Expert group joint opinion

Evaluation Procedure: Assessment of Study Field

Higher Education Institution: University of Latvia

Study field: Internal Security and Civil Protection

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

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The University of Latvia (UL) has established itself as a prominent classical university since its founding in 1919, recognized for its dedication to advancing scientific research and offering a comprehensive education across various disciplines, including the humanities, social sciences, natural sciences, and technical fields. As the largest higher education institution in Latvia, UL plays a crucial role in enhancing the academic landscape while contributing to the nation's economic and cultural growth. (SAR, p. 5)

The UL mission, encapsulated by its motto "For Science and Fatherland," emphasizes its commitment to global scientific discourse, technological innovation, and the promotion of democratic and cultural values within Latvia. Its vision aims to foster an environment of excellence and sustainable development, showcasing its high standing in the international academic community. (SAR, p. 5)

The Self-Assessment Report (SAR) provided a detailed overview of UL's activities, management, quality assurance, and study programmes. However, several minor issues, such as inconsistent terminology, outdated data, non-functioning web links, and missing tables in the English version, presented challenges during the assessment process and could potentially lead to inaccuracies in the joint report considering the references to the SAR page numbers.

Despite these minor challenges, UL received a very high overall rating, reflecting the strong value that students, graduates, and employers place on its programmes. Engaging conversations with students and faculty during the assessment visit revealed a vibrant, supportive atmosphere, which is fundamental to UL's esteemed reputation. The commitment to high academic standards and exceptional processes is evident, although minor issues were identified, making it difficult to pinpoint larger systemic concerns.

An optimistic outlook was noted regarding the new leadership that took office six months prior to the assessment visit, raising expectations for enhanced research and development initiatives. UL's community-oriented culture fosters a sense of belonging among its members, many of whom maintain connections with the UL post-graduation, often returning as educators or in other roles.

UL benefits from a robust quality management system that ensures compliance with international standards while continuously improving its study programmes and research initiatives. Stakeholders acknowledged the uniqueness and thoughtful design of UL's study courses, stressing the importance of aligning them with a clear commercial strategy. The dynamic interaction between motivated faculty and engaged students contributes to a high-expectation learning environment, supported by a culture that encourages both formal and informal communication.

During the assessment visit, some challenges were highlighted, including the necessity for a targeted marketing and commercialization strategy to address funding issues related to study places, scholarships, and grants—critical concerns for students. While UL has formed numerous international agreements and mobility opportunities, there is significant room for expanding substantive collaborations, which could further enhance its global recognition.

Additionally, the assessment visit underscored the importance of frequently reviewing strategic goals and ensuring that language accurately reflects the intended objectives and problems being

addressed. Encouraging greater student involvement in research and mobility programmes, along with promoting collaborative missions for faculty and students, emerged as essential areas for further development.

In summary, the assessment of the University of Latvia highlighted its strengths and areas for improvement, reinforcing the notion that with continued effort and strategic initiatives, UL can maintain its prestigious position and enhance its contributions to both national and international academic landscapes. The expert team appreciates the warm hospitality and valuable insights shared during the assessment visit, affirming UL as a commendable place for study and work.

I - Assessment of the Study Field

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1.1 Management of the Study Field

Analysis

1.1.1. The study field "Internal Security and Civil Protection" at the UL has clearly defined aims that align well with the UL's strategic development directions and societal needs. The primary objective is to provide research-based and innovative education in occupational safety and health, addressing both local and international labour market demands. The newest concepts are ergonomics and human factors, which are integrated in a full cycle of four levels. This alignment is evidenced by study programmes that are designed to meet modern demands and potential future trends in Latvia and beyond. (SAR, p. 17-18)

The strategic goals outlined by the UL, focusing on scientific excellence, educational quality, and societal contributions, are reflected in the objectives and structure of this study field. The integration with the Bologna Declaration principles supports its compatibility with broader European higher education standards, ensuring that graduates are well-prepared for the EU labour market. (SAR, p. 18-20)

Moreover, the interconnection between the study programmes within this field is clear and logical and covers the full four-level cycle ensuring continuity of all levels and specialization options (SAR, p. 17-18). The programmes are structured to allow for continuity of learning, from short-cycle professional programmes to bachelor’s, master’s, and doctoral degrees, ensuring a comprehensive educational pathway. This structure supports a logical progression for students, fostering their development into highly skilled professionals in civil and labour protection. (SAR, p. 19-20)

The well-structured coherence of the curricula and the available options were highly valued by students, alumni, and employers during the assessment visit. It was noted that short-term studies provide a good opportunity to familiarize with the field and to quickly enter the workforce. However, it often serves merely as the beginning of a journey, with many individuals returning to continue their studies after some time. This reflects a positive learning environment and quality that speaks for itself.

