

# Expert group joint opinion

Evaluation Procedure: Assessment of Study Field

Higher Education Institution: Stockholm School of Economics in Riga

Study field: Management, Administration and Management of Real Property

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## Summary Assessment of the Study Field

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Onsite visit at Stockholm School of Economics in Riga (SSE Riga) took place on November 9th and November 11th, 2020. SSE Riga has a very ambitious mission 'to contribute to the economic, social and democratic development of the region' and it is evident that the school follows it, and the impact is felt in society. The SSE Riga has a good position in the Latvian higher education market and Latvian society, and even Baltics. SSE Riga study direction 'Management, administration and real estate management' has clearly defined attainable goal, which well-suites the new SSE Riga mission, vision and FREE (Fact and science-minded; Reflective and self-aware; Empathetic and culturally literate; Entrepreneurial and responsible) concept. It well complies with the main directions of the strategic development of the higher education institution and exceptionally well meets the needs and the development trends of the society and national economy. SSE Riga is bound by the license agreement with SSE Stockholm and this contributes to the quality of the study content.

SSE Riga has established a Study Quality Assurance Policy which is based on the EQUIS Standards and Criteria. It covers objectives, strategies, tasks, and principles of internal study quality assurance, and evaluation of the performance of academic staff, however, the document was not publicly available at the time of experts' onsite visit.

SSE Riga the quality management system implies adherence to the principles of academic integrity in the conduct of students and SSE Riga staff and faculty, which includes objectivity, responsibility, mutual respect, and trust, and promotes the quality and prestige of education and science.

SSE Riga is a small higher education institution that can ensure flexible and fast internal communication between staff, faculty, students, and other stakeholders. Information on study the programme is collected and analysed on a regular basis and uses it to improve the study direction and programme.

SSE Riga has a very good resource base and the students and the teaching staff have access to the necessary resources to ensure the quality of the teaching and learning process.

Research is considered a key activity, as important as teaching to reach the goals connected to the mission statement. The research workload for a faculty member is indicated in the job contract, it is specific to faculty needs (on average 50% is dedicated to research). Faculty are assessed on the results of the Annual Activity report which include academic publications, participation in academic conferences, contributions to the policy debate, and the debate on business practice. In addition, international cooperation and student involvement in the research process are taken into account. Despite its small size SSE Riga possesses strong research potential. Virtually all core faculty perform research. Faculty research largely corresponds to the faculty teaching profile. Research output is good and has become increasingly international during the period. Increased research potential also translates into increased external research funding through grants and projects.

The institution has also developed mechanisms to promote the involvement of the students in scientific research by improving EMBA thesis processes, they are well-functioning and efficient.

The university has a strong alumni club, which is highly valued by its members, now mainly as an opportunity for networking. This cooperation could also be used more actively for brainstorming on improvements in the study process and involve, for example, the development of new and topical case studies based on Latvian practice.

Professional master programme "Business Management" (EMBA) programme delivered in English and aims to 'build management and administrative capabilities of current and future business leaders, resulting in a contribution to the economic, social and democratic development of the region'. It is well related to the programme tasks and is logically linked with the name and degree.

Programme admission requirements ensure high-quality students in the programme. The content of study courses meets the needs of the programme. International mobility of the students is

incorporated in the programme. The Asia trip provides a valuable experience and is a good selling point for the programme. All study courses are relevant and complementary, they comply with the aims of the study programme and ensure the achievement of the learning outcomes. The study implementation methods are diverse, but the main emphasis is on the case study approach. The quality of master Theses is very high.

Faculty diversity is emphasized. SSE Riga continues to maintain an international instructor body throughout the years - 70-80% are foreign teaching staff. There is a mechanism for mutual collaboration between the teaching staff members in place, which contributes to the improvement of the study courses/ modules and their correlation.

Overall, the programme could be evaluated as excellent, except unclarity with professional qualification to be awarded and study from correspondence to duration and credit value of the programme. Still, these deficiencies can be easily solved and clarified.

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

### **Analysis**

The mission of SSE Riga is “to contribute to the economic, social, and democratic development of the region.” In line with that, the vision of SSE Riga is that of ‘being the leading economics and business school in the region with a demonstrably robust record of contributing to regional economic, social, and democratic development’. As identified by management during the visit, SSE Riga is a ‘pan-Baltic institution with Swedish DNA’ as it is owned by SSE Riga Foundation, which is founded by Stockholm School of Economics, University of Latvia, and SSE Riga Alumni Association.

The study direction ‘Management, administration and real estate management’ is one of two study directions implemented in SSE Riga and it is an essential component of delivering the SSE Riga vision. The aim of the “Management, Administration & Real Estate Management” study direction is ‘to build the management and administrative capabilities of future and current business leaders’. As explained by management during the visit, this goal is pursued in close alignment with the FREE concept. However, during the discussion only one student remembered this concept, thus it could be more popularised among the students.

SSE Riga has a very ambitious mission, more than traditionally expected by a university. However, they follow it, and the impact is felt in society. The SSE Riga has a good position in the Latvian HE market and Latvian society, and even Baltics. Thus, the aim of the study direction is clearly defined and attainable, it well complies with the main directions of the strategic development of the higher education institution and exceptionally well meets the needs and the development trends of the society and national economy.

The study direction has one study programme – Executive Master of Business Administration (EMBA). Therefore, the study direction as well as study programme management and administration is structured around the EMBA programme management team, which consists of the Programme Chair, the Programme Manager, and the Programme Advisor. The responsibilities of the management team are clearly defined and explained (in SAR page 25). This study direction management structure has proven to be effective as it focuses on core functions of the programme implementation - the quality of study content, student grades, faculty feedback, recruitment, and admissions. Evidence of the efficiency of the management structure is derived from the benchmark of the size of the study programme management team against similar study programmes in partner institutions (SAR page 25) and was proved during the visit.

SSE Riga has a well-established and viable administrative and technical support system. During the onsite visit, it was proved by the students and by the teaching staff, who mentioned the same support channels and were positive about the quality of support services.

SSE Riga is bound by the the licence agreement with SSE Stockholm. This contributes to the quality of the study content (e.g. during the last couple of years SSE has revised its curricula and broadened the scope of its education; quarterly reporting to SSE Stockholm). Still, this might be the reason why less attention is devoted to Latvian regulations on Higher education (e.g. changes in professional standards, annual self-assessment). SSE Riga does not produce annual self-assessment reports, but this is very well substituted by quarterly reports submitted to SSE Stockholm.

All in all, it is evident that the structure of the management at SSE Riga is strongly oriented towards development.

SSE Riga Admission requirements for this study direction are regulated by “The SSE Riga Executive MBA programme admission rules” and under Clause 11 of Regulation No.846 of 10.10.2006 of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Latvia “Requirements, criteria and procedure for admission to study programmes”. SSE Riga Admission regulations are reviewed and approved by the SSE Riga Senate annually and are published on the SSE Riga web platform.

SSE Riga in relation to the EMBA programme has more complicated than the selection process (2 stages), so it allows us to conclude that the quality of the applicants is ensured. This is especially important in line with ‘value loops’ which are part of study direction management and quality assurance process.

