

# Expert group joint opinion

Evaluation Procedure: Assessment of Study Field

Higher Education Institution: College of Business Administration

Study field: Law

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# Summary Assessment of the Study Field

## Summary Assessment of the Study Field

The College of Business Administration (further – CBA) is a college founded by a legal person, accredited by the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Latvia on 5 May 2005, registration No. 3347802338. The study field “Law” (accredited on 22 February 2019 till 22 August 2021, Accreditation Certificate No. 114), consists of one first level professional higher education programme “Law” (the programme code 41 380). Students acquire qualification of the legal assistant after successfully finished studies. Self-evaluation report and meetings during onsite visit have showed that CBA has taken in consideration all recommendations received during the previous assessment procedure. Majority of recommendations have been implemented fully, some have been implemented partly, but some are still in process of implementation. Moodle study platform are efficient in the study process and each study subject provides theoretical material which is developed according to the guidelines for video materials. This approach provides students with opportunity to study theoretical material at the time suitable to them and ensures flexibility of the study process. Despite the fact that cooperation agreements for incoming or outgoing mobility are signed, the onsite visit did not bring evidence on joint activities organised with the universities or institution of higher education, for instance regular joint scientific conferences, seminars, opportunities to follow webinars by guest lecturers or organization of moot court competitions. Therefore international cooperation must be improved in the future; the same refers to the research activities by the academic staff in study field “Law”. Taking into account the specifics of study field “Law” and the form of education -distance learning, it looks like more attention must be paid to the “internationalization at home” (e.g., to introduce more study disciplines in English, to elaborate the procedures for the attracting the visiting professors from abroad, to introduce virtual exchange programmes (studies, research, internship), etc.)

## 1. Management of the Study Field

### Analysis

The Study field includes one study programme “Law”. The study programme is unique because it is the first first level professional study programme implemented in Latvia in the form of distance education, the acquisition of which provides the qualification of a Legal assistant. On the page 15 of the self-evaluation report it is indicated that the strategic goal of the Study field is to develop and implement the study programme in as high quality as possible to become the first choice study programme for those individuals (including the emigrants of Latvia in other EU Member states) who want to get the Legal Assistant qualification. Thanks to Covid-19 pandemic, the demand for the distance learning studies has increased. The study field “Law” and its only study programme comply with the needs and the development trends of the society and national economy.

The SWOT analysis of the study field (presented on the pages 18-19 of the self-evaluation report) has been carried out in 2020 by the director of the study direction by gathering the opinion of different stakeholders (students, academic staff, management and staff of the CBA, employer representatives). SWOT analysis highlights the individual approach to the students and their satisfaction with the quality of studies. As one of the strengths study courses in English are indicated. However, currently only one course in English is offered. Also the Erasmus+ activities should be seen more as possibility and not the strength, because so far it was not functioning in practice. As weaknesses are mentioned insufficient access to legal databases and difficulties in buying electronic study materials, although in other sections it is indicated that students and academic staff can use the library resources of Riga Graduate School of Law and that CBA also has purchased EBSCO database. Also as a weakness is mentioned insufficient cooperation with

employers, although on the same page of self-evaluation report (p. 19) it is indicated that regular cooperation with employer representatives is ensured, moreover, during onsite visit the representatives of the CBA and the representatives of employers indicated close cooperation both in the Council of the CBA and in the study process (for instance, by providing places for the internships, participating in the defence commission, etc.). However, such important aspects as employability of graduates, lack of international activities (mobility, lectures of foreign professors, etc.) are not included among weaknesses.

On page 20 of the self-evaluation report it is indicated that the management of the study field "Law" is provided by the Deputy Director of Studies, the Council of Studies, the Director of the study direction and study programme, the Study Support Center, the methodologists, and the academic staff. Taking into account that there is only one study programme in the study field "Law", the duties of the Director of the study direction and the Director of the study programme are fulfilled by one person. Such distribution of functions is logical and ensures the efficient and fast process of decision-making process. During onsite visit the efficiency of the management of the program was confirmed by different stakeholders. Moreover, students highlighted the support provided by the administrative and technical staff, which contributes to all needs of students. The work of the CBA is also highly evaluated by students, alumni and employers, who regularly receive surveys.

Admission to the study programme "Law" is defined in "Regulation of Admission" adopted by the CBA. The process is described in detail on the pages 23-26 of the self-evaluation report. It could be concluded that in the study field "Law" procedures for the admission of students, the recognition of the study period, professional experience, and the previously acquired formal and non-formal education, as well as for the evaluation of the achievements and learning outcomes of the students are logical and efficient. At the beginning of the study process, after enrollment, introductory lectures are offered for the new students in which they are introduced to the CBA, its internal rules, organization, material and technical basis and the study process. Once again it shows high level support and assistance to the students from the beginning of their studies.

The basic principles of academic integrity are approved by the Council of the CBA on 12 August 2019. These principles are presented in detail on pages 28-31 of the self-evaluation report. The commitment of academic staff to the fundamental principles of academic integrity in their attitudes and behavior is based on five core values: honesty, respect, justice, responsibility, and courage. In order to prevent plagiarism in works of students, during the European Social Fund project "Improvement of management processes and quality of study programs at the College of Business Administration" No. 8.2.3.0/18/A/005 the participation of the CBA in the Unified Computerized Plagiarism Control System (VDPKS) is ensured. Qualification papers developed by students after they have been submitted to the Study Support Center before the defence are subject to compulsory plagiarism control. Other works (tests or internship reports) are checked in the plagiarism control system as necessary.

Information published on the CBA website [www.bvk.lv](http://www.bvk.lv) corresponds to that available in the official registers. It provides the most important information in Latvian for the candidates and the students.

## **Conclusions. Strengths and weaknesses**

It could be concluded that the study programme "Law" taught at the CBA is a unique study programme not only in Latvia, but in the region as well, due its distance education. The programme attracts not only local Latvians, but migrants as well due its study form. Provided SWOT analysis focuses more on the strengths of the study field, and in the section of weaknesses some important aspects are missing and some contradictions in statements can be found. SWOT analysis is an important instrument for the improvement of the study field and study programme. It could be concluded that in the study field "Law" procedures for the admission of students, the recognition of the study period, professional experience, and the previously acquired formal and non-formal

education, as well as for the evaluation of the achievements and learning outcomes of the students meet the requirements.

**Strengths:**

1. Well-functioning communication system between different levels (students, director of study programme, academic staff, administration)
2. Individual approach to the students allows to solve issues fast and efficient.
3. The unique way of distance education is attractive not only to the local Latvians, but also migrants, who live abroad.

