Scopus or Web of Science;
- 2) TU teaching staff is not active in participation in joint applied and scientific research projects, international mobility programme;
- 3) there is a lack of methodological cooperation of teaching staff in development of the content of the study programme, application of the unified approach in development of the study course descriptions, development of study course mapping for the programme;
- 4) teaching staff lacks unified knowledge about teaching and learning methodology, and its application in study process;
- 5) low English language skills of some teaching staff members limits their ability to read the newest international literature and scientific publications in the fields of their teaching and research interest; it can limit achievement of the study field's goals about competitiveness of study

programmes on foreign market, and acquisition of competitive on EU level knowledge and skills necessary for the chosen profession.

## 5. Assessment of the Compliance of the Study Programme "Marketing and Trade Managing"

### Requirements

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** The sample of the diploma to be issued in the study programme is provided in SAR Programme Annex 8; the document fully complies with the procedure by which state-recognised documents of higher education are issued.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** Cooperation agreement with RISEBA (Riga International School of Economics and Business Administration) from 20.12.2019. is attached in SAR Programme Annex 9; the document complies with the legal requirement.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** Document providing evidence of fulfilment of this requirement is attached in SAR Programme Annex 15, in case of TU inability to provide studies in the programme, students can continue their studies at RISEBA (Riga International School of Economics and Business Administration).

In case, if students do not agree to continue their studies at RISEBA, there is no document providing information about any monetary compensation for these students. At the same time, Management of the study field has provided additional document - new version of TU study agreement (amended in February 2020), the added clause 6.1.9. indicates compensation for student's losses if study programme is discontinued because of TU fault.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** The teaching staff of the study programme is proficient in the official language, evidence can be found in CVs of the teaching staff in SAR Annex 4.2., and letter from TU Management of the study field, SAR Annex 13.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

**Justification:**

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

**Justification:**

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

**Justification:**

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** The sample of the study agreement is provided in SAR Annex 14, the document complies with the legal requirements.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Partially compliant

**Justification:** Descriptions of the study courses of the study programme are provided in SAR Annex 7. The study course descriptions partially comply with the legal requirements: the learning outcomes are not precisely defined in all study courses, there are not clearly stated testing and assessment methods of the achievement of the learning outcomes, also teaching methods are described in a limited way, sources of literature mentioned in majority of study course descriptions are outdated; there is no unified structure and formatting of the study course descriptions.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** The study programme complies with the 5th level professional qualification "Marketing Manager", comparison is provided in SAR Programme Annex 4.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

**Justification:**

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** The study programme provides the second level professional higher education, it fully complies with the professional higher education standard; evidence is provided in SAR Programme Annex 3.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

### **Justification:**

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** Each member of TU teaching staff has either publications published in reviewed editions within the last six years, or a five-year practical work experience in accordance with the Law on Institutions of Higher Education. The evidence is provided in CVs of the teaching staff, which are available in SAR Annex 4.2. Directions of research of the elected teaching staff are related to the study programme.

- 15 P5 - Overall rating

**Assessment of compliance:** Partially compliant

**Justification:** The overall rating of the study programme is partially compliant because of inefficiencies in the study course descriptions of the programme.

### **Requirements (R6-R8)**

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Partially compliant

**Justification:** TU has ensured well-developed infrastructure, good material, and technical provisions for the study process, and in general it leads to the achievement of learning outcomes of the study programme. Evidence is available in SAR of the study field, and part 3 of this Experts' Joint Report. As main deficiencies can be mentioned: outdated literature available in TU Library and used in the study courses; statistics software like SPSS is not mentioned in related study courses and looks like not used in the study process; data analytics tools and introduction to AI are not included in the programme and related applications and software are not introduced into study process. Emerald Insight database is mentioned in the study course descriptions but is not available in TU Library.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** The qualification of TU elected teaching staff members and guest lecturers complies with the conditions for the implementation of the study programme and the provisions set out in the respective regulatory enactments. Evidence can be obtained from CVs of the teaching staff, which are available in SAR Annex 4.2.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