Recognition of study results achieved in previous education is regulated by the “Regulation of the Recognition of Education and Competencies” (mentioned in SAR page 27 and available on SSE Riga e-learning platform)

Students’ admission procedures, as well as recognition of the study period, professional experience, and the previously acquired formal and non-formal education, correspond with all national requirements.

Academic integrity is said to be one of the core values at SSE Riga. Faculty, staff, and students approved during the discussions that they are expected to adhere to high ethical standards. The main documents regulating issues related to academic integrity are student agreements and the SSE Riga EMBA Internal Rules which cover issues related to various types of cheating, plagiarism, academic dishonesty, freeriding and misuse of online resources, violations of published policies, rules, and regulations.

All study assignments are checked for plagiarism using the Turnitin originality check. For Executive Master Thesis, students have access to the Turnitin software for an Originality Check a week before the submission deadline.

SSE Riga Disciplinary Committee which is chaired by the Rector and includes members representing faculty and students is a place where violations of academic integrity are discussed, and decisions made.

It is evident that the identification of plagiarism via appropriate tools (Turnitin) is compulsory, for all study papers and final thesis, SSE Riga uses plagiarism detection tools which are effective and has developed the internal culture with high ethics, and the stakeholders are aware of the tools and mechanisms.

The information published on the website of the SSE Riga regarding the EMBA study programme of the study direction complies with the information available in the official registers. It provides important information for the candidates and the students and is published in English. Since for Riga English is the only language in which the study programmes are implemented, this complies with the requirements.

## **Conclusions. Strengths and weaknesses**

Study direction 'Management, administration and real estate management' has clearly defined attainable aim, which perfectly suites the SSE Riga mission and vision, and it is well managed.

Strengths:

1. Very good image and impact on society in line with SSE Riga mission and vision.
2. FREE concept of overarching educational aims contribution to the development of graduates as business leaders.
3. Applicant selection process which ensures high quality and demanding students and helps to create 'value loops'.
4. Competitive portfolio of executive education related to the study division under assessment.
5. Being bound by the licence agreement with Stockholm School of Economics is creating preconditions to high quality of the education (e.g. quarterly reporting; following EQUIS standards)

Weaknesses:

1. Being bound by the licence agreement with Stockholm School of Economics in line with creating preconditions to high quality of the education also brings some difficulties to align with Latvian legislation (e.g. standards of professional qualifications; annual self-assessments).
2. FREE concept seems not to be enough promoted among the students.

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

### **Analysis**

SSE Riga has established Study Quality Assurance Policy (SAR page 17 and available on the SSE Riga e-learning platform using the assigned access account) which was approved on the 2nd of July, 2018. SSE Riga Study Quality Assurance Policy is based on the EQUIS Standards and Criteria. It covers objectives, strategies, tasks and principles of internal study quality assurance; and evaluation of the performance of academic staff. The document was not publicly available at the time of experts' on-site visit (November 9th and 11th, 2020).

SSE Riga Study Quality Assurance Policy does not name the ESG standard as the one, which requires special attention. However, SSE Riga Study Quality Assurance Policy was developed following the EQUIS Standards and Criteria for International Business Schools (EFMD), which is aligned with ESG. Moreover, SSE Riga Study Quality Assurance Policy demonstrates the implementation of all ESG standard requirements as it aims to provide professional, high-quality, science-based and internationally recognised studies by preparing qualified, responsible professionals for the labour market capable of driving economic growth in the region; involve students in the improvement of the study process; to maintain feedback with industry and employer organisations, graduates, external experts to ensure that the results achieved in the study process correspond to the latest trends in the labour market.

SSE Riga is the small higher education institution which can ensure flexible and fast internal communication between staff, faculty, students and other stakeholders; thus, its quality assurance system is a simplified one. SSE Riga quality management system implies adherence to the principles of academic integrity in the conduct of students and SSE Riga staff and faculty, which includes objectivity, responsibility, mutual respect and trust, and promotes the quality and prestige of education and science. SSE Riga the quality management system comprises such documents as SSE Riga Study Quality Assurance Policy, Constitution, Bylaws of Senate, Bylaws of the Constitutional Assembly, Bylaws of Self-governance Body of Students, Regulations regarding academic positions, Recognition of the Study Results Achieved in Previous Education, Bylaws of Academic Arbitration, Disciplinary Regulations, Admission Regulations for Executive MBA. This list of documents proves that SSE Riga the quality management system contains all compulsory attributes of higher education institution according to European and Latvian regulations. Moreover, during the onsite-visit experts got evidence that those documents are employed.

A strategy of SSE Riga coded learning outcomes of the study direction under the acronym of FREE. SSE Riga Constitution ensures academic freedom for faculty and students. All academic staff members have a right to decide on the content of their course. During the onsite-visit academic staff told that recently they developed a harmonised evaluation system which will be applied by every module of the programme. It is a logical change, as learning outcomes are distributed among all the modules; thus, evaluation system also has to be harmonised.

SSE Riga uses students and graduates survey for the review of the Executive MBA programme. At the end of each course, students fill the surveys about the content and culture. Survey results are discussed with academic staff before the start of next academic year; and if needed, corrections are made. After that, employers are asked to comment updated programme and give feedback about made changes. However, students and graduated do not get back feedback about made changes (e.g. there is no study programme report accessible to students); Students claim that some academic staff representatives provide late feedback about evaluations of the tasks. Besides, SSE Riga Annual activity reports are not available for society. So, it is clear that feedback to students and employers process has to be improved.

Study direction relevant programme information SSE Riga collects regularly. The institution collects students' demographic data during the students' enrolment stage; all study process information is collected and kept in LAIS system. Alumni database provides Alumni progress data. Rector reports quarterly to the Stockholm School of Economics about the achievement of activity indicators.

### **Conclusions. Strengths and weaknesses**

SSE Riga has an established Quality management system; however, quality management policy isn't publicly available. SSE Riga Quality Management System policy does not name the ESG standard as the one, but it was developed in accordance with the EQUIS Standards and Criteria for International Business Schools (EFMD), which is aligned with ESG. SSE Riga quality management system ensures continuous improvement, development, and efficient performance.

#### **Strengths**

1. SSE Riga is the small higher education institution which can ensure flexible and fast internal communication between staff, faculty, students and other stakeholders.

#### **Weaknesses**

1. Quality management policy is not publicly available
2. Annual activity reports are not publicly available
3. Feedback to students and social partners is not developed.

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

#### **Analysis**

Financial resources required for the implementation of the study direction and the relevant study programme mainly comes from tuition fees. In total, approximately 450 students are enrolled at SSE Riga. For 2019, the tuition fee charged for the Bachelor programme is EUR 6 250/year (with a tuition fee waiver of EUR 2 350 for Baltic students, hence reducing the fee paid to EUR 3 900). The EMBA tuition fee is EUR 27 000 (if paid in instalments, EUR 29 000) for the entire program (SAR page 29). Part of the proceeds from the EMBA program is used to subsidize the Bachelor programme. Therefore, it infers that the main part of financial income for SSE Riga comes from students themselves. SSE Riga financial year is the calendar year (as indicted in SAR page 39) which also assumes the active role of the Alumni Association in generating funds for scholarships (mainly for bachelor programme).