**Weaknesses:**

1. SWOT analysis lacks critical approach, deeper analysis of weaknesses. Used properly SWOT analysis can be a powerful tool to improve the programme and to identify the challenges for the future.
2. Only one study course is offered in English.

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

### **Analysis**

As provided by the self-evaluation report, CBA has developed quality policy in line with the EFQM Excellence Model, which integrates ESG internal quality assurance standards and guidelines across all of the strategic priorities of the CBA to ensure transparency of internal processes and performance of activities. The self-evaluation report stated that the Director of the study field, in cooperation with academic staff, students, graduates and employers, carry out the programme evaluation. The views of all stakeholders are taken into account and, consequently, the development of study programmes in accordance with the requirements of industry specialists and the labor market, as well as the students' views and graduates' experience in starting or continuing professional development is promoted.

During the onsite visit, the confirmation was received by the intervened parties that the Director conducts regular meetings with study groups to receive input and feedback on the study process which further serves as a basis for quality improvements.

One of the unique quality assurance instruments is assigning an individual study coordinator to each student to ensure double direction feedback from study programme side to the student and from the student to the study programme. During onsite visit different groups recognized this instrument as highly valuable and efficient in improving the quality of the study process.

Valuable contribution to the improvement of study quality is provided by employers' input. Employer's representatives are involved in the CBA Council, the Covenant and provide input to improve the quality of studies. In addition, the employers are involved in external audit of the study programme to make sure the programme corresponds to the needs of employers and consequently labor market. Finally, the employers are involved in providing feedback to the qualification papers and internship reports. There are 4 samples of internship reports are enclosed in the AIC Annexes (Internship\_Report\_LV\_1 till 4 pdf.) The report of internship of the particular student is enough and provide input concerning the quality of internship, achieved knowledge and skills of the student, challenges during the internship, as well as recommendations to employer's.

Another valuable tool contributing to improving the quality of the study process and monitoring of staff performance is regular methodological trainings for academic staff. The methodological trainings were recognized as efficient tool to jointly solve study methodological challenges, exchange good case practice and find new methods to improve study quality to present theory and train practical skills.

On page 36 of the self-evaluation report the procedure of submission of complaints and proposals is

described. Students can submit proposals and complaints in oral, written and electronic format. Although CBA does not see the need for anonymous complaints and suggestions, option of anonymous complaints could guarantee full transparency.

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

It can be concluded that CBA has developed a quality assurance system which contributes to the achievement of the aims and learning outcomes of the study field and the relevant study programmes. The system ensures continuous improvement, development, and efficient performance of the study field and the relevant study programme.

Strengths:

1. Various quality assurance instruments are used (surveys, group feedback, individual study coordinators).
2. Individual study coordinators recognized as innovative and efficient tool to improve feedback process.
3. Regular trainings of academic staff ensures exchange of good case practice and problem solving that contributes to the improvement of the study process.

Weaknesses:

1. No option for anonymous complaints and suggestions. Even though the CBA has individual approach and different tools for the feedback, still the option for anonymous complaints would guarantee full transparency.

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

#### **Analysis**

On pages 41-45 of the self-evaluation report the financial resources of the CBA are described in detail. The College is a privately owned higher education institution and its source of funding is income from economic activity. The bulk of the budget income of the College, in accordance with the Regulation of the CBA, consists of tuition fees, which are covered by personal funds of the students, their relatives, funds of students' employers, student loans with state guarantee, commercial credits, funds of sponsors. The amount of the tuition fee and the payment procedure for each academic year is determined and approved by the Management Board of the CBA. Net turnover of the CBA has increased during couple last years. To stimulate the provision of additional resources, the College's administration has attracted additional funding in 2019 from the European Union (150,000 EUR), which is invested in the development of the study process and program content till the end of 2020. Planning of the expenses of the study field "Law" and the programme "Law" is carried out jointly with the other study fields implemented in the CBA. The biggest items of expenditure are administration, rent of premises and marketing costs. Besides salaries academic staff members are also paid for their contribution to the creation of video content. Students' self-government activities are financed from the budget of the CBA in accordance with Article 53 of the Law on Higher Education Institutions. Additional expenses were allocated for improvement of study programmes in accordance with the latest trends in education, and innovations and IT solutions have been introduced in the study process.

The CBA has premises for the administration, library, consultation rooms and study auditoriums. As it is stated on page 46 of the self-evaluation report besides own premises CBA has also signed rental agreement with the Riga Graduate School of Law, which leases study auditoriums with modern technical equipment necessary for the study process - whiteboards, computers, software, projectors, screens, presentation boards and internet connection.

Three information technology systems are used to perform the functions at CBA (page 46 of the self-evaluation report):

1. Education Process Administration System (IS) - IPAS - collects data on the CBA administration staff, academic staff and students.
2. Customer Relationship Management System (CRM) BITRIX, the purpose of the system is to provide a support function in working with stakeholders, academic staff, students, course listeners, and college partners.
3. Learning Management System (LMS) - MOODLE.

It was confirmed during on-site visit that CBA organizes joint methodological seminars for the academic staff and works individually with the lecturers. CBA in the self-evaluation report indicated that the general budget provides funding for the promotion of scientific research activities of the academic staff, payment for publications, attendance and organization of conferences and seminars, experience exchange activities as well as international cooperation activities and membership fees at professional organizations. However, majority of academic staff in the study field "Law" also work at other higher education institutions and majority of publications are not linked to the CBA, moreover, exchange activities so far have not been organized.

College provides students with the necessary resources for their studies: distance learning materials (books published by the academic staff of the CBA); access to study materials (audio and video recordings) on Moodle. During onsite visit it was explained that students can choose if they want to receive printed copies of textbooks (in this case additional charges are applied) or electronic copies. The CBA collaborates in the provision of library resources and has signed an agreement with Riga Graduate School of Law for free access to library resources and use of resources for the students and academic staff of the CBA. The electronic database EBSCO has been purchased and is used more often by the students, they also have access to the case-law databases, however, in SWOT analysis one of the weaknesses is indicated Insufficient access to legal databases. During onsite visit it was explained that attempts to purchase some electronic books has failed due to publishers policy.

The process of recruitment and employment of the elected academic staff is regulated by the "The Regulation of academic and administrative positions of the CBA" and the "The Regulation of competition on academic positions of the CBA". Joint workshops are organized three times a year for academic staff, during which administrative and methodological issues are discussed, also training and exchange of experience between the members of academic staff is offered. Academic staff member also receive individual support. During onsite visit members of academic staff confirmed efficient assistants from the administration of the CBA.