**Justification:**

### **Conclusions by specifying the strengths and weaknesses**

The main conclusions are the following:

The name of the study programme, provided degree and professional qualification, main objectives,

tasks, learning outcomes, and enrolment requirements are interrelated. At the same time, name of the programme in English language is used differently in AIKA e-platform, the Self-Assessment Report, descriptions of the study courses; all that is misleading and can cause difficulties in comprehension of the key fields of the study programme - is it about marketing, sales, and/or trade, also relation to the study field "Economics" is not obvious, study programme looks more related to business administration and management.

The thematic content of the study programme "Marketing and Trade Managing", in general, corresponds to the needs and trends of the industry. The study programme provides a link between the goals of the study programme, the content of study courses and the learning outcomes. The tasks and structure of the study programme are following the requirements of the 5th level professional qualification Marketing Manager (corresponds to the 6th LQF). At the same time, the study programme is not well-balanced in its content, marketing courses are prevailing, and offer of the study courses related to sales, trade and trade management is very limited or close to zero (for example, in sales). There are many study courses with the term "marketing" in their names, there is a risk of content overlapping. The descriptions of study courses must be improved: they are not developed in the same style, are missing up-to-date literature, learning outcomes are not linked to their achievement assessment forms; limited teaching, learning and assessment methods are mentioned; there is an obvious lack of application of innovative teaching methods. Student-centred principles are followed in administration of the study programme, as also in teaching and learning.

The study provision, informative provision (including libraries), material and technical provision, and financial provision comply with the specific features and the conditions for the implementation of the study program "Marketing and Trade Managing", create the prerequisites for the achievement of the learning outcomes, and indicate the possibility to ensure a high-quality study process also in the future.

At the same time, there is a necessity for teaching staff to update study course descriptions with the newest literature and scientific articles, wider range of study materials available in TU Library, or initiate purchasing of the newest literature in Latvian and English languages.

Application of professional, business analytics, and statistics software (for example, SPSS) is not evident in study course descriptions and is not available or actively used by students.

TU has recently updated its strategy with internationalisation and sustainability goals, infrastructure, material and technical provisions should be updated in accordance with these strategic goals also in professional Bachelor's study programme "Marketing and Trade Managing".

TU has developed strong network of the teaching staff, including elected teaching staff members and guest lecturers. Number of permanently employed teaching staff members is not changing in the last years, it proves high loyalty to TU. Professionals from the industry join the teaching team every year. TU teaching staff complies with the legal requirements. Teaching staff is strongly motivated by TU to be active in research, development of personal professional skills, publication of research results, and obtaining of Doctoral degrees. At the same time, number of scientific publications in scientific journals indexed in databases Scopus or Web of Science is very low, and willingness to participate in international mobility projects also is very low. TU teaching staff collaborates with each other, participate together in training seminars. At the same time, unbalanced content of the study programme, ununified structure and formatting of the study course descriptions indicate inefficiency of methodological cooperation among the teaching staff.

Inprofessional study programmes, Doctoral degree for teaching staff with sufficient professional experience is not mandatory but increase of number of the teaching staff with Doctoral degrees and scientific research in marketing, sales and trade can contribute a lot to methodological basis and content of the study programme, linkage of practice and research.

The main strengths are the following:

- 1) the latest requirements to the professional qualification Marketing Manager are taken into account in the study programme;

- 2) students and Alumni have shared high satisfaction with the study programme, its content and study environment, obtained knowledge and skills;
- 3) wide and diverse literature is provided in descriptions of study courses, many courses include variety of sources in English language;
- 4) students, employers, and graduates are regularly surveyed, and their opinions are considered in improvement of the study programme;
- 5) TU ensures sufficient and well-developed infrastructure for students;
- 6) TU ensures extra curriculum opportunities to students like business incubator, regular open lectures;
- 7) TU has ensured successful adaptation to online studies;
- 8) TU is active in attraction of professionals from the industry, mostly small-scale enterprises, to join the TU teaching team of the study programme and share their experience with students;
- 9) TU supports teaching staff to participate in international scientific conferences with publications;
- 10) TU organizes training seminars for all teaching staff members.