The engagement of lecturers, who are recognized as opinion leaders in the field of occupational health and safety in Latvia - as evidenced by their published articles and interviews referenced in the SAR (p. 23-24) - enhances the programme's credibility and relevance. Additionally, the coexistence of academic and practical learning experiences, supported by collaborations with industry partners and other Higher educational institutions, solidifies the practicality and applicability of the programmes offered. These aspects not only ensure the attainment of the field’s

aims but also reinforce UL's contribution to addressing the educational and economic needs of society and the national economy (SAR, p. 20-21).

In conclusion, the study field "Internal Security and Civil Protection" at the UL effectively prepares students for careers in occupational safety and health through well-structured and comprehensive programmes. The integration of practical experience, industry involvement, and a strong emphasis on student-centered learning fosters a supportive educational environment. While the study field demonstrates many strengths, such as alignment with State standards and a commitment to continuous improvement, addressing areas such as the need for additional certifications will further enhance its effectiveness and relevance in the labour market. Overall, the study field successfully meets its educational objectives and prepares graduates for impactful roles in their field.

1.1.2. The UL has identified and analyzed the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) of the study field "Internal Security and Civil Protection" and according to the SAR (p. 22) the analysis reveals that strengths dominate, such as alignment with international standards through the Bologna Declaration, a robust interdisciplinary curriculum, and strong ties with industry and international partners. In the SAR (p. 23-24) is provided examples of published articles and expressed opinions (including interviews) from lecturers which effectively illustrate the high caliber of the teaching staff and highlight UL’s position as leading organization in the field.

It was highlighted in the SAR (p. 24) collaboration between students and employers as both a strength and an area for development. During the assessment visit, the expert team received clarifications indicating that the collaboration at the operational level (study process) is, in fact, quite effective. Students feel that their opinions are valued and considered, and the involvement of employers in curriculum development is commendable. Some examples were given how teaching staff has improved studies regarding the feedback or the studies are organized as flexible as possible to help students to unite studies, work and private life.

However, from the perspective of research activities, it was heard during the assessment visit that there is still potential to enhance and promote collaboration, which currently relies largely on personal contacts. Companies that do not currently employ alumni or students from the UL may not be fully aware of the offerings the UL could provide as a partner. The same content was reflected as weakness in the SAR (p. 26) that attraction of the project and funding in the field of occupational safety and health include insufficient marketing activities for study opportunities in the study field. During the assessment visit, discussions focused on how to enhance this area, with a clear understanding that every stakeholder plays a role in facilitating these improvements. This represents a valuable resource for the UL as an opportunity.

The SAR (p. 25) outlines one possibility for the development of the PhD programme, which is to attract more international students. It is particularly emphasized that the PhD programme is implemented in English during the 2023/2024 academic year. During the assessment visit it was confirmed that from the academic year 2023/2024 one international student has enrolled and studies are held in English. It was recognized that it is not the cost effective solution to keep studies in English for one student, however, it was also seen from the expert team perspective that it is a good opportunity to gain experience and promote the studies to get more international students.

The primary threat is seen as the demographic situation in the country (SAR, p. 25), which is also linked to the overall economic conditions that affect students' ability to continue their studies. An overview is given in the SAR (p. 9) of the drastically decreasing population, which intensifies competition among universities for students. The discussions during the assessment visit addressed

the challenges associated with the demographic situation and the preparation of youth multiple times, further solidifying the understanding that the UL focus must extend beyond just Latvian youth. In the future, it will be essential to compete on a broader European scale. This is particularly important considering the limited availability of such educational programmes, with only two comparable offerings identified at the European level.

Another significant threat mentioned in the SAR (p. 25) is the necessity of working while studying, which is required for economic reasons and increasing study costs. The country is attempting to implement measures to support student loans under more favorable conditions, among other initiatives. Additionally, the threat posed by free education offered in foreign countries is considered significant, as this competition may further decrease the number of potential student candidates. (SAR, p. 25) However, during the assessment visit discussions, working while studying was not viewed as a significant risk. It was noted that, in fact, the work experience gained during studies provides an advantage in the job market and sometimes helps to understand the studies better. Also it was mentioned that UL offers a good flexibility and various possibilities to attend the studies as well as the new learning environment is inviting and attractive to study.

The UL has incorporated these insights into a detailed Study Field Development plan for 2021-2027 (see Annex_3_Development plan of the study direction.docx), outlining specific objectives and actions to enhance strengths and opportunities, while addressing weaknesses and threats. These efforts demonstrate the UL strategic approach to ensuring the study field “Internal Security and Civil Protection” growth and relevance in the educational and economic landscape. (SAR, p. 26-27) However, it was not understood how the implementation of the Study Field Development plan 2021-2027 is going as the provided numbers did not explain, was it target number for years 2021/2022 or real number from the field. Despite of this clarification, lot of activities are described, which are supporting the UL strategic goals and help to improve the weaknesses and threats, for example mobility, internationalization, digitalization, marketing and promotion the studies and researches, cooperation etc (see Annex_3_Development plan of the study direction.docx).