Performance of all college academic staff is evaluated, ensuring that remuneration is linked to the strategic goals of the CBA, performance as well as integration of scientific work. During onsite visit members of the academic staff confirmed their satisfaction with their remuneration.

Even though in the self-evaluation report it is stated that mobility of academic staff was not realized at its maximum capacity. However, the Annex on mobility shows that it was not realized at all. Moreover, indicated guest lectures by the foreign academic staff, for whom CBA has used its own resources were not in the field of Law. CBA claims that form of distance learning is one of the main reasons for not realizing mobility activities, however, mobility activities can also be implemented online.

The CBA has developed "Customer Relationship Management Standard", which provides a unified approach to customer service, incl. in providing support. The student has a possibility to receive information on the content and formal organization of the study process via e-mail, skype or phone. Using individual access code, the student has access to the electronic learning environment (Moodle) with the content of the study courses. During onsite visit students have confirmed efficient communication and assistance both from the administration and academic staff.

## Conclusions. Strengths and weaknesses

It could be concluded that the financial resources of the CBA and the study field "Law" are collected from the economic activities, mainly tuition fees, moreover, CBA also tries to attract funding from the projects to improve the quality of the studies and the working conditions for the staff. The lack of large own premises CBA is compensating by the rental agreement with Riga Graduate School of Law, which leases study auditoriums with modern technical equipment, also students of the CBA have access to the library. CBA is also investing in the purchase of electronic materials and access to the databases. Three different information technology systems are used to perform the functions at CBA. Moreover, the CBA has developed "Customer Relationship Management Standard", which helps to provide efficient and fast support to the students. Recruitment and evaluation procedure of the academic staff is working fine, however, the mobility activities are still missing.

### Strengths:

1. Sufficient financial and material resources are devoted for the implementation of study field "Law".
2. Efficient assistance and support to the students and academic staff is guaranteed.
3. Cooperation with Riga Graduate School of Law allows for students and academic staff of CBA to have access to the library resources and modern auditoriums.

### Weaknesses:

1. Insufficient access to legal databases.
2. No mobility activities of academic staff.

## 4. Scientific Research and Artistic Creation

### Analysis

As it is stressed in the self-evaluation report, in accordance with Latvian legislation the first level professional higher education programmes focuses on preparing students for a particular profession, as well as gaining specific knowledge, skills and competences to get a professional qualification, and colleges are not legally obliged to conduct research activities. However, considering modern trends and ESG standards, the CBA decided to develop the direction of applied research.

According to the strategic documents of the CBA applied research is defined among key priorities of the institution and covers the promotion of cooperation between stakeholders (students, professors, and employers) in the field of internships, qualification papers, funded projects, promotion the good practice of research results in conferences, forums, publications, participation in joint collaborative projects in the field of applied research (p. 4.4, 4.6 of the CBA Strategy Statement 2018-2024 confirmed by the CBA Board meeting on February 10, 2020, protocol No. VAD 4-02/10.01.2020 ([https://www.bvk.lv/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/college-of-business-of-administration-strategy-2018\\_2024.pdf](https://www.bvk.lv/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/college-of-business-of-administration-strategy-2018_2024.pdf)). Participation in a scientifically-practical researches, involving partner organizations, preparation of international publication on topical issues in the field, as well as participation in local and international conferences and forums are stipulated as measures to implement the strategic priority "Promotion of Applied Research". Similar provisions are included in the Strategy of Study field "Law" Year 2018-2024 approved with the amendments at the CBA Council meeting 20/04/2020 protocol No. VAD 4-02/20.04.2020, with no specificity related to peculiarities of legal studies (p. 3.4., 3.6, and 4.4).

The CBA has its Strategy for improvement of scientific and research activities of students 2018-2024 approved at the Council of the CBA meeting on 16.02.2018 Protocol No. 02-02-2017/2018-01 (available only in Latvian).

Based on the information provided in the self-evaluation report and obtained during the meetings

with stakeholders it can be concluded that applied research activities at the CBA are mostly limited to:

- preparation of qualification papers;
- participation in the scientific and practical conferences and other similar events;
- publication of conference and research papers.

Preparation and defence of qualification papers is regulated by the internal documents of the CBA (e.g., Regulations for the development, design and defence of research papers for law students approved at the Council of studies of the CBA meeting on 12.10.2020, Protocol No. VAD 4-03/12.10.2020). It plays significant role in the study programme's curriculum, considering that it is the form of students' final attestation and the paper is to be defended in a class. The students are provided with the list of suggested topics for the qualification paper, but can also suggest the topics by themselves. The topics reflect modern issues of legal science and practice. Students are satisfied with the level of communication with supervisors during the process of preparation of the qualification paper. They are also familiar with antiplagiarism rules. According to the information provided in the self-evaluation report and obtained during the onsite visit, the introduction of the study discipline "Research design" into the curriculum leads to improvement of students' research skills.

According to the self evaluation report and based on the information provided by the academic staff during the meeting with the expert group the lecturers work also in other higher education institutions in Latvia where they conduct research and publish its results in Latvia and abroad. They introduce the results of its scientific activity into the study process. According to the information provided in the self-evaluation report and obtained during the onsite visit the CBA arranges methodological seminars for the teaching staff on the annual basis and one of them devoted to the creativity in the process of applied research.

The students have an opportunity to participate in research conferences, but use it mostly starting from the fifth semester. It is suggested to consider the possibility to involve the students from yearly courses into research activities, e.g., via permanent student research clubs/groups.

As to the research projects, it is stated in the self evaluation report, that in cooperation with the Insolvency Control service, the academic staff and students have conducted research on the organization. In 2020 the cooperation with Court Administration of Latvia was started, current problems of court system are being researched, e.g. length of court proceeding at first and second instance courts. Such projects can be considered as a good example. However, considering the information obtained during the meeting with employers, it is not a common practice. The cooperation with employers is mostly limited to the internship and participation in the improvement of a study programme, but not covers the research activities.

One of the key priorities of the CBA is internationalization. However, the internationalization of research activity needs to be enhanced. There is lack of international research projects within the study field in law.

## **Conclusions. Strengths and weaknesses**

The first level professional higher education programme focuses on preparing students for a particular profession in order to gain specific knowledge, skills and competences. The CBA has defined the applied research among key priorities of the institution. International cooperation in the study field "Law" are not ensured. The e-learning environment of the study field has been improved, including making the e-learning environment more user-friendly and accessible - customized appearance of the e-learning environment.