The main weaknesses are the following:

- 1) main objectives and tasks of the study programme are too many, repeat the same things and are not clearly formulated;
- 2) learning outcomes of the study programme are too many, not split by knowledge, skills and competences; rather general and it is not clear, how to assess their achievement, what indicators should be used and tested;
- 3) application of different terms in English language - sales and trade, management and managing - complicated the clear comprehension of the content and main fields of the study programme;
- 4) the descriptions of the study courses are not well developed and do not fully comply with the legal requirements: defined learning outcomes are very limited and too general, there are not defined testing methods how to assess achievement of the learning outcomes by students (there are separate regulations, but should be included in the study course descriptions), majority of the lists of literature contains outdated books by year of publication, some indicated sources are not available at TU (Emerald database), the structure and design of the study courses is not uniform, only few scientific publications are mentioned, the range of teaching methods used is not diverse, there is lack of innovative teaching methods, and methods targeted on transferable skills of students;
- 5) lack of student international exposure because of low incoming mobility opportunities and very low number of outgoing mobilities;
- 6) internationalisation and sustainability issues are not implemented yet in infrastructure, material, and technical provisions of the study programme;
- 7) there is still low number of applied research and scientific articles of TU teaching staff, especially the ones published in the scientific journals indexed in Scopus or Web of Science;
- 8) TU teaching staff is not active in participation in joint applied and scientific research projects and international mobility programme;
- 9) there is a lack of methodological cooperation of teaching staff in development of the content of the study programme, application of the unified approach in development of the study course descriptions, development of study course mapping for the programme;
- 10) there is a limited application of professional, statistics, business analytics software and introduction of AI (Artificial Intelligence) in the study programme.

### **Evaluation of the study programme "Marketing and Trade Managing"**

Evaluation of the study programme:

Good

## 6. Recommendations for the Study Programme "Marketing and Trade Managing"

### Short-term recommendations

To review the name of the programme in English language and use the same translation in all the documents.

To organize seminar for the involved staff and review main objectives and tasks of the study programme, precise formulation and decrease the number of objectives and tasks, for example, one main goal and 5 main tasks.

To organize seminar for the involved teaching staff and review main objectives, tasks and learning outcomes of the study courses of the study programme, develop mapping of the study courses to eliminate content overlapping risk.

To develop unified in structure and design template of the study course description to be used by all teaching staff members.

Teaching staff to review and update literature in study course descriptions with the newest books, scientific and professional articles in Latvian and English language in the field of their teaching interest; in case of need suggest TU Library to enrich its collection with the specific newest sources; identify mandatory information source, for example, one core textbook for the course, and then indicate recommended sources for additional reading.

To organize training for teaching staff on teaching methods, including innovative and interactive methods, student-centred approach and methods targeted on development of transferable skills, and their application in face-to-face, distance and hybrid studies.

To organize training for teaching staff on learning outcomes achievement evaluation and assessment methods, and their application in face-to-face, distance and hybrid studies, update study course descriptions with clear linkage between each learning outcome and assessment of its achievement.

To provide broader offer of the optional study courses, for example, study courses in advanced digital marketing, big data, business and data analytics, data management, application of AI (Artificial Intelligence) tools; find the opportunity to share optional courses with other study programmes.

To increase participation of teaching staff and students in international mobility projects, for example, Erasmus+, stressing out traineeship mobility, e-mobility and short mobility opportunities like international business weeks for working students.

To review the professional higher education Bachelor study programme "Marketing and Trade Managing" regarding compliance of the study content to the name of the programme; introduce more study courses related to sales, trade and trade management, if not, change the name of the programme to "Marketing".