1.1.3. The management structure of the study field "Internal Security and Civil Protection" at the UL is oriented towards the development of the study field. The structure involves a collegiate responsibility shared among various decision-making bodies such as the Senate, the Study Programme Quality Assessment Commission, faculty councils, and the Study Field councils (see Annex_4_Structure for the Management of the study direction.docx). This distributed governance ensures that decision-making is efficient and well-coordinated, promoting accountability at different levels, from the study field to individual programmes. (SAR, p. 27-28)

The Self-Assessment Report (p. 29-30) provides a comprehensive description of the roles and responsibilities within the structure. During the assessment visit, the expert team received confirmation that, in general, everything is functioning as described, and no significant concerns were identified. The only area that remained somewhat unclear was related to centralization, where for example direct benefits from feedback forms were not apparent, however, it was understood that input is necessary to create a broader perspective, quality assurance and development plans. As a result of the discussions during the assessment visit, the expert team believes that one way to enhance the quality assessment system is to develop a method for integrating immediate feedback and the feedback provided by employers after the internship, into a centralized assessment system. This integration would create a more comprehensive and substantive overview of performance and give more value to teaching staff. However, it is understandable that it is a challenge to find a solution to how to do it without extra workload for someone.

Additionally, the expert team was unable to obtain examples of how problem-solving through various structural components has developed in practice, as most issues and inquiries are resolved at the initial levels. This, however, is a very positive indicator that the cooperation among faculty, teaching staff, and students is good and open, with an evident willingness to discuss concerns. Numerous examples were cited where feedback has been provided to teaching staff or, when necessary, direct communication has occurred with certain leaders, as this is not viewed as a problem, all are responsive and willing to assist where needed.
Additionally, the integration of academic and administrative functions, such as the merging of the Study Department and the Department of Science into the Academic Department, reflects a strategic effort to strengthen support systems for education and research. (SAR, p. 28-30) Technical and administrative support is robust, with key roles played by the Academic Department and other administrative units. It was confirmed during the assessment visit (specially by the teaching staff) that these units ensure the effective planning, implementation, and continuous improvement of study programmes. They address students' and faculty needs, provide technical support, and facilitate necessary administrative functions, such as admissions and quality assurance processes. Overall, the management and administrative structure actively supports the study field's development goals and ensures efficient operation of the programmes within it. (SAR, p. 31)

Therefore, it can be concluded that the structure is well-defined, with roles appropriately distributed, and the management culture fosters an open and supportive environment for both faculty and students. This affirms that the UL adheres to modern trends not only on paper but also in practice, particularly in the area of people management, where there is an increasing emphasis on creating a positive work environment and the role of leaders as supporters and motivators. The high motivation of the faculty has positively influenced the students, serving as the best example of a well-functioning organization.

1.1.4. The UL has established a comprehensive system and developed procedures for various aspects related to student admissions, recognition of prior learning and experience, and assessment of achievements and learning outcomes. These systems and procedures appear to be logical and effective, ensuring transparency and fairness across various processes. (SAR, p. 31-32)

The UL has clear and structured procedures for the admission of students, which are updated and published annually. These procedures include centralized and decentralized admissions processes for undergraduate and postgraduate programmes, respectively, thus catering to different levels of study efficiently. (SAR, p. 32-33)

It is noteworthy to highlight examples presented during the assessment visit, where candidates have been denied admission even when study places were available. This occurs when the candidates are not deemed suitable for the level of studies. For instance, in the case of PhD programmes, while the average grade from previous studies is one of the criteria, the most significant factor in the decision-making process is the interview, during which an evaluation of the candidate's readiness for research is conducted. This clearly demonstrates that quality is prioritized over quantitative metrics, such as the number of students enrolled in PhD programmes.

The UL has a regulatory framework in place for recognizing prior formal, non-formal education, and professional experience. This framework allows students to have their previous learning and experience assessed and credited toward their current studies, thereby facilitating a seamless educational transition and advancement. (SAR, p. 33-34) According to SAR there are only a few cases during the assessment period which do not give enough information to evaluate this area, however, the possibilities are described and offered.

1.1.5. The UL has developed and defined methods, principles, and procedures for assessing student achievements (the UL Order no 1/277 of 10.08.2018 “Procedure for the Development and Actualisation of Study Courses at the University of Latvia”). (SAR, p. 35) During the assessment visit it was discussed how the learning outcomes are measured and it was confirmed that assessments are aligned closely with both the aims of the study programmes and the needs of the students, ensuring they effectively measure the intended learning outcomes.