Strengths:

1. Applied research is among key priorities of the CBA according to the strategic documents;



2. A number of regulations related to the development of defense of a qualification paper are in place;
3. Students from the last year of studies are encouraged to participate in conferences;
4. Methodological seminars related to creativity in research are arranged for the academic staff;
5. Study field "Law" has started cooperation on applied research with local cooperation partners, like Insolvency control service and Court Administration of Latvia.

Weaknesses:

1. Lack of a detailed action plan for research activities within the study field "Law";
2. Lack of international research projects within the study field "Law";
3. Lack of internal applied research in the form of participation in scientifically-practical researches, involving partner organizations, on the regular basis.

## **5. Cooperation and Internationalisation**

### **Analysis**

As provided by the self-evaluation report, the CBA cooperates with various institutions and professional organizations, other higher education institutions in Latvia. The CBA has signed agreements also with other higher education institutions in Latvia, e.g. University of Applied Sciences EKA, RISEBA University of Business, Arts and Technology, ISMA University of Applied sciences, Rezekne Academy of Technologies, College of Accounting and Finances.

While cooperation agreements are signed, the onsite visit did not bring evidence on joint activities organised with the universities, for instance regular joint scientific conferences, seminars, opportunities to follow webinars by guest lecturers or organisation of moot court competitions.

One of the innovative approaches is cooperation of the CBA with the Riga Graduate School of Law. The CBA has signed a rental agreement the Riga Graduate School of Law, which leases study auditoriums with modern technical equipment necessary for the study process - whiteboards, computers, software, projectors, screens, presentation boards and internet connection as well as free access to the resourceful library of the Riga Graduate School of Law. The onsite visit showed that this kind of cooperation significantly raises capacity of the CBA and is highly valued by the staff and students. The most valuable cooperation point is access to the library and online catalogues.

As further explained in the self-evaluation report the CBA is working intensively on the involvement of employers in the development of the College's curriculum. The main areas of cooperation include participation of employers at the Advisory Convention of the CBA, the Council of the CBA, provision of internship placements, participation of employers in guest lectures and scientific practical conference organized by the CBA, teaching study courses, supervising and reviewing qualification papers, work at the state examination commission, as well as project development and implementation, and open discussions with the CBA management on the relevance of study content to labour market needs and employment of students. During the onsite visit it was confirmed by the employers' representatives that they provide feedback and proposals and the CBA makes changes to the study programme. At the same time during the visit a recommendation was proposed by the employers to broaden the number of employers' representatives, in particular, to involve more larger employers. In addition, the self-evaluation report and findings during the study visit indicate that employers in a role of guest lecturers on separate legal topics are not sufficiently explored as a tool to improve study process.

The CBA has signed agreements on cooperation in provision of internship placements with the following organizations: Court Administration, State Police, several individual companies, law firms, individual lawyers. The number of agreements is quite low and provides internship opportunities in a limited number of state authorities and institutions, as well as employers in the private sector. In addition, within the cooperation aimed to provide internships, feedback on internship process

requires improvement, as provided in section 2 on quality assurance.

According to the Strategy of Study field “Law” Year 2018-2024 approved with the amendments at the CBA Council meeting 20/04/2020 protocol No. VAD 4-02/20.04.2020 promoting the international cooperation defined among strategic priorities. It is stipulated to establish long-term cooperation with study programme managers of similar profile higher education institutions, to promote exchange visits among visiting lecturers and students as well as to work on joint collaborative projects in the field of applied research within the framework of study programs (p. 3.6 of the above mentioned Strategy). Organization of guest lectures involving foreign specialists as well as specialists with foreign experience, implementation of international mobility of students and lecturers, and organization and realization of exchange visits and giving lectures in similar programs at foreign higher education institutions provided as key actions in the Strategy of the Study field “Law”.

It shall be stressed that the above mentioned provisions of the Strategy are similar to the provisions of the CBA’s Strategy Statement 2018-2024 confirmed by the CBA Board meeting on February 10, 2020, protocol No. VAD 4-02/10.01.2020 ([https://www.bvk.lv/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/college-of-business-of-administration-strategy-2018\\_2024.pdf](https://www.bvk.lv/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/college-of-business-of-administration-strategy-2018_2024.pdf)).

However, the internationalization of the study programme in Law has its peculiarities that shall be emphasized in the Strategy of Study Direction. It should be mentioned that the same drawback was identified by the previous evaluation report. Moreover, the unique profile of the CBA in general as a distance-learning higher education institution requests the special approach to the internationalization that is not reflected in the CBA Strategy Statement mentioned above. The action plan of the Study field “Law” is rather descriptive.

In the recent years, the CBA made significant steps toward the improvement of its internationalization direction.

The CBA established cooperation with a number of Latvian and foreign institutions.

In 2019, the Erasmus charter for higher education was obtained by the CBA (call EACEA/02/2019) ([https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/sites/eacea-site/files/list\\_of\\_selected\\_projects\\_16.pdf](https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/sites/eacea-site/files/list_of_selected_projects_16.pdf))

7 Erasmus agreements were concluded with HEIs from Poland, Lithuania, Uzbekistan, Turkey, Czech Republic, and Spain (list of agreements provided in the annex attached to the SER).

In 2021, Erasmus+ charter for higher education was received (call EACEA- 03-2020) ([https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/cap/eplus2020/eche-lp-2020/1927701-eacea\\_03\\_2020\\_selected\\_proposals\\_lp\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/cap/eplus2020/eche-lp-2020/1927701-eacea_03_2020_selected_proposals_lp_en.pdf))

During the meeting with the head of the Study field “Law” and the programme under evaluation, the expert group was informed that the CBA prepared Erasmus+ application about virtual internships together with Siauliai State College (Lithuania), Lusofona University (Portugal) and Riga Technical University (Latvia) (presentation by the head of the study direction in law in the AIC annexes).

As to the international cooperation outside the Erasmus+ programme, the CBA has signed a cooperation agreement with the Lithuanian Business University of Applied Sciences (Lithuania) (17/05/2018, information provided in SER).

The CBA is in the process of the preparation of cooperation agreements with University of Malta and University of Essex (UK) (presentation by the head of the study direction in the AIC annexes).

Despite the intensification of the CBA’s efforts in the internationalization direction in the recent years, there is a lack of international mobility of the teaching staff and students, both outgoing and incoming. The same drawback was identified in the previous evaluation report.