There is a system for financing different projects, scientific research where SSE Riga takes part, for example, Nocca (financed by Interreg Central Baltic program), Nordplus (financing non-partner

specific), Future Leadership Academy program (support from the Swedish Institute through the Swedish Embassy in Riga) (Quarterly Report on SSE Riga Operations, May 2019, page 12). For external funding, a scientific institute which is a unit within the SSE Riga is established.

The study quality assurance policy of SSE Riga states that for observing the basic principles of SSE internal quality there have been provided and maintained state-of-the-art facilities, advanced infrastructure, and accessible study environment. All students have access to the library's collection, databases, and two reading rooms. Students and academic staff expressed their satisfaction with facilities during the on-site visit.

The SSE Riga Library is an academic library with the aim to build a high-quality collection for higher education and research in relevant fields. The library can be used by faculty, students, and external users. According to the SSE Riga report (page 42), at the moment, the library holds approximately 29 980 books and other materials (printed and electronic), all of are necessary for the implementation of the study process and to support the curriculum (business, economics, management, marketing, accounting, organization, finance, business law, statistics, computing, and related fields with an emphasis on economics, entrepreneurship, finance, sustainable business, and ethics) as indicated on the library website. In terms of course literature, the Library supports the SSE Riga students with individual copies of textbooks and other core course-related material. The study course material collection is available only to SSE Riga students. The Library assists students in searching for study materials. The collection consists also of working papers, research papers, TeliaSonera Institute Discussion Papers, the Baltic Journal of Economics, reports written within EU-projects, and other SSE Riga and/or BICEPS publications, etc. These publications are available in printed copies as well as electronically through the Library's catalogue/website.

The Library offers access to two types of databases: Journal databases and Databases with economic, financial, business, and statistical data, made in close cooperation with the SSE Riga faculty available for all SSE Riga students by authenticating with their databases profiles. The journal database covers the most relevant journals in the field. Quoting the Library Overall policy: "priority is given to quality, not quantity when it comes to journal databases." Desired journal databases include JSTOR and ScienceDirect - not entire databases but the sub-databases within relevant fields (library website).

To ensure that library collection is relevant to the study programme curriculum, recommendations from faculty and students are taken into account. For example, if a student is in need of a book that has not been provided yet by the library, or a teaching staff wants to start teaching from new books, the library has the resources and access to make an order, all needed materials can be ordered. The system for the acquisition of full sets of textbooks (around 130 copies) is budgeted and coordinated with the SSE Riga academic leadership. During the on-site visit, experts got evidence that the library resources are at high standards.

It is evident that a system and procedures for the improvement and purchase of the material, technical, methodological, and informative provision, is in place (submitted comparison of the library's three-year budget). It's important to mention the SSE Riga's ability to quickly adapt and promptly respond to non-standard situations, based on the current provision - supplementing the environment with space for remote video lectures with sound insulation and other much-needed equipment.

As it was stated during the visit by management and confirmed by faculty members, the SSE Riga procedure for attracting highly skilled teaching staff for the study direction and EMBA programme is based on the prestige of the school and 'value loops' - 'high-quality students enable to attract high-quality professors'. Programs are adequately staffed, managed, and administered. Faculty are granted flexible working hours for teaching staff as stipulated in the Internal Work Regulations. The academic and research workload of the teaching staff is set in the work contract and it is specific for each faculty member. The Research/teaching workload is well balanced. The normal research workload for a faculty member is 50%. Upward deviations from the 50% include faculty

with extensive research funding and hence a reduced teaching load. All faculty members met during the visit appeared to be satisfied with the workload balance.

SSE Riga academic staff's activity reports (available on the SSE Riga e-learning platform) and interviews demonstrate that SSE Riga Faculty members regularly attend academic conferences and workshops in their specialism to share expertise and form partnerships resulting in new research and projects bringing added value to study.

The level of teaching staff incoming mobility is very high, however, mainly related to the SSE Sweden group. This mobility brings significant added value to the implementation of the study process and the study quality. Outgoing mobility is not so active, but it exists.

Student well-being, as captured by students, is administered in surveys and through mandatory academic advising. As the number of students in the institution is relatively small, it is possible to have better communication between the student and administration, providing extra feedback, as well as general communication and problem-solving. A more individual approach with students is possible and is in place.

For those students from EU countries that are in need of financial support, there is an established Latvian state student loan program in cooperation with SEB Bank. In addition, there are some scholarships and stipends – needs-based as well as merit-based. As mentioned previously the SSE Riga Alumni Association plays an active role in generating funds for scholarships, however mainly for the bachelor programme.

## **Conclusions. Strengths and weaknesses**

SSE Riga has developed a successful system to detect financial resources for the implementation of the study direction and the relevant study programme, that has resulted in high quality infrastructure resources, the material and technical provision. SSE Riga is very good at attracting highly skilled teaching staff. SSE Riga provides good student support mainly because of being small and good communication between staff and students.

Strengths:

1. Highly qualified teaching staff engaged in high quality research.
2. Well balanced research/teaching workload of academic staff.
3. High quality infrastructure and library resources.

Weaknesses: not identified.

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

### **Analysis**

According to the SSE Riga mission statement, the School should “contribute to the economic, social, and democratic development of the region” (SAR page 19). The mission statement has in comparison to most business schools’ mission statements, a considerably broader scope, going beyond simply contributing to the development of business and the business environment. Research is considered a key activity, as important as teaching to reach the goals connected to the mission statement.

The directions of scientific research are developed in line with the FREE acronym. According to SAR (page 10), the main development priority for research initiatives at SSE Riga is “to continue driving world-class academic and policy research in-house, within the FREE network and partnering with other leading institutions”.

SSE Riga conducts research in four fields: economics, finance, business administration (including ethics and sustainability), and English language with a focus on applied linguistics. The fields are relevant to the study field and the relevant industry. Within each of the research fields covered are certain areas with a particular focus and where distinctive expertise develops.



The directions of scientific research in the study direction comply with the development aims of SSE Riga, they are relevant to the study direction, industry, and society.

According to SAR, SSE Riga promotes the relevance of the research through a range of activities that bring researchers into direct contact with practitioners and policymakers. The prime example is an active research agenda on the shadow economy, its measurement and causes, which started with the observation that the shadow economy is, by EU standards, large in the Baltic states. The school also conducts research on demographic issues, which is also an urgent issue in Latvian society and very much on the policy agenda.

According to ESG standards, the school should regularly produce original contributions to knowledge that are effectively disseminated. The school should demonstrably make an impact on one or more constituencies that are strategically important for the successful development of the school, academic peers, management professionals, students, etc. SAR, staff activity reports and interviews give evidence to the fact that local and visiting academic staff on the EMBA programme carry out scientific research.