Descriptions of course content, assessment criteria, and other relevant information are made available to students via platforms like the LUIS and the LU e-study environment. Additionally, students receive detailed information on these aspects at the start of their courses. (SAR, p. 35)
The assessment system includes both interim assessments and final examinations. Interim assessments, such as quizzes, reports, individual or group projects, and practical work, contribute significantly to the final grade, ensuring continuous evaluation throughout the course. Final exams or defenses of projects contribute a smaller portion, ensuring the assessment is comprehensive. (SAR, p. 35-36)

The assessment system is published in the “Procedure for the Development and the Actualization of Study courses at the University of Latvia” (the LU order No 1/277 of 10.08.2018). It is guided by key principles such as summing up positive achievements, transparency, the possibility of review, mandatory assessment, and diversity of assessment types as well as describes the 10 grade evaluation system (table is offered at the SAR, p. 36) where study result criteria described beforehand are used. The basis for formulation of criteria is learning outcomes formulated in each study course and explanations of assessments. These principles ensure the fairness, objectivity, and comprehensiveness of the assessment process. (SAR, p. 36)

The relevance of these assessment methods and procedures is regularly analyzed, with feedback from students being a critical component of this analysis. The UL systematically revises assessment strategies in line with student feedback, academic staff insights, and learning outcomes achievement, thereby aligning assessments with programme goals and student needs. (SAR, p.37) During the assessment visit several examples were given by the students who confirmed that they have seen the improvement of the study course according to the feedback of the previous students.

Overall, these well-structured assessment methods and procedures help ensure that student evaluation is an integral, strategic part of the educational process at the UL, effectively contributing to the educational and professional development of the students. However, a challenge was identified during the assessment visit from the students’ perspective regarding the study courses and learning outcomes associated with the mandatory fire safety training required in the field. While this training is included in the study programme, it is not formally recognized within the academic framework, which necessitates that students undergo additional training to obtain the certification. Students would greatly appreciate it if the knowledge and skills acquired during their studies aligned with the same criteria as those required for additional training, and if it were possible to obtain the necessary certification for employment alongside their studies.

1.1.6. The UL has articulated clear principles of academic integrity, which include fairness, transparency, responsibility, and respect. These principles are outlined in the “Academic Ethics Code of the University of Latvia” (the UL Senate Decision No 2-3/46 of 26.04.2021) and in the “Regulations on Academic Integrity at the University of Latvia” (the UL Senate Decision No 2-3/48 of 26.04.2021), which are made publicly available to all students and staff. (SAR, p. 38)

UL has set up various mechanisms to enforce these principles, including a separate academic Ethics

Commission for research at the Faculty of Chemistry that oversees the adherence to ethical standards and addresses violations. There are detailed procedures for identifying and addressing breaches of academic integrity, promoting accountability among students and staff. (SAR, p. 38)

Several anti-plagiarism tools, such as Turnitin and the Unified Computerised Plagiarism Control System, are employed to detect and prevent plagiarism. These systems are integrated into the workflow for checking students' written work, including theses and dissertations, ensuring that work submitted is original and properly referenced. (SAR, p. 39) According to the SAR (p. 40) an agreement has been established (16.12.2022) with the company Turnitin LLC for the implementation and use of the anti-plagiarism tool for the needs of the UL.

The SAR (p. 39-42) provides a detailed description of the procedures and highlights the limitations of the plagiarism detection software that need to be taken into account and further developed where possible. One of the primary future challenges is to implement plagiarism detection for English-speaking students, which is currently not feasible with the existing resources of UL as well as the challenge with the text translation and creation technologies, which with the assistance of machine learning and artificial intelligence (AI) tools create new challenges not only in Latvia, but around the world. (SAR, p. 40). During the assessment visit it was also noted that the emergence of AI is unavoidable and that verifying information generated by AI is significantly more complex. Instead of resisting this inevitability, a course on the use of AI is offered, focusing on how to use it correctly and in accordance with academic ethics.

At the same time, it should be noted that the statistics presented in the SAR (p. 42), indicating seven cases of suspected plagiarism in the past two years, however none of these cases have resulted in severe consequences (such as exmatriculation), demonstrate a very high level of academic integrity and the understanding and appreciation of this value among both faculty and students. This is a value that creates a strong foundation for academic culture and development.

In conclusion, the UL demonstrates a strong commitment to academic integrity through its comprehensive policies, tools, and educational efforts, creating a reliable and principled academic community. UL ensures that all stakeholders, including students, teaching staff, and administrative staff, are informed about the academic integrity policies and the use of anti-plagiarism tools. Training is provided, and guidelines are distributed to ensure understanding and compliance with these standards. By actively enforcing these principles and utilizing these tools, the UL is not only safeguarding academic standards but is also promoting a culture of integrity. This culture is integral to the UL's mission of fostering a respectful and honest academic environment.

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

The management of the study field "Internal Security and Civil Protection" at the UL reveals a strong alignment with the institution's strategic goals and the needs of society. The well-defined objectives, coupled with a solid management framework and cohesive study programmes, equip students to meet the demands of the labour market effectively. By fostering collaborations with industry partners and upholding a commitment to academic integrity, the UL creates an environment that promotes both high educational standards and the real-world application of knowledge.

Nevertheless, several challenges remain, particularly in enhancing research collaboration beyond personal networks. There is also a pressing need to improve the recognition of prior learning and certifications to facilitate a smoother transition for students. Additionally, the demographic decline poses a significant threat to student enrollment, which necessitates the development of strategies

to attract more students nationally as well as internationally. The increasing costs associated with education, combined with the necessity for many students to work while studying, further complicate their academic journeys.