Considering the specificity of the CBA’s profile as a distance-learning institution, and respective peculiarities of its student profile (in average, people of 26-35 years old who are already employed as was mentioned during the meetings with the management and students of the CBA), more attention should be given to the “internationalization at home” – e.g., lectures by visiting professors

from abroad, virtual mobility programmes, etc.

According to the study plan of the study programme under evaluation, there are two electives taught in English – Private International Law and EU Data Protection Law, both by one lecturer. During the meeting with the academic staff, the majority of participants demonstrated the good level of English and expressed readiness to teach study disciplines in English. Therefore, there is a room for the improvement of internationalization via the introduction of more study disciplines in English. It will create the opportunity for “mobility windows” and would attract more incoming students within academic mobility programmes.

The official web site of the CBA includes the information mostly in Latvian. In order to enhance the international visibility of the institution in general and its study programme in Law in particular it is suggested to provide more information in English.

During the onsite visit the students paid attention that the foreign students of Latvian origin face difficulties in finding the places for the internship. Therefore, it is necessary to broaden the list of cooperation agreements with organizations that can arrange the internship and pay more attention to the needs of this segment of students.

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

The CBA has made significant steps in order to improve cooperation and internationalization: joining Erasmus+ Charter and agreement of cooperation with Riga Graduate School of Law are among the most important steps. Simultaneously study field "Law" still has lack of incoming and outgoing international academic mobility.

Strengths:

1. Successful and resourceful cooperation with Riga Graduate School of Law.
2. Established cooperation with employers that is characterised by regular communication and implementation of employer's proposals on the study programme.
3. Internationalization is among key priorities of the CBA according to the strategic documents.
4. Use of Erasmus+ opportunities (e.g., Erasmus+ Charter for Higher Education for 2021-2027, application for other Erasmus+ projects).

Weaknesses:

1. Not sufficient joint activities organised with the universities, for instance regular joint scientific conferences, seminars, opportunities to follow webinars by guest lecturers or organisation of moot court competitions.
2. Limited number of employers involved in the cooperation.
3. Employers are not sufficiently invited as guest lecturers on particular legal topics.
5. Action plan of the internationalization of the Study direction “Law” is very descriptive.
6. Lack of incoming and outgoing international academic mobility.

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

### **Analysis**

Self-evaluation report and meetings during onsite visit have showed that CBA has took into consideration all recommendations received during the previous assessment procedure. Majority of recommendations have been implemented fully, some have been implemented partly, but some are still in process of implementation.

1. CBA at the beginning of 2020 has made changes to the Strategy following the recommendation on the the development of strategy for the direction of studies. However, these changes are not

indicated in the self-evaluation report, therefore, it is difficult to evaluate if this recommendation was fully implemented.

2. Recommendation involved SWOT analysis and even though the analysis has improved evidently and different stakeholders were involved in the preparation procedure, it still lacks some important aspects, for instance, COVID-19 situation, also some contradictions are evident.

3. Recommendation required clarification of the functions of all persons/bodies involved in the study field/programme management, which has been done within the framework of the project "Improvement of the management processes and study program quality of the College of Business Administration".

4. CBA has ensured the quality standards required by the experts during the last evaluation.

5. Recommendation required improvement of self-evaluation and feedback mechanisms. Theses mechanisms were also presented in other sections of the self-evaluation report and during on-site visit. May be only the lack of anonymous complaints and suggestions should also be considered, although CBA does not see a need of it.

6. During the reporting period the library of the CBA was supplemented with legal textbooks, moreover, the rent agreement with the Riga Graduate School of Law guarantees to the students access to their library. The recommendation is implemented, although in the self-evaluation report and during on-site visit the director of the study programme "Law" has mentioned some difficulties with the purchase of electronic publications.

7. Moodle system has been significantly improved. It was showed to the experts during the onsite visit and it was obvious that now the platform is well structures, for all courses the materials are provided and various tools of the platform are used both for the communication with students and for their tasks.

8. The tradition to organize annual scientific conference is continued following the recommendation of the experts.

9. Recommendation regarding international cooperation in research activities was not fully implemented. Even though some international cooperation is shown, but it is not in the field of research activities.

10. In 2019 CBA has already obtained the Erasmus+ charter, however, so far the activities under this program still were not implemented.

11. in 2019 International Cooperation Coordinator was appointed following the recommendation of the experts.

12. The content of language study courses was revised and new lecturer appointed following the recommendation.

13. The step forward for the implementation of recommendation No. 13 regarding courses in English has been implemented by opening the course in English "European Union data protection law" from Autumn semester of 2020. During onsite visit the experts could get familiar with the lecturer of this course, who was fluent in English, but also were introduced with the teaching materials of this course, which are provided on Moodle platform. During onsite visit experts were informed about plans to open two more courses in English.

14. Students' self-governance is sufficiently financed.

15. The long-term recommendation regarding interdisciplinary research directions is still in the process, in 2019 the research directions have been updated and currently CBA is working in the research program in cooperation with employers.

16. First steps for the implementation of the long-term recommendation regarding ELSA organization have been made and the meeting with the representatives have been organized. However, the implementation of this recommendation depends on the interests of students. Therefore, it could be concluded that from the side of administration the steps were made and the long-term recommendation has been implemented.

17. Following the recommendation of the experts the division of credit points in the study

programme "Law" has been revised, also in several study courses practical tasks have been revised and updated. However, in the self-evaluation report it is not indicated in which courses such changes have been made. In general, since the study program "Law" is professionally orientated program, practical tasks should be included in all the courses of legal field.

18. Recommendation required reforms in the system of internship, which have been made already in 2018, after the accreditation procedure.

19. Regulation regarding research papers for law students has been approved following the recommendation of the experts.

20. Since no information is provided about the employability of graduates, only discussions with students about their future plans are not enough. Therefore, it could be concluded that the implementation of this recommendation is still in the process.

21. During onsite visit experts were presented with the Moodle system and could see how it has developed since the last accreditation procedure. Therefore, it is evident that more interactive learning methods are used following the recommendation of the experts. But there is always a room for the improvement, for instance, including moot-courts and other activities in the process of studies.

22. Steps to implement long-term recommendation regarding academic staff have been made by developing a plan for the development of professional competencies of the academic staff and evaluation system.

## Conclusions. Strengths and weaknesses

It could be concluded that majority of recommendations from the previous assessment procedure have been implemented.