Mechanisms for the involvement of the teaching staff are set within job contracts. The normal research workload for a faculty member is 50%. Upward deviations from the 50% include faculty with extensive research funding and hence a reduced teaching load (SAR page 51). Faculty members decide on which research areas to focus on. Research is required for promotion. Faculty are assessed on the basis of academic publications, participation in academic conferences, contributions to the policy debate and the debate on business practice. In addition, international cooperation and student involvement in the research process are taken into account.

In the period from 2015 till 2019, SSE Riga faculty members have published in some of the leading peer reviews academic journals (3-4 ABS ranked) in Finance, Economics, Management and Entrepreneurship fields, including Journal of Financial Economics, Review of Financial Studies, Review of Finance, Journal of Corporate Finance, Management Science, Strategic Entrepreneurship Journal, International Small Business Journal, Journal of Business Ethics, Journal of Comparative Economics, Economic Policy, Corporate Governance: an International Review as well as edited and co-edited book volumes published by Springer, Routledge, Edward Elgar. The highlights in terms of academic publications include 12 publications in the top 50 academic journals in economics, finance, business and management as identified by the Financial Times and influencing the FT rankings (Harvard Business Review, Human Resource Management, Journal of Business Ethics, Journal of Financial Economics, Management Science, Review of Financial Studies, Review of Finance, Strategic Entrepreneurship Journal) During the given period (2013-2019) in total 38 publications by SSE Riga faculty members involved in the EMBA programme have been listed in the Scopus database, which lists academic peer-reviewed publications (journals) and 17 publications in the EBSCO database (SAR page 50, academic staff CVs).

SSE Riga faculty members serve as editors of international academic journals. Many core faculty members act as reviewers for international academic journals. The School publishes the Baltic Journal of Economics together with the Baltic International Centre of Economic Policy Studies and in cooperation with Taylor&Francis Routledge.

Research inputs are not coming from visiting staff members only. Local staff members are active in research also. However, the interviews showed that some of the cases used in the courses were outdated or not very relevant for the students' who mostly work for small and medium-size companies.

SSE Riga faculty and visiting lecturers' involvement in applied research is demonstrated through reports for the OECD, the European Commission, Eurofound, industry associations, NGOs, and so on. For example, SSE Riga professor Arnis Sauka and visiting professor Tālis Putniņš, two internationally acknowledged scholars in their fields, are co-authors of the Shadow Economy Index for the Baltic

Countries. Arnis Sauka is also the author of the annual FICIL Sentiment Index (with the Foreign Investors Council in Latvia, since 2015) and author of the annual study on the Shadow Economy in the Construction Industry in Latvia (with the Partnership of Latvian Construction Entrepreneurs, since 2015) (SAR page 47).

SAR, staff activity reports and interviews demonstrate that SSE Riga Faculty members regularly attend academic conferences and workshops in their specialism to share expertise and form partnerships resulting in new research and projects bringing added value to study.

SSE Riga encourages the faculty members to participate in extramural practice-oriented activities, such as serving in the Latvian Fiscal Discipline Council, working together with the FICIL (the Foreign Investors Council in Latvia) in assessing the Latvian business climate or estimating the social cost of migraine in the Baltic states. However, the school emphasizes that research should be free and independent so that faculty members decide which areas to focus on. The school is aware of the fact that research profile can, to a limited extent, be managed through faculty recruitment.

To further attract external funding, SSE Riga has established a scientific institute which is a unit within the School. Several SSE Riga faculty members are also affiliated with the Baltic International Centre for Economic Policy Studies (BICEPS, [www.biceps.org](http://www.biceps.org)). BICEPS is an independent research institute located at SSE Riga. It forms part of the network of research institutes led by the Stockholm Institute of Transition Economics at SSE Stockholm

In the future SSE Riga is planning to strengthen the involvement of the faculty in scientific research, which will be demonstrated by even larger number of publications in the topic journals in the corresponding field. To encourage international cooperation and exposure, SSE Riga operates a generous policy in terms of travel grants for conference and seminar presentations.

The aim of the study programme is to provide students with theoretical and practical knowledge as well as research skills providing thereby providing them with an opportunity to explore a wide scope of management challenges. The research skills are applied most specifically in the preparation of a Master's Thesis. During the second study, year all EMBA students have to write an Executive Master's Thesis which is a required part of the academic criteria for completion of the EMBA programme. The purpose of the Thesis is to demonstrate that the student has mastered the usage of analytical tools taught in the programme, and can successfully apply them to diagnosing and solving business management problems. A standard Thesis uses a case study approach and is based on one company or industry. The Thesis may be written either individually, or in teams of two students (approximately 80% of cases). The Thesis is a combination of applied and academic research. A purely descriptive Thesis is not accepted. The outcomes of student research are published on the Riga website, thus are freely accessible to anyone.

SAR, staff activity reports and interviews give evidence to the fact despite its small size SSE Riga possesses strong research potential. Virtually all core faculty perform research. Faculty research largely corresponds to the faculty teaching profile and is integrated into the study courses. Research output is good and has become increasingly international during the period. Increased research potential also translates into increased external research funding through grants and projects.

As innovative solutions in the study process, SAR (page 52 and 53) mentions 30% of the curriculum delivered via case studies, learning teams and digital learning which include digital learning platforms (e.g. Coursera, edX, HBSOnline) after each module. During the visit students and EMBA programme graduates evaluated the study process as sufficiently innovative.

## **Conclusions. Strengths and weaknesses**

The scientific research at SSE Riga comply with the development aims of the institution. The aims are relevant to the study field and the business school's scope of activity. The research is improved in a target-oriented manner. The students of the study direction are involved in scientific research. The institution has also developed mechanisms to promote the involvement of the students in scientific research by improving EMBA thesis processes. They are well-functioning and efficient.

Strengths:

1. The relation between scientific research in the study field and the study process has been well-defined and well-ensured, they are also efficient.
2. Scientific research and the outcomes thereof are well integrated in the study process in the study programmes of all levels.
3. There is lively international cooperation in the field of scientific research within the study field.
4. Mechanisms for the involvement of the teaching staff in scientific research are well-functioning and efficient.
5. Mechanisms to promote the involvement of the students in scientific research by improving EMBA thesis processes are well-functioning and efficient.

Weaknesses:

1. Because of the small size of the institutions most of the research takes place outside the institution and it is not possible to carry out large-scale research programs within the institution.

## **5. Cooperation and Internationalisation**

### **Analysis**

Due to many specific features (founders, elite EMBA study programme with a small number of students, studies only in English, etc.), SSE Riga differs from other Latvian higher education institutions in many ways, including in the criterion Cooperation and Internationalisation which are analysed and/or listed in this section.

In Appendix 8 of SAR 75 cooperation agreements have been shown, which is an impressive number for a university of this size. There are 43 Erasmus + agreements, but the opportunities offered by the Erasmus + and listed in Appendix 8 of SAR (1-43) are used mainly in the bachelor programme realized by SSE but not included in this accreditation visit. Several cooperation agreements have been concluded with universities in different countries, but in fact, the closest international cooperation is with the SSE Stockholm and SSE Russia: both teacher exchanges and joint study courses and other cooperation. This cooperation, mainly jointly delivered and shared modules were highly appreciated by the students and alumni during the discussions.