Overall, the management of the study field is characterized by strong leadership, strategic planning, and comprehensive support systems that collectively enhance its capability to deliver high-quality education and research outcomes. This effective management ensures that the study field not only meets current educational and economic needs but is also well-prepared for future challenges and opportunities.

Strengths:
1) The objectives of the study field “Internal Security and Civil Protection” are closely aligned with the strategic goals of the UL and broader European higher education standards, particularly those established in the Bologna Declaration, ensuring that the programmes remain relevant and competitive.
2) The study field “Internal Security and Civil Protection” provides a comprehensive educational cycle that includes short-cycle professional education as well as bachelor's, master's, and doctoral programmes, ensuring continuity and a clear progression path for students.
3) Industry representatives play a crucial role in the study process, offering students practical learning opportunities and ensuring that the curriculum stays aligned with current market demands.
4) The administrative and technical structures support efficient decision-making and provide comprehensive services that facilitate both academic and administrative processes within the study field.
5) There is a strong emphasis on maintaining Higher educational standards and promoting scientific research and innovation, contributing to the field’s dynamism and ability to adapt to new challenges.

Weaknesses:
1) There is a recognized need for increased funding, especially for attracting projects and financing research activities, as limited resources can hinder the development of new initiatives and improvements within the study field.
2) Insufficient marketing efforts to promote study opportunities within the programmes have been identified as a weakness that may impact their visibility and appeal to prospective students both locally and internationally.
3) The demographic situation in Latvia presents a challenge due to a declining number of secondary school graduates available to enter higher education, which may affect student enrollment figures in the long term.

1.2. Efficiency of the Internal Quality Assurance System

Analysis

1.2.1. The UL has established a quality policy, approved by the UL Senate on January 27, 2020, under decision number 78. This quality policy is publicly accessible on the UL website (https://www.lu.lv/par-mums/dokumenti/). Its purpose is to advance the university's continuous quality improvement, implement its vision and mission, and achieve strategic development goals. The quality policy outlines UL's quality principles, the prerequisites for its implementation, and specific tasks and objectives for those responsible for executing the quality system.

The UL has implemented a quality management system based on six levels of quality management

documents (see annex: "Latvijas Universitates Kvalitates rokasgrāmata.01.2024..pdf"):
- development strategy, functional strategies;
- quality policy;
- quality action policy;
- quality management system manual;
- document management system/process management system;
- results management system.

Based on SAR section 2.2.1. improvement of the study field “Internal Security and Civil Protection” and the corresponding study programmes specified in the quality manual of the departments and ULs is ensured according to the Deming cycle approach, i.e. plan-do-check-act.

During the assessment visit, the expert team was convinced that the quality management system at the UL facilitates a continuous improvement process, where feedback from teaching staff, students, and employers is periodically analyzed. The resulting data, complaints, and feedback are reviewed at various levels of the university, ranging from the study field council to top management. According to the annex “Latvijas Universitates Kvalitates rokasgrāmata.01.2024..pdf" as well as during the assessment visit interviews conducted, UL has established various quality procedures for reporting complaints and providing feedback. However, during the assessment visit discussions with students revealed that while they are generally aware of surveys, they are less familiar with other problem-reporting mechanisms. Despite the existence of a formal system, it was noted that it is not often utilized, largely because the strong relationships among students and UL employees enable most issues to be resolved informally. This reliance on informal channels is seen as a positive aspect of the learning environment.

1.2.2. Study programmes included in the study field “Internal Security and Civil Protection” are reviewed once a year, when a report is prepared in accordance with the procedure established by the UL "Procedure for the preparation of annual reports of UL Study Directions" (approved by UL Order No. 1/255 of 13.07.2018). According to SAR section 2.2.2., the main representatives of all parties are allowed in this process. The study field and study programme reviews are prepared by the head of the study field and the director of the study programme. They are coordinated with the dean of the faculty, the faculty council and the council of study field. The faculty council consists of representatives of teaching staff, administration and students. Almost all involved parties (students, teaching staff, study area administration, employers) are represented in the study field council. The review of the course of study is approved by the Study Program Evaluation Commission and the Senate, which also has student and teaching staff representation. (SAR, p. 44-47)

In accordance with the quality management manual (see annex: "Latvijas Universitates Kvalitates rokasgrāmata_03.01.2024..pdf"), various indicators are collected in the annual report of the field of study, which include:
- study programme changes during the reporting period and their justification;
- comparison with similar study programmes in Latvian universities;
- various statistical indicators on the dynamics of the number of students (enrollment, mobility, graduates);
- results and analysis of conducted surveys;
- various statistical indicators on the number of teaching staff and the mobility carried out;
- etc.

Reports of study areas are publicly available to any interested party and are available at: https://www.lu.lv/par-mums/dokumenti/pasnovertejuma-zinojumi/.

In order to ensure improvement and development, the management of the study area prepares and revises the study area plan for 6 years, which is coordinated and approved by all the above-mentioned parties. The head of the study area and heads of study programmes are responsible for the implementation of this plan (see annex: "Latvijas Universitates Kvalitates rokasgrāmata_03.01.2024..pdf").