Strengths:

1. Recommendations have been taken seriously and are implemented fully, partly or in the process of implementation.

Weaknesses:

1. Recommendation on SWOT analysis is not fully completed.

2. Recommendation regarding international cooperation in research activities is uncompleted (there is still lack of international research projects).

3. Recommendation regarding courses in English is partly implemented.

## 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:** The CBA has developed a concept of Excellence that describes quality management policy. It is based on the ESG Part 1 standards and guidelines and the principles of the EFQM (European Foundation for Quality Management) Excellence Model. The CBA Quality Improvement Cycle is based on the Deming Cycle principles, which include the following continuous improvement steps: PLAN - DO - CHECK - ACT.

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:** CBA has developed quality policy in line with the EFQM Excellence Model, which integrates ESG internal quality assurance standards and guidelines across all of the strategic priorities of the CBA to ensure transparency of internal processes and performance of activities.

- 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:** The development of programs at the CBA is organised in accordance with the Description of the New Study Program Design and Approval Process (approved on 12 August 2019). Internal review and evaluation of study programs at the CBA is organized in accordance with the Description of the Study Program Internal Evaluation Process (KVAL 2-04 STUD).

- 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:** The CBA has adopted "Description of the Quality Management and Audit Process" (approved at the Council of the CBA meeting on 12 August 2019) and the "Description of the Study Program Internal Evaluation Process" (approved at the Council of the CBA meeting on 12 August 2019).

- 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:** The CBA has developed the academic staff performance management system (including the process description for staff performance management) with the aim to evaluate performance of the academic staff and the results over a one-year period, and to identify training and career development paths for an employee.

- 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:** Structured data on study content, academic staff, employment of graduates (including student and graduate surveys, end-of-course surveys) are regularly obtained and analysed in the study process at the CBA, providing direct feedback on the quality of the study course, work of the specific lecturer etc.

- 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:** The continuous quality improvement cycle (including oversight activities) is implemented on the basis of the Deming Cycle and provides systematic involvement of both internal and external stakeholders

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** The CBA has established good co-operation with a lot of professional organizations: Judicial Council, Latvian Association for People management, Association of Business Consultants of Latvia, attorney offices etc. Despite the fact that cooperation agreements are signed with universities and institutions of higher education, the onsite visit did not bring evidence on joint activities organised with the universities, for instance regular joint scientific conferences, seminars, opportunities to follow webinars by guest lecturers or organisation of moot court competitions. It is recommended to organize the mentioned activities in the future.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** There is action plan for research activities, international research projects within the study field "Law".

- 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:** It could be concluded that majority of recommendations (but not all in practice) from the previous assessment procedure have been implemented. CBA works on starting the activities in international research projects.

## 8. Recommendations for the Study Field

### Short-term recommendations

to specify the peculiarities of the applied research of the Study field "Law in the strategic documents of the CBA;

to elaborate the detailed action plan for the applied research of the Study field "Law";

to elaborate the instruments for the involvement of students in the research activities from the beginning of their studies;

to specify the peculiarities of the internationalization of the Study field "Law" in the strategic documents of the CBA;

to elaborate the detailed action plan for the internationalization of the Study field "Law";

to present more information in English on the web site of the CBA, including the information related to the study programme under evaluation;

### Long-term recommendations

to extend the cooperation agreements with employers to applied research opportunities

to develop the cooperation in applied research with foreign higher education and research institutions

to expand the list of the cooperation agreements with foreign higher education and research institutions outside the Erasmus+ projects

to pay more attention to the “internationalization at home” (e.g., to introduce more study disciplines in English, to elaborate the procedures for the attracting the visiting professors from abroad, to introduce virtual exchange programmes (studies, research, internship), etc.)

to expand the list of cooperation agreements with organizations that can arrange internship for students, in particular, for Latvians living abroad

to implement international mobility activities

to guarantee access to the required electronic study materials and legal databases

## **II. "Law" ASSESSMENT**

### **II. "Law" ASSESSMENT**

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

##### **Analysis**

The Study programme "Law" is unique because it is the first first level professional study programme implemented in Latvia in the form of distance education, the acquisition of which provides the qualification of a Legal assistant. Code of the study programme is 41380 in accordance with the Latvian Education Classification. Study type is part-time extramural studies - distance education with duration 2 years and 5 months. For the admission applicants must have completed secondary education and it corresponds to the requirements of the Latvian education system. The professional qualification to be acquired, the aims, objectives, learning outcomes, and admission requirements are interrelated. The tasks and results of the study programme are developed in accordance with the professional standard of a legal assistant - upon completion of the study programme, graduates are able to provide assistance to representatives of legal professions in a high quality, prepare legal documents and reports, advise on legal issues (<https://registri.visc.gov.lv/profizglitiba/dokumenti/standarti/ps0215.pdf>). During the reporting period, a new study plan has been prepared, which will enter into force after accreditation. For some study courses in the reporting period, not only the content but also the title, was reviewed and updated. The title of the study programme is harmonized with the aims, objectives, content and learning outcomes of the programme. The content of the study programme meets the professional standard of a legal assistant (approved at the meeting of the Tripartite Cooperation Sub-Council for Vocational Education and Employment on 15 April 2009; is valid in accordance with the Regulations of Cabinet of Ministers of 9 October 2018 No. 626 “Regulation on the List of Mandatory Applicable Professional Standards and Professional Qualification Requirements and the Procedure for Publication of Professional Standards and Professional Qualification Requirements Included Therein” (point 4.22).

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

Study programme "Law" is the only programme in Latvia taught in distance and the indicators describing the study programme meet the requirements of the Latvian education system.

Strengths:

1. Unique study programme offered by distance learning in order to obtain the qualification of a Legal assistant.
2. Study programme attracts not only local Latvian students, but migrants living abroad as well.



Weaknesses:

1. It is difficult to find cooperation partners abroad as the offered educational product is a very unique.
2. The study programme "Law" is more intended for distance learning and less for the research activities of the academic staff.
3. Only one study course is offered in English.

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

### **Analysis**

Following the recommendation of the previous accreditation commission, the study plan of the study programme "Law" has been updated, including the courses in the fields of general education, general law, as well as specialized courses. Although the study programme "Law" is implemented in Latvian, but from 2020 one course in English is offered and as it was indicated during the onsite visit, there are also plans to prepare more courses in English. During the meeting with students it was one of the raised aspects for the improvement of the study programme, especially, for the students, who live abroad.