During a random review of the list of cooperation partners (Appendix 8 of SAR), at least one higher education institution, which has not existed for some 5 years, was noticed. There are several agreements on the lease of sports facilities (Appendix 8 of SAR, pages 64-68), but they do not apply to the EMBA study program under evaluation.

SSE Riga has developed a system and procedures for the attraction of the teaching staff from abroad, moreover, 70-80% of the teaching staff of the EMBA programme is foreign lecturers (SAR page 54). Students and graduates highly appreciated the professionalism of foreign teaching staff, thus it is evident that the system is efficient and contributes to the quality of the study process.

The long-term / stable involvement of the SSE Riga teaching staff in the different kind of research and knowledge dissemination processes in Latvia and internationally and in activities of various organizations is especially noteworthy: participation in the Latvian Fiscal Discipline Council, working together with the FICIL (the Foreign Investors Council in Latvia) in assessing the Latvian business climate or estimating the social cost of migraine in the Baltic states. Several SSE Riga faculty members are also affiliated with the Baltic International Centre for Economic Policy Studies (BICEPS, [www.biceps.org](http://www.biceps.org)). BICEPS is an independent research institute located at SSE Riga. It forms part of the network of research institutes led by the Stockholm Institute of Transition Economics at SSE

Stockholm.

Many discussion events with the involvement of SSE Riga faculty take place regularly, most of them are open to the general public and free of charge. In addition to this, SSE Riga frequently hosts public lectures and conferences with prominent local and international speakers. Information regarding different events open for the general public is regularly posted in the “News” section of the SSE Riga homepage (<https://www.sseriga.edu/news-and-events/news>).

From a long-term scientific and research perspective, the “Memorandum of understanding on establishing the initiative group” concluded with the University of Latvia and the “Cooperation agreement on interuniversity doctoral study programme” with RISEBA are evaluated as very positive (Appendix 8 of SAR).

SSE Riga has a strong alumni club, which is highly valued by its members, now mainly as an opportunity for networking. This cooperation could also be used more actively for brainstorming on improvements in the study process and involve, for example, the development of new and topical case studies based on Latvian practice.

Given both the small size of the university and the elite orientation and small groups of the EMBA study program, it is understandable that no detailed procedure has been developed for involving students and teaching staff, relying more on disseminating information in public, both through marketing campaigns and indirectly: through graduates, various research and social activities, which are highly developed at the university.

A system for the provision of the internship is related to the study trip to three South-Asian countries (Singapore, Malaysia and Indonesia). It is an integral part of the study process – a kind of practice/internship and at the same time the opportunity for students to gain new knowledge, experience and contacts. As in the EMBA programme with students who are full-time managers in organizations, there are no traineeships of the “traditional” kind when students go on a multi-week internship in a company with which the university has a cooperation agreement on the provision of thematic internships. During the assessment visit, programme graduates highly evaluated the experience gained during the South-Asian trip. Moreover, it serves as a selling point for potential students and applicants. Thus, it could be concluded that the type of internship realized by SSE Riga is very relevant for a study programme targeted at professionals with managerial work experience of at least 5 years.

No joint study programmes are run, and none are planned.

## **Conclusions. Strengths and weaknesses**

SSE Riga cooperates with the institutions from Latvia and abroad and this cooperation contributes to the achievement of the aims and learning outcomes of the study programme. The cooperation partners are generally selected in view of the specific features of the study direction. The system and procedures for the attraction of the teaching staff from abroad is developed, it is efficient and contribute to the quality of the study process.

Strengths:

1. Cooperation within the universities of the SSE Group positively contributing to diversity and quality of study process.
2. The strong and active Alumni club. Alumni club should be used more actively to gather information about possible improvements in the study process and to cooperate in the development of new and topical Latvian business cases.

Weaknesses:

1. The detailed list of cooperation partners include some with currently non-existing organisations. It needs to be regularly updated and reviewed, except for universities or other organizations with which there is no real cooperation or even no longer exist.

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

### **Analysis**

SSE Riga has analysed the recommendations of the previous accreditation and their implementation (SAR pages 56-57). Four out of six recommendations are fully implemented, however, two in view of the specific features of the study programme are only partly implemented.

In line with the recommendation, the Thesis Memorandum and Thesis Template and writing guide is developed (available on SSE Riga internal platform). These documents are updated and improved every year. Remote access to electronic databases is expanded (SSE Riga Library website).

A range of activities related to the dissemination of the research results are implemented. These include the Shadow Economy index, public discussions hosted by SSE Riga, bringing EMBA students' Master Thesis to public attention, etc. (SAR page 56).

In line with the recommendation to increase the motivation of the academic staff to publish in internationally cited editions, SSE Riga has contributed to developing faculty research potential by giving plenty of time for resident academic staff for research - the normal research workload for a faculty member is 50%. This has resulted in more than 130 publications, 60 case studies and reports, 70 books and book chapters. This includes 12 publications in the top 50 academic journals in economics, finance, business, and management as identified by the Financial Times (SAR page 51).

Recommendation related to identifying additional outsource funding to provide scholarships and budgeted places to develop the accessibility of studies is not currently implemented. This is justified by the fact that the EMBA programme is designed for managers and executives who are seen as a rather solvent audience, potential sources of funding do not see the EMBA as a priority. Currently, though there is an internal discussion of looking for opportunities for potential study fee discount to selected candidates, representing, for instance, nongovernmental organisations.

Recommendation related to developing participation in Erasmus is not implemented since the EMBA programme is not structured to accommodate Erasmus students. However international exposure of the students is ensured through EMBA exchange (elective modules) within the SSE network of EMBA programmes (Sweden, Russia and Riga) and students met during the visit expressed their satisfaction with these activities.

### **Conclusions. Strengths and weaknesses**

SSE Riga has analysed the recommendations and implemented the ones which are in line with the specific features of the study programme. It is understandable that the potential sources of funding do not see programme like EMBA as a priority, considering potential study fee discounts for candidates representing non-governmental organisations is good initiative.

Strengths:

1. Most of the previous accreditation recommendations were implemented after the accreditation process and it gave a visible progress for study process development.

Weaknesses: not identified.

## **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:** Continuous improvement and quality assurance is ensured by quarterly quality reports to SSE Stockholm. Reports are presented according to EQUIS criteria and include continuous improvement actions. The latest Report was presented to the experts during the visit.

- 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:** Quality policy and procedures exist, it is available on SSE Riga administrative E-learning system (<https://elearning.sseriga.edu/admin/course/view.php?id=392> ).

Detailed analysis of all quality documents is presented in part 1.2. of experts joint opinion report.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** Quarterly reports submitted to SSE Stockholm according to EQUIS requirements. The actual Report was presented to the experts during the visit.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** Criteria are described in study course descriptions (SAR Appendix No 16) and available on SSE Riga e-learning system, which was demonstrated to the experts during the visit.