Taking into account all of the above, the UL has introduced a systematic approach to maintaining the competitiveness of study programmes and improving study programmes. However, considering that the study programmes are sufficiently unique within Latvia, it would be advisable to include comparisons with other similar study programmes at the European level in the annual reports of the field of study.

1.2.3. The mechanism for submitting student complaints and suggestions at the UL is well-structured, reflecting the institution's commitment to democratic principles and quality assurance. UL has established clear procedures across various stages of the academic process, from admissions to final examinations, ensuring that students have multiple avenues to voice concerns and suggestions. These procedures are governed by specific regulations, such as the UL Senate decisions and Orders, which detail the processes for lodging, processing, and appealing complaints. (SAR 2.2.3.)

A significant update in 2022 replaced the older submission system with the "Regulations on lodging and review of students' proposals and complaints at the University of Latvia.", which standardizes the process, allowing students to submit complaints individually or in groups, directly to faculty deans or vice rectors. The regulation also mandates timely responses to complaints, as stipulated by law, and includes an internal reporting system where deans and vice rectors report annually to the UL Quality Manager. This process enables continuous monitoring and improvement of the system, ensuring student rights and interests are upheld. (SAR 2.2.3.)

Moreover, the UL has specific procedures for handling complaints related to study course examinations, graduation examinations, and other academic matters, including the right to appeal against decisions made by faculty deans. The existence of the Academic Court of Arbitration further reinforces the students' rights to a fair and transparent evaluation process. (SAR 2.2.3.)

Students are also informed of their rights and the procedures for lodging complaints and suggestions through various channels, including during the initial study weeks and through course descriptions available online. The UL ensures that students are not only aware of these processes but also receive feedback on their submissions, promoting transparency and trust in the system. (SAR 2.2.3.)

Overall the mechanism is effective in addressing and resolving student complaints and suggestions, as it is supported by clear procedures and regular monitoring. And UL's system for managing student complaints and suggestions is comprehensive and well-integrated into the UL's quality assurance framework, fostering a student-centric environment.

1.2.4. In order to ensure the quality of the study process, the UL conducts various surveys of the parties involved, including the survey of the opinions of students, employers, and graduates. In addition to this, monitoring and evaluation of students' learning performance is also carried out, as well as collected information on general student parameters for statistical purposes. (SAR 2.2.4.)

A regular survey of students about the progress of studies and teaching staff is conducted twice a

year, ensuring that the opinion of all students is known. (SAR 2.2.4.) As it was clarified during the assessment visit, filling out the survey is mandatory for students. Otherwise, students will not be allowed to register for the next study semester. Although students do not object to such a practice, it is worth considering whether such a practice brings the desired results, as there are risks that students delve into the questions included in the survey inadequately, and as a result, the quality of the obtained data may suffer.

Students are also surveyed at the end of their studies to provide information about the overall study experience, as well as at the start of their studies, so that the UL can improve the integration of new students into the university environment. On the other hand, the purpose of graduate surveys is to collect information about the work progress of former students. In surveys, employers provide information on the compliance of knowledge and skills acquired by graduates with the requirements of the labor market. (SAR 2.2.4.)

Most surveys are organized centrally using the UL's information system according to a uniform sample questionnaire. As confirmed during the assessment visit, information about survey results is available to students and teaching staff, as well as survey results are discussed with both students and teaching staff. (SAR 2.2.4.)

Survey results are monitored at all levels of UL and the results are discussed with the management.

1.2.5. The information on study programmes available on the UL website (www.lu.lv) is comprehensive and includes general descriptions of study programmes that provide insight into the content of the study programmes and potential job opportunities after graduation. Information about the duration of studies and the degree to be obtained is also indicated, which matches the information indicated in the state registers. The information pages contain clear and unambiguous information about study conditions and admission conditions.

Detailed information about the study plan is readily accessible on the UL's website (www.lu.lv), where users can view study course descriptions, planned outcomes, assessments, and recommended literature. A random check confirmed that this information aligns with the study course descriptions provided in the SAR. Additionally, information about the only English-taught study programme of the Study Field, “Human Factors, Safety at Work and Occupational Health,” can be found in English in the relevant section of the UL website (available at: https://www.lu.lv/en/studies/study-programmes-1/doctoral-studies/human-factors-safety-at-work-and-occupational-health/).

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

UL has established a comprehensive and structured quality assurance system that effectively supports the institution's strategic goals and promotes continuous improvement across its study programmes. The system is underpinned by a well-defined quality policy and a multi-level management framework that ensures systematic monitoring and enhancement of academic offerings. Regular feedback from students, teaching staff, and employers is integral to this system, enabling responsive adjustments and fostering a student-centered environment.

However, while the system is robust in many aspects, there are areas for improvement. Awareness of formal complaint and reporting mechanisms among students is limited, which may hinder the effective use of these tools. The mandatory nature of student surveys could also impact the quality of the data collected, suggesting a need for reviewing this approach to ensure meaningful feedback.