The content of the study programme is harmonized with the professional standard of a legal assistant (approved at the meeting of the Tripartite Cooperation Sub-Council for Vocational Education and Employment on 15 April 2009; is valid in accordance with the Regulations of Cabinet of Ministers of 9 October 2018 No. 626 "Regulation on the List of Mandatory Applicable Professional Standards and Professional Qualification Requirements and the Procedure for Publication of Professional Standards and Professional Qualification Requirements Included Therein" (point 4.22).

As it is indicated in the self-evaluation report all descriptions of study courses have been updated in 2020 taken into consideration suggestions from the employers and students. However, it is not clarified in which way these suggestions were obtained (during meetings, through the surveys or any other form). Moreover, the independent expert audit of the study programme was carried out, also taking into consideration the recommendations after the audit.

The study programme "Law" is implemented in the form of distance learning. In the self-evaluation report the learning tools used at the CBA are indicated: specific textbooks suitable for distance learning and published by the CBA (available in print and electronic format), self-tests (available in print and electronic format), video and/or audio lectures and consultations, analysis of problem situations (case-studies), practical exercises (incl. Moodle Discussion), group work and other methods. Studies are organized on the "Moodle" platform, which during the onsite visit proved to be flexible and efficient. Each study subject provides theoretical material which is developed according to the guidelines for video materials. This approach provides students with opportunity to study theoretical material at the time suitable to them and ensures flexibility of the study process. During video lectures lecturers also provide input on practical side of the particular subjects and also show legal documents as an example. Moreover, twice a month students receive additional consultations (blended learning) in face-to-face consultations / lectures in certain study courses at the auditoriums of the CBA or in a remote format via the online platform "ZOOM".

For the evaluation of students knowledge first the intermediate test is organized (in the form of discussions on "Moodle" platform). Students who have successfully passed the intermediate examination are allowed to take the test / exam, which is organized on "Moodle" platform. Therefore, all courses use the standard methods for evaluation.

As explained by the staff representatives during the onsite visit, practical skills of students are trained during the practical week, when student work on practical tasks, for instance, solve cases, analyze judgements, discuss practical aspects to develop analytical skills of students. At the same time sufficient evidence was not found to establish that the study process involves actual preparation of legal documents by students themselves. Students are shown and explained the main

legal documents, however, the actual preparation of legal documents (e.g. claims, contracts) by students takes place during internship. Ability to prepare legal documents is essential in professional work of legal assistant and it was underlined during the meeting with employers.

Internships is a valuable tool to develop practical skills for students. Meanwhile, the examples of the assessment reports provided during the study visit, did not allow to see the skills development process of the student due to the short nature of the assessment. The assessment template lacks extended information on the professional growth of the student during internship process, employers assessment of the professional characteristics of the student, his/her knowledge and practical skills, including skills to draft and prepare legal documents, soft skills, as well as employers recommendations for further professional learning process.

There is lack of incoming and outgoing student mobility at the CBA. However, the institution has received the Erasmus+ Charter for higher education, it is suggested to expand the list of cooperation agreements with foreign higher education institutions that include the provisions regarding student exchange and to elaborate the opportunities for virtual student mobility.

In the self-evaluation report it is claimed that CBA organizes various surveys of students, graduates and employers. However, during the meetings with the employers it was explained that they were not participating in the surveys, but rather in the telephone conversation. In the self-evaluation report the results of various surveys are presented, indicating the suggestions for the improvement, which led to the changes to the content of the study programme and introduction of some improvements. However, during meeting with students the issue of the 5th semester was raised, since it is a very intensive semester, including the pre-qualification internship, preparation of qualification paper and 2 additional courses, therefore, students struggle to graduate on time.

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

While it can be concluded that theoretical knowledge is sufficiently presented to students in the Moodle platform, there is not enough evidence to conclude that learning methods provided are sufficiently designed to develop practical skills for students (in particular document preparation skills) and thus contribute to the achievement of the aims and learning outcomes of the study courses and the study programme.

Strengths:

1. The Erasmus+ Charter for higher education has been received.
2. Study materials on Moodle system are structured, easily accessible, different type of materials are used (textbooks, video lectures, etc.).

Weaknesses:

1. Learning methods do not contribute enough to development of practical skills.
2. Internship assessment process is ineffective.
3. Lack of incoming and outgoing academic staff/students.

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

#### **Analysis**

Financial and material resources allocated for the implementation of the study programme "Law" are sufficient to reach the outcomes of the studies. Students and academic staff have at their disposal premises (including rented premises from the Riga Graduate School of Law) for the studies and teaching activities, used information technology systems guarantee efficient study process and access to all necessary materials, students and academic staff are provided with efficient assistance and support from the administration of the CBA. A more detailed analysis of the resources can be

found in the section I.3 on the resources of the study field. Since in the study field "Law" only one study programme is implemented, the resources are used and the same analysis is applicable.

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

Financial and material resources allocated for the implementation of the study programme "Law" are sufficient to reach the outcomes of the studies. Since the strengths and weaknesses were discussed in the analysis of the resources of the study field "Law" (section I.3), there is no need to repeat them, as they are the same.

## **4. Teaching Staff**

### **Analysis**

The implementation of the study program is ensured by 22 academic staff members. Since last assessment several academic staff members have changed: 3 lecturers have left and instead them 4 new lecturers were hired, also one lecturer obtained PhD in Law. In total 5 academic staff members hold PhD, however only two of them are in the field of Law. Moreover, out of 22 academic staff members 16 are guest lectures and majority of academic staff in the field of law are working full time in other institutions (for instance, Supreme Court, Constitutional Court, private law companies). On one hand it could be an advantage for the students to get not only theoretical knowledge, but practical knowledge as well, which is very important for their future career. On the other hand, even though majority of activities with students are organized online, however, it still raises questions about their ability to devote enough time to the students and their classes at the CBA. Although during onsite visit neither current students, nor the graduates had any complaints regarding communication with academic staff. The ratio of academic staff to students is 13:87.

Several academic staff members are actively engaged in scientific research: participate at international conferences, publish research results both at the national and international level. However, there are only few in the field of Law. Moreover, since the same academic staff members also work in other higher education institutions of Latvia, their publications are not referenced to the CBA. Also some of the publications, indicated in the Annex, are not scientific publications, but just an overview.

As it is indicated on the page 96 of the self-evaluation report CBA organizes lifelong learning seminars for the academic staff to promote collaboration, develop competences and connect study courses, also news in distance learning. However, more detailed information about the format of these seminars, the moderators of the seminars and activities is not provided. Therefore, it is not clear how this collaboration contributes to the improvement of the study courses.