- 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:** Faculty Activity Report is completed and assessed annually. The report template is available on SSE Riga administrative e-learning system

(<https://elearning.sseriga.edu/admin/course/view.php?id=392>). The assessment process was explained during the visit and approved by the representatives of academic staff.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** Students' surveys, graduate feedback, etc. information is collected by SSE Riga - evidence was gained during discussions with students and graduates.

- 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:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** Continuous improvement is part of Quality Assurance Policy

- 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:** Very high number of cooperation agreements with organisations from Latvia and abroad - in the Appendix 8 of SAR 75 cooperation agreements are listed. During the visit and discussions evidence was gained that these cooperation's ensures the achievement of the aims of the study direction.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** According to the experts joint opinion analysis presented in part 1.4, SSE Riga level of scientific research activities is high.

- 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:** Four recommendations are implemented. Detailed analysis of the implementation of the recommendations of previous accreditations is provided in Chapter 6 of this Report.

## 8. Recommendations for the Study Field

### Short-term recommendations

- |   |
|---|
| 1. To share publicly quality management policy and annual activity reports. |
| 2. To improve feedback to students and social partners process.             |

### Long-term recommendations

- |  |
|--|
| 1. Review the list of cooperation agreements and keep the ones with which cooperation is active and useful - focus on quality of cooperation not quantity of agreements. |
| 2. To select cases and lecture materials near to the industries which are represented by the students.   |
| 3. Make FREE concept widely spread among students.   |
| 4. Develop a system which promotes large-scale research programs within the institution.   |

## II. "Business Management" ASSESSMENT

### II. "Business Management" ASSESSMENT

#### 1. Indicators Describing the Study Programme

##### Analysis

The professional master study programme 'Business Management' (study programme) envisages the acquisition of professional Master's degree in business administration (EMBA), and professional qualification 'manager of enterprises and institutions' (as it is indicated in the application). Study programme code according to the Classification of Latvian Education is 47345.

The name of the study programme and the degree are logically interrelated, however there is confusion related to the professional qualification.

The application states the acquisition of professional qualification 'manager of enterprises and institutions/ uzņēmumu un iestāžu vadītājs', however this is an old (non-existing anymore) professional qualification. When this was indicated during the visit and, the school provided the information that 'according to the information available in the Latvian qualification database until 2020, the title of the qualification is "Managing Director and Company Manager". Moreover, the comparison with professional standard is presented in the Appendix No 13 is with the new, existing standard "Company manager / Organizācijas vadītājs" ( link: <https://registri.visc.gov.lv/profizglitiba/dokumenti/standarti/2017/PS-114.pdf>). Moreover, the diploma

sample provided in the Appendix 17 states that qualification awarded is 'manager of enterprises and institutions/ uzņēmumu un iestāžu vadītājs'. When asked to change to the new qualification, no changes were made.

To sum, the experts group is not able to assess the relevance of the professional qualification to be awarded, because the information provided in the document and the clarification provided by SSE Riga contain three different qualification names.

The study programme is held in English language. The duration of the study programme is 2 years, amount of credit points is 80. It is stated that it is part-time time study programme.

This does not comply with the Law on Higher Education Institutions Chapter 1 paragraph 9, which state that "part-time studies - a type of studies which corresponds to less than 40 credit points per academic year"

Aim of the study programme is to 'build management and administrative capabilities of current and future business leaders, resulting in a contribution to the economic, social and democratic development of the region'. It is well related to the study programme tasks and are logically linked with the name and degree.

Study programme admission requirements are corresponding to master programme in management field and are in line with Articles 46 and 47 of the Law on Higher Education Institutions and Regulation of the Cabinet of Ministers No. 846 of October 10, 2006 "Regulations Regarding the Requirements, Criteria and Procedures for Admission to Study Programmes".

Study programme Intended learning outcomes, as evident from the programme mapping, are formulated as knowledge, skills and competences which are in line with Latvian and European qualification framework (LQF and EQF) Level 7 (<https://www.latvijaskvalifikacijas.lv/en/>).

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

The professional master study programme 'Business Management' name and the degree to be acquired, the aim, task, and admission requirements are interrelated and can be regarded as programme strengths.

Strengths:

1. Admission requirements are well designed and ensure high quality of students in the programme.

Weaknesses:

1. Professional qualification to be awarded is not clear yet and must be clarified.
2. Programme duration and its amount in credit point correspond to full time study form, not part time as it is indicated in programme parameters.

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

### **Analysis**

The goal of the study programme is to build management and administrative capabilities of current and future business leaders, resulting in a contribution to the economic, social, and democratic development of the region. The task of the study programme is to educate today's leaders by providing quality education relevant for addressing current challenges and exploring business development opportunities; to develop managers able to lead successfully in business and the public sector. Learning outcomes of the study programme are formulated as knowledge (2 results), skills (3 results), and competences (2 results). In total, the programme has seven learning outcomes (SAR, p. 60).

Programme envisaged acquisition of the professional qualification and compliance with the standard



Company manager (Organizāciju vadītājs) is presented (Appendix 13\_Conformity of the qualification obtained in the study programme with the profession standard .pdf). From this Appendix, it is evident that the study programme covers all the knowledge areas of this professional standard.

Learning outcomes of the programme are in line with FREE, the educational mission of the Stockholm School of Economics group of educational institutions. It is aligned with the needs of society. The needs of the society and scientific trends are covered via the high-level academic research results of the academic staff, as well as via the professional experience of advanced practitioners who participate in the study process. The learning outcomes are relevant to the programme and are in line with the Latvian and European qualification framework (LQF and EQF) Level 7. Appendix 14 demonstrates the compliance of study courses with the learning outcomes, and it is reflected in the descriptions of the study courses. Descriptions of study courses provide all the necessary information and are of good quality. Also, students are provided with a very convenient and informative master thesis template and writing guide.

There is an established SSE Riga grading scheme (from 0 to 200 points) which is used for grading of all learning results; however, evaluation methods differ and comply with the study results of the course. Course descriptions demonstrate that academic staff use student-centred learning and teaching methods. Almost all the courses use case analysis, and even students are thought about how to do case research. Some courses use simulations (e.g., Change Master, Sustainable Development, Marketing Management, Corporate Governance) and other interactive exercises (e.g., C-Level Presentation, Marketing Management).

There is an established process for the review of the Executive MBA programme. At the end of each course, students fill the surveys about the content and culture. Also, graduates fill the survey straight after the graduation of the programme. Administration analyses the collected survey results, discusses them with academic staff, and make needed changes at the end of each summer or beginning of autumn. During the on-site visit, it was proved that the surveys' results are taken into account and used for the programme improvement. Alumni of the previous years claimed that some academic staff members were using outdated cases. They communicated this claim via the survey after graduation; however, they did not know what the reaction of the administration was. In contrast, the recent graduates emphasised, that lecturers use the material relevant to nowadays world. Still, recent graduates wished studies material to comply with the industries in which students work.

All study programme students take part in outgoing mobility as it is a compulsory part of the programme – an internship “Study Tour – Globalisation”. During this internship, students visit three different countries of South East Asia, where they meet local experts and businesspeople. The current cohort visit to South East Asia is postponed because of Coronavirus disease (COVID-19).