Additionally, expanding the scope of programme comparisons to include European benchmarks could further enhance the competitiveness and relevance of UL's offerings.

Overall, the quality assurance system at UL is strong, but attention to these areas could lead to more effective and comprehensive quality management, ultimately benefiting all stakeholders involved.

Strengths:
1) UL has a well-defined quality policy, approved by the UL Senate, and it is publicly accessible. This ensures transparency and aligns with the university's strategic goals, fostering continuous improvement.
2) The university regularly collects feedback from students, teaching staff, and employers through various surveys, which are analyzed and reviewed at different levels of the institution. This practice ensures that the perspectives of all stakeholders are considered in decision-making and programme development.
3) The UL has a well-structured mechanism for submitting students' complaints and suggestions, which includes clear procedures, timely responses, and an internal reporting system. This system promotes student rights and encourages a student-centered environment.

Weaknesses:
1) Despite the existence of various problem-reporting mechanisms, students are primarily aware of surveys, and not as familiar with other formal channels. This suggests that the UL could improve communication regarding these mechanisms to enhance their utilization.
2) While the UL systematically reviews its study programmes, comparisons are primarily made within the context of Latvia. Incorporating comparisons with similar programmes at the European level could provide a broader perspective and help maintain competitiveness.

Assessment of the requirement [1]

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

UL has implemented a quality assurance system and described the necessary quality assurance processes.

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

UL has established a policy and procedures for assuring the quality of higher education (see annex: "Latvijas Universitates Kvalitates rokasgrāmata_03.01.2024.pdf")

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

Annex: "Latvijas Universitates Kvalitates rokasgrāmata_03.01.2024.pdf"

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Study course descriptions state information on demands and evaluation of the knowledge.

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

Based on assessment visit, regular student surveys are conducted to evaluate the work of the 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

According to SAR chapter 2.2.4., HEI collects and analyzes a wide spectrum of data related to satisfaction of students, employment of graduates and other key indicators related to improving study field and study programmes.

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Based on assessment visit, the UL regularly and carefully evaluates the data obtained on the availability of resources, academic staff and the well-being of students in general, introducing the necessary changes

1.3. Resources and Provision of the Study Field

Analysis

1.3.1. According to SAR chapter 2.3.1 and the assessment visit, the primary costs associated with delivering the study programmes are faculty salaries and administrative expenses.

Faculty remuneration includes costs of:
- contact hours (lectures, seminars, practical work, and laboratory work);
- supervising independent work, providing consultations, and conducting exams;
- preparing and delivering courses, including methodological work;
- managing and evaluating student work, including reviewing;
- organizing and supervising internships;
- faculty research to develop new study materials. (SAR, p. 60)

The UL has established guidelines for faculty remuneration "Planning and Accounting Regulations for Academic Personnel's Workload", approved by the Rector's Order No. 1/469 of 07.12.2016. However, faculties may determine different standards based on the specific study programme and available resources, in consultation with the relevant vice-rector. (SAR, p. 61)

Costs related to the organization of the study process encompass several key areas. First, general

staff costs include salaries for personnel who support the implementation of the study programme and the operations of the faculty. In addition, there are direct programme costs, which cover expenses for external services, facility rentals, equipment, and transportation specific to the study programme. Infrastructure costs also play a significant role, comprising expenses for premises, utilities, repairs, and maintenance. (SAR, p. 61)

Furthermore, costs associated with goods and services include materials, equipment, and professional development training for staff. Finally, indirect costs encompass the UL's general operating expenses, such as IT, finance, personnel, and marketing, along with investments in development. Together, these elements provide a comprehensive overview of the financial resources required to effectively organize the study process. It is important to highlight that during the assessment visit, teaching staff emphasized the excellent working conditions at the UL, from the technical support provided by the IT department to the availability of research databases and the collaborative spirit among colleagues. Also the participation in training sessions and conferences was discussed during the assessment visit, both nationally and internationally, for which teaching staff have sufficient opportunities. However, international mobility for staff has been somewhat limited, although encouragement from colleagues is contributing to a gradual increase in participation.

To estimate the financial resources required for its study fields and relevant study programmes, the UL calculates the cost per programme using a methodology that takes into account all factors involved in delivering the programme, including faculty, students, and the curriculum. This approach ensures reliable financial projections. (SAR, p. 61)

UL secures funding for its study programmes through a state budget grant from the Ministry of Education and Science, alongside tuition fees. Tuition fees are determined based on several factors, including the cost of delivering the study programme, tuition fees for similar programmes at other universities, potential student interest in the programme, expected state budget funding, and input from the student self-government. These fees are set annually at the end of the year to provide timely information and remain unchanged throughout a student’s studies unless the programme’s fees differ by year, in which case they are established at the beginning of the studies. (SAR, p. 61)