To update the list of literature and sources in study course descriptions with the latest book editions and publications in Latvian and English languages; increase number of applied research and scientific publications to be read by students during the study course; divide the list of literature and sources into two parts: compulsory/mandatory literature and additional/recommended; in the compulsory part, there can be 5-7 important books or chapters of books, the most recent publications, databases, while the additional part of the list of literature can give Internet sources, other books, latest publications.

## Long-term recommendations

To increase number of students in the programme and ensure sustainability of the study programme in a long term, focusing not only on local students, but also introduce export of the study programme.

To update infrastructure, material and technical provisions of the study programme in accordance with internationalisation and sustainability strategic goals of TU.

To discuss and define the key selling points and unique value proposition of the study programme, use this information for promotion and sales of the programme.

To provide this study programme also in English language to attract foreign students.

To find top-level partnership in implementation of joint study modules, for example, joint course or business game, with other higher education institution(s) in Latvia and abroad to attract more students.

To promote more traineeship opportunities abroad through participation in Erasmus+ mobility project.

To provide students with internationalisation activities like participation in international business weeks, virtual mobility.

## 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
Pursuant to Section 5, Paragraph 21 of the Law on Institutions of Higher Education, the higher education institution/ college shall ensure continuous improvement, development, and efficient performance of the study direction whilst implementing their internal quality assurance systems:	Fully compliant			TU internal Quality Assurance System is developed in compliance with Section 5, Paragraph 21 of the "Law on Higher Education Institutions", and is targeted on continuous improvement, development and efficient performance of the study field "Economics".

Requirements	Requirement Evaluation	Comment
R2 - The cooperation with different organisations from Latvia and abroad implemented within the study direction ensures the achievement of the aims of the study direction.	Fully compliant	TU has strong cooperation with employers, entrepreneurs, representatives of different organizations and institutions on the local, including regional, level. Separately can be stressed out TU strong relations with the industry. All three study programmes of the study field are in Latvian language, local partnerships are prevailing upon international ones.
R3 - Compliance of scientific research and artistic creation with the development level thereof (if applicable).	Fully compliant	All three study programmes are professional, two of them are the first level programmes, and are mostly oriented on applied research. At the same time, there is enough and broad variety of scientific publications of the teaching staff in the fields related to marketing and trade, but still rather limited number of scientific publications related to finance and accounting. Relation to study field of economics can be more stressed in all the research works. On Experts' opinion, TU should continue to enforce applied and scientific research in the study field to enforce linkage between research and practice.
R4 - Elimination of the shortcomings and deficiencies identified during the previous assessment of the study direction, if it has been conducted, or the implementation of the provided recommendations.	Fully compliant	TU has done improvement activities in all the recommendations of the Experts from the previous accreditation, and there is clear evidence of the progress. The only recommendation, which was ignored, is finding cooperation opportunities with other higher education institutions in development of joint or double degree study programmes and modules. As it was clarified during the on-site visit, currently it is not in the agenda of TU management, but in future, TU can consider joint or double degree study programme cooperation with another higher education institution abroad in professional Bachelor study programme "Marketing and Trade Managing".

#### Assessment of the Requirements for the Relevant Study Programmes of the Study Field

<b>No.</b>	<b>Study programme</b>	<b>R5</b>	<b>R6</b>	<b>R7</b>	<b>R8</b>	<b>Evaluation of the study programme (excellent, good, average, poor)</b>
1	Marketing and Trading (41342)	Partially compliant	Partially compliant	Fully compliant	Not relevant	Good
2	Finance and Accounting (41344)	Partially compliant	Partially compliant	Fully compliant	Not relevant	Good
3	Marketing and Trade Managing (42342)	Partially compliant	Partially compliant	Fully compliant	Not relevant	Good

### **The Dissenting Opinions of the Experts**

The Experts are unanimous on the assessment made in the report.