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

The content of EMBA programme “Business Management” comply with the SSE Riga mission and objectives of the programme. It is implemented by ensuring the student-centred approach via proper learning and evaluation methods.

#### **Strengths**

1. Administration improves programme according to the suggestions/claims of the students.
2. All students take part in outgoing mobility as it is a compulsory part of the programme – an internship “Study Tour – Globalization”

Weakness: not identified

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

#### **Analysis**

The study provision of the study programme is the same as for the study direction (see experts joint opinion chapter 3). The SSE Riga library is accessible for EMBA study programme students and teaching staff. Students and study programme graduates expressed satisfaction with the availability of study materials and resources. As it was evident during the visit, library supports the SSE Riga students with individual copies of textbooks and other core course related material. The Library assists in acquiring course materials and materials necessary for Master Thesis. Students also have access to two types of databases: Journal databases and Databases with economic, financial, business and statistical data, made in close cooperation with the SSE Riga faculty available for all SSE Riga students by authenticating with their databases profiles.

Rooms where EMBA study programme lectures take place are well equipped, they have different design of tables which can be easily transformed for team activities and are very convenient for discussions.

SSE Riga has made it a top priority to provide study, informative, material and also technical support, which makes the study process more efficient and ensures higher quality.

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

SSE Riga study provision, informative provision, including library, material and technical provision, and financial provision comply with the features and the conditions for the implementation of the EMBA study programme, 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.

Strengths:

1. Very good library with all the necessary study resources, also providing support for students.
2. Good infrastructure and well-equipped lecture rooms applicable for teamwork activities.

Weaknesses: Not identified.

## **4. Teaching Staff**

### **Analysis**

The study programme at SSE Riga is conducted in English by an international faculty including professors from leading business schools (for example, Ross Business School at the University of Michigan, Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, Central European University), as well as experienced business practitioners from Sweden, Finland, the UK, the USA, Canada, the Baltics and elsewhere. Most of the study programme local and visiting faculty are teaching staff from abroad. Faculty diversity is emphasized. SSE Riga continues to maintain an international instructor body throughout the years. During the period 2013 – 2019, on average 20-30% of faculty consisted of Latvian nationals, while the remaining 70-80% were foreign teaching staff (SAR page 73-74).

The study programme is open to candidates from all over the world, so lecturers come from diverse academic and professional backgrounds to provide state-of-the-art education in business and economics. Altogether, 24 visiting and local faculty members were involved in conducting study programme courses during the academic year 2018/2019. Since 2013, this number has slightly increased reflecting both the fact that the SSE Riga permanent faculty has increased during the period and that in recent years new learning modules and courses have been added to the study programme (such as Big Data Analysis and Excel, C-Level Presentation, Supply Chain and Operations), involving new lecturers and academics (SAR page 46)..

Although not covered by EQUIS standards SSE aims to follow these standards. The EQUIS standards 4 and 5 stipulate that the Employment process for permanently employed staff is regulated by the Internal Regulations “Regarding the Academic Positions of Rīgas Ekonomikas augstskola-Stockholm School of Economics in Riga”. These stipulate the terms/criteria for selection and taking academic positions, and qualification requirements, tasks and terms of election at SSE Riga. Furthermore, as

described in SAR page 37, SSE Riga bylaws are developed to ensure implementation of the Law on Higher Education, the Labour Law, the Law “Par Rīgas Ekonomikas augstskolu” (<https://likumi.lv/ta/id/37448-par-rigas-ekonomikas-augstskolu> ) , the Law on Scientific Activity, Order No.214 of the Cabinet of Ministers “On Approval of the Constitution of “Rīgas Ekonomikas augstskola-Stockholm School of Economics in Riga” as well as corresponding regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers (SAR page 37).

The academic staff consists of permanently employed staff and visiting staff. Visiting teaching staff are invited to conduct specific courses and/or lectures and are employed on term-based contracts. Visiting teaching staff must satisfy the same qualification requirements as permanently employed staff. During the assessment period the number of permanently employed staff has increased and visiting staff numbers have decreased. The school envisage maintaining this tendency and attracting even more staff on a permanent basis. Permanent staff members have a better feel for the needs of the University, while permanency also facilitates cooperation and exchange of views with colleagues from other departments in order to maintain an all-inclusive educational system.

SSE Riga strives to attract the most knowledgeable and recognized experts in their fields in order to comply with the FREE Educational mission (Face and science-minded, Reflective and self-aware, Empathetic and culturally literate, Entrepreneurial and responsible), as well as one of the three values of the SSE Riga community – Excellence. Potential candidates are sought by different means – through specific scientific networks, advertising (e.g., the Social Science Research Network, SSRN), through the SSE Riga Alumni network, recommendations from partner universities (mainly SSE Stockholm and SSE Russia), plus approaching individuals based on faculty contacts. The employment process is regulated by the Internal Regulations “On Academic Positions at Rīgas Ekonomikas augstskola-Stockholm School of Economics in Riga”, approved by the Senate on July 2, 2018, minutes No.3/2018. These regulate the terms/criteria for selection and taking academic positions, and qualification requirements, tasks and terms of election at SSE Riga. All positions are open and candidates are assessed by heads of department, the Rector and the Senate. Recruitment procedures vary as between permanently employed academic staff and visiting academic staff (SAR page 44).

The Faculty Activity Report (FAR) serves as the basis for faculty development and evaluates academic staff based on the EQUIS criteria, including educational activities, research and development goals. Data submitted are shared with SSE Stockholm and included in the reporting to the Board of the SSE Riga Foundation to ensure the quality of the academic staff and study content they provide. The report serves as a significant instrument for the development and implementation of the study process and also forms a basis for planning of the upcoming academic year Report (Template available on SSE Riga administrative e-learning platform <https://elearning.sseriga.edu/admin/course/view.php?id=392> ). The academic staff members do not find filling up the FAR as an unnecessary burden.

According to SAR (page 46) and as approved by faculty during the visit, the main motivation for teaching staff at SSE Riga is the opportunity to work in an international environment with highly motivated students. The School provides faculty with plenty of time for research. Faculty are granted flexible working hours as stipulated in the Internal Work Regulations. Faculty are encouraged to identify training courses that they might find relevant for their professional development – these courses could cover issues ranging from pedagogical training to training in certain skills related to their research.

The academic staff members have an opportunity to participate in the decision-making at SSE Riga. The Constitutional Assembly is the highest collegial representation, management and decision-making institution of SSE Riga in academic and research issues. The Constitutional Assembly consists of 60% academic personnel, 20% general personnel and 20% students (SAR page 13).

According to SAR research at SSE Riga impacts learning and study programme innovation in two ways: directly and indirectly. First to stress is the direct influence of research on teaching and

learning as faculty continually update content to reflect current research findings. In addition to providing input into re-development of existing courses, research also provides a basis for development of new courses. Research has also provided input for SSE Riga teaching cases. However, the interviews with graduates (who were in the meeting with employers and have graduated several years ago) showed that some of the cases used in the courses were outdated or not very relevant for the students' who mostly work for small and medium size companies. Still, it should be recognised that recent graduates (during another meeting) indicated that the cases are very relevant and up to date. This is an indication that SSE Riga management have identified the issue and it is already corrected.