Study programmes can generate revenue through continuing education and other services, which are reinvested into programme development. In cases of financial need, the study quality improvement fund allocates part of the UL's annual budget to support various faculty needs, including new programme development or existing programme enhancements. All income from the state budget, tuition fees, and other sources supports the study programme after deducting indirect expenses, with faculties managing their allocated budget. Faculty financial accountability emphasizes overall performance rather than individual programmes, as faculty management monitors the study process, student enrollment trends, and the balance between programme costs and funding, making necessary adjustments to ensure long-term viability and development. (SAR, p. 61-62)

It could be concluded that the UL has implemented an effective financial system for supporting its study fields and programmes, ensuring that faculty salaries and administrative expenses are covered while also allowing for flexibility based on specific programme needs. Funding sources include state budget grants, tuition fees, and revenue from continuing education, with fees determined by various market factors remaining stable throughout a student's studies. Additionally, a study quality improvement fund supports faculty development and programme enhancements. Overall, UL’s financial strategy is designed to promote the successful delivery of study programmes

while fostering a collaborative environment for both faculty and students.

1.3.2. Detailed overview is offered in chapter 2.3.3 of the SAR as well as assessment visit interviews confirming that the UL has identified and has at its disposal all necessary infrastructure and material resources for the implementation of the study field and relevant programmes. These resources are accessible to both students and faculty. A unified system and procedures have been established for the development and acquisition of materials, methodological tools, information, and other resources.

The acquisition of new resources, including materials, methodological tools, and information, is funded through the UL central budget. However, the library can also purchase resources upon request from faculty, student government, or library staff, subject to approval by the relevant dean or director. (SAR 2.3.3.)

During the assessment visit, it was clarified that classes for the study programmes of the study field “Internal Security and Civil Protection” take place at Jelgavas iela 1, with the exception of some laboratory work, which is conducted in the main UL building (Raiņa bulvāris 19). It was demonstrated during the assessment visit that the classrooms are modern, equipped with adjustable lighting, and technical media (laptops, projectors, interactive whiteboards, etc.) as well as several laboratories were demonstrated. For example the Work Technology Laboratory, the Occupational Safety Laboratory, and the Physical and Psychological Workload Laboratory. Although those laboratories were available for both faculty and students to use in their research, final thesis etc, few questions arose during the assessment visit. For instance, concerns were raised regarding the collection of used emergency shower water and the containment of contaminated water. It was understood that drainage systems cannot be installed in these showers, as contaminated water must not enter the sewage system, however, it was not entirely clear to what extent this contaminated water could spread in the corridors without any barriers in place. Additionally, questions emerged regarding the measurement of electromagnetic fields in various work processes (e.g. timber preparation). Nonetheless, these issues were not deemed critical for the instruction of the study field and will not be further addressed in this report. They are noted here to allow UL to internally verify whether safety measures are in place and to determine if any enhancements are needed.

1.3.3. The UL library is committed to addressing the information needs of all users, including students at various academic levels, faculty members, and researchers. The library consistently updates its collections to remain aligned with the university's academic and research priorities, with a strong emphasis on electronic resources that provide access to a wide range of information, including books, articles, and databases. The collection is housed within the eight specialized libraries and a central repository, ensuring easy access to all areas of study. In the previous year, a UL lecturer published "Civil Defense," a groundbreaking work in Latvia that benefits students in their studies. (SAR 2.3.3) Also it was clarified during the assessment visit that the UL funds the acquisition of new resources through its central budget, allowing both students and faculty to submit requests for new materials.

Detailed information about library services can be found on the UL website (https://www.biblioteka.lu.lv/en/), where it is indicated that students have the option to request materials from other libraries across Latvia if the resources they need are not available at UL. According to SAR chapter 2.3.3 and the information gathered during the visit, the UL library, identified as Library Register BLB1000, functions as a comprehensive resource divided into eight specialized libraries. As of 2022, the library's collection includes approximately 1.8 million information units, with a substantial portion housed in the Natural Sciences Library located at

Jelgavas iela 1. This library specializes in resources related to occupational safety, health, ergonomics, and work safety, spanning a total area of 662.80 square meters, and fully supports UL's educational programmes and research in these domains.

1.3.4. According to the SAR chapter 2.3.4 and findings from the assessment visit, the study field and relevant study programmes make extensive use of information and communication technology (ICT) solutions. The UL believes that effective use of ICT tools enhances student motivation and learning outcomes. (SAR, p. 70)

Students and academic staff have access to the MS Office 365 suite, which includes a range of applications for productivity and collaboration. Additionally, students, faculty, and staff can utilize specialized software such as SPSS, QuestionPro, Autodesk, MathWorks MstLAB etc. These programmes are accessible both on and off campus. (SAR, p. 70)

The Moodle learning management system serves as the primary e-learning platform for the study programmes. Microsoft Teams and BigBlueButton are also widely used for online collaboration and communication. Students at all levels can submit and receive assignments, independent work, and tests through the e-learning environment. (SAR, p 71)

During the assessment visit, the capabilities of the Moodle platform were demonstrated across various levels of study, as well as it was confirmed that all study rooms are equipped with high