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

It could be concluded that the qualification of the academic staff members is relevant, although the higher number of members holding PhD in the field of Law would be preferable. Majority of academic staff members work as full time workers in different institutions (both private and public sector), which is useful for the students from the professional perspective, but may raise issues regarding their involvement into various activities of CBA.

Strengths:

1. Close communication with students, involvement in different activities.
2. Most of the academic staff is not only the academics, but also the practitioners.

Weaknesses:

1. Majority of academic staff members are quest lecturers.
2. Majority of academic staff, especially of Law disciplines, teach several courses and some are from

very different fields of Law, which could lead to a lower quality of the teaching level.

3. No academic mobility has been organized.

## 5. Assessment of the Compliance of the Study Programme "Law"

### 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, enclosed in the in the Annex, complies with mandatory provisions 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 SIA "Alberta Koledža" No.LIG/2018/02 from 11.07.2018.

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:** Agreement NO. STUD 12-01/2020-000 in the Annex. Article 2.7. of the mentioned agreement provides that "in case the study program is not accredited due to the CBA actions and the Student does not want to continue studies in another study program, the CBA guarantees the Student compensation for losses by reimbursing the paid tuition fee for unrealized and incomparable credit points".

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:** Academic staff are proficient in Latvian.

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. 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 in the Annex complies with mandatory 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:** The descriptions of the study courses are in Latvian, and, if necessary, also in English. The samples of the description of the study courses, provided in Annex by CBA, reflect goal of the course, study results, content of the course etc. These descriptions comply with requirements Section 56.1, Paragraph two and Section 56.2, Paragraph two of the Law on Institutions of Higher Education.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** The content of the study programme are harmonized with the professional standard of a legal assistant (approved at the meeting of the Tripartite Cooperation Sub-Council for Vocational Education and Employment on 15 April 2009; is valid in accordance with the Regulations of Cabinet of Ministers of 9 October 2018 No. 626 "Regulation on the List of Mandatory Applicable Professional Standards and Professional Qualification Requirements and the Procedure for Publication of Professional Standards and Professional Qualification Requirements Included Therein" (point 4.22).

- 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 programme complies with the Cabinet of Ministers Regulations of March 20, 2001 No. 141 "Regulations on the State Standard for First-Level Professional Higher Education". Volume of credit points (CP) in the study programme are 92 (Standard is 80-120 CP); the total volume of study courses is 68 CP, which is 74% of the total volume of the programme (Standard is the total amount- no less than 56 KP, but no more than 75% of the total volume of the program). There are 10 general education study courses in the study plan as well as 28 field-specific study courses (20 of them are limited choice and 8 are free-elective courses). The study programme has study course "Civil and environment protection" in the study programme in the volume of 2 CP, which corresponds to the Standard. Legal internship is in the amount of 8 CP and prequalification internship – 8 CP. Totally it is 16 CP (Minimum according to Standard is 16 CP).

- 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:** Several academic staff members are actively engaged in scientific research: participate at international conferences, publish research results both at the national and international level. Moreover, since the same academic staff members also work in other higher education institutions of Latvia, their publications are not referenced to the CBA. Simultaneously we have to accept that academic staff has significant professional experience which is important for professional study programme.

- 15 P5 - Overall rating

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** The study programme "Law" corresponds to the requirements of Latvian regulatory enactments.

### **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:** Financial and material resources allocated for the implementation of the study programme "Law" are sufficient to reach the outcomes of the studies. Students and academic staff have at their disposal premises (including rented premises and access to the library from the Riga Graduate School of Law)

- 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 the academic staff members meet requirements of the respective regulatory enactments.

- 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 Study programme "Law" is the first first level professional study programme implemented in Latvia in the form of distance education, the acquisition of which provides the qualification of a Legal assistant. Meetings with students and graduates prove that existing and former students are satisfied with the form of education, management of the programme and academical personal. The CBA has established a good cooperation with Riga Graduate School of Law which provides with necessary resources for the study programme "Law".

Strengths:

1. A very specific niche educational programme intended for a busy professionals who would like to get additional legal knowledges.
2. Close communication with students, involvement in different activities.
3. A good cooperation with Riga Graduate School of Law ensuring access to excellent premises and library.

Weaknesses:

1. Lack of incoming and outgoing academic staff/students.
2. Not sufficient research activities.
3. Majority of academic staff members work as full time workers in different institutions (both private and public sector), but not at the CBA.

### **Evaluation of the study programme "Law"**

Evaluation of the study programme:

Good

### **6. Recommendations for the Study Programme "Law"**

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

to establish more courses in English;

to present more information in English on the web site of the CBA, including the information related to the study programme under evaluation;

to provide internship placements abroad.

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

to develop the cooperation in applied research with Latvian foreign higher education and research institutions;

to implement international mobility activities;

to expand the list of cooperation agreements with organizations that can arrange internship for students, in particular, for Latvians living abroad;

to guarantee access to the required electronic study materials and legal databases.

to revise 5th semester of the study programme "Law", which involves pre-qualification internship, preparation of qualification paper and 2 courses, and raises difficulties for the students to graduate on time

## **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		The CBA has developed a concept of Excellence that describes quality management policy. It is based on the ESG Part 1 standards and guidelines and the principles of the EFQM (European Foundation for Quality Management) Excellence Model. The CBA Quality Improvement Cycle is based on the Deming Cycle principles, which include the following continuous improvement steps: PLAN - DO - CHECK - ACT.
R2 - The cooperation with different organisations from Latvia and abroad implemented within the study direction ensures the achievement of the aims of the study direction.	Fully compliant		The CBA has established good co-operation with a lot of professional organizations: Judicial Council, Latvian Association for People management, Association of Business Consultants of Latvia, attorney offices etc. Despite the fact that cooperation agreements are signed with universities and institutions of higher education, the onsite visit did not bring evidence on joint activities organised with the universities, for instance regular joint scientific conferences, seminars, opportunities to follow webinars by guest lecturers or organisation of moot court competitions. It is recommended to organize the mentioned activities in the future.
R3 - Compliance of scientific research and artistic creation with the development level thereof (if applicable).	Fully compliant		There is action plan for research activities, international research projects within the study field "Law".
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		It could be concluded that majority of recommendations (but not all in practice) from the previous assessment procedure have been implemented. CBA works on starting the activities in international research projects.

#### 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	Law (41380)	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Not relevant	Good

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

No dissenting opinions