Teaching methods used for the study programme including the following elements: case and field methods, learning teams and elements of digital learning.

There is limited teaching staff mobility related to the study programme. Main difficulties encountered with the mobility relate to the availability of academic staff members in the time slots required for the study programme. However, EMAB programme is delivered mainly by foreign faculty, therefore this is not a problem.

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

The qualification of the teaching staff members involved in the implementation of the study programme enables the achievement of the aims and learning outcomes of the study programme and the relevant study courses. Nearly all of the faculty members have PhD degree. The academic staff is involved in scientific research in the fields related to the content of the study programme both at national and international level. The obtained information is used in the study process. The collaboration between the teaching staff members is in place, it contributes to the improvement of the study modules and their correlation.

Strengths:

1. very high quality of the academic staff
2. High percentage of foreign lecturers in the study programme.

Weaknesses:

1. Teachers limited mobility, mainly because of the availability of teachers in the time slots required for the study programme.

## **5. Assessment of the Compliance of the Study Programme "Business Management"**

### **Requirements**

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Partially compliant

**Justification:** The sample diploma (Appendix 17) and study programme parameters indicate acquisition of professional qualification: Manager of Enterprises and Institution / uzņēmumu un iestāžu vadītājs. This qualification does not exist any more.  
The compliance with the professional standard (as presented in Appendix No 13) is performed with the standard Comapny manager / Organizācijas vadītājs (2.1.24; Level 7 LKI ).

SSE Riga confirmed that they have taken it into account and changes will be made in the following documents. According to the information available in the Latvian qualification database until 2020, the title of our qualification is "Managing Director and Company Manage / Rīkotājdirektors un uzņēmuma vadītājs".

However, this is even more confusing since this is the third option. To sum, the accreditation commission is not able to assess the relevance of the title of the professional qualification to be awarded, because the information provided in the document and the clarification provided by SSE Riga contain three different qualification names.

Experts` joint recommendations for the Higher Education Quality Commission to change the evaluation from "Good" to "Excellent" if SSE addresses the shortcoming related to the name of professional qualification till the moment the decision is taken.

- 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:** Letter confirming that students can continue the studies in Faculty of Economics of the University of Latvia (Appendix No 18 - scanned copy of the letter is attached, the quality of the document does not allow to identify number and date of the document).

- 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:** Minutes of the Management board meeting No V5/2018 provide in Appendix No 19.

- 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:** Study programme is delivered in English, for local teaching staff Latvian is a native language (as indicated in their CVs, Appendix No 5)

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** Certification from February 6, 2020, provided in Appendix No 20.

- 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:** Study agreement provide in Appendix No 22 include all the necessary provisions.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** Study course descriptions are prepared in English, which is language of study programme delivery, and also Latvian. They include all the necessary requirements indicated by the Law on Higher Education Institutions Section 56.1 part two.

- 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:** Conformity of the study programme with the profession standard for the 'Company manager' is provided in Appendix no 13. It is evident that the study programme content complies with this standard.

- 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:** Clarification document comparing study programme with the Professional Higher Education Standard indicate the compliance with this standard (see Annex No 12).

- 13 13. The joint study programmes comply with the requirements prescribed in Section 55, 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:** According to teaching staff CVs (presented in the Appendix No 5 Biographies of the teaching staff), all teaching staff members have at least one scientific publication or more than 5 year practical work experience. This is also evident from the Appendix No 7 'List of academic publications of the teaching staff'.

#### 15 P5 - Overall rating

**Assessment of compliance:** Partially compliant

**Justification:** The study programme is in compliance with all the parameters above, except there is unclarity related to the name of the professional standard. Moreover, the duration of the programme, which currently is 2 years (80 CP, in total and 40 CP per year,) is not in line with regulation for part-time studies.

### Requirements (R6-R8)

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** SSE Riga has excellent resource base (see analysis in Experts Joint Opinion Report part 1.3.)

- 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:** There are 3 professors, 1 associate professor, 1 assistant professor in the professor (SAR page 74). All academic staff members are highly qualified.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** The information provided in the study course descriptions (Appendix No 16) and the high quality of master thesis (available on SSE Riga website <https://www.sseriga.edu/student-research>) prove the relevance.

### Conclusions by specifying the strengths and weaknesses

The professional master study programme 'Business Management' name, the degree and the aim, task, and admission requirements are interrelated and can be regarded as programme strengths. The name of the professional qualification to be awarded is unclear (three different qualification names were presented to the experts).

Programme design and content of the study courses correspond to the industry requirements and latest trends. Strong material and technical resource base, very good library.

Strengths:

1. Well designed selection process and good students.
2. Highly professional teaching staff.
3. International nature and mobility incorporated in the programme, including Asia trip.

Weaknesses:

1. Programme duration, amount of credit points does not correspond to part-time programme requirements.
2. Three different professional qualifications appear in submitted documents and clarifications – it is

not clear which qualification will be awarded to the graduates in future, in 2021.

### **Evaluation of the study programme "Business Management"**

Evaluation of the study programme:

Good

### **6. Recommendations for the Study Programme "Business Management"**

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

1. Decide about the study from of duration to comply with the Law on Higher Education Institutions Chapter 1, paragraph 9. Experts` recommendation is to change the study programme study from to full-time studies. This will ease the attraction of non-European students as they will be able to get residence permit for studies.
2. Clarify the professional qualification to be a awarded in next graduation.

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

1. Since FREE concept is so important for SSE Riga and EMBA programme, communicate it better to the students.
2. To select cases and lecture materials near to the industries which are represented by the students.

## **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**

<b>Requirements</b>	<b>Requirement Evaluation</b>			<b>Comment</b>
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			Continuous improvement and quality assurance is ensured by quarterly quality reports to SSE Stockholm. Reports are presented according to EQUIS criteria and include continuous improvement actions. The latest Report was presented to the experts during the visit.



<b>Requirements</b>	<b>Requirement Evaluation</b>			<b>Comment</b>
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			Very high number of cooperation agreements with organisations from Latvia and abroad - in the Appendix 8 of SAR 75 cooperation agreements are listed. During the visit and discussions evidence was gained that these cooperation's ensures the achievement of the aims of the study direction.
R3 - Compliance of scientific research and artistic creation with the development level thereof (if applicable).	Fully compliant			According to the experts joint opinion analysis presented in part 1.4, SSE Riga level of scientific research activities is high.
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			Four recommendations are implemented. Detailed analysis of the implementation of the recommendations of previous accreditations is provided in Chapter 6 of this Report.

### **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	Business Management (47345)	Partially compliant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Good

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

Experts` joint recommendations for the Higher Education Quality Commission to change the evaluation from "Good" to "Excellent" if SSE addresses the shortcoming related to the name of professional qualification till the moment the decision is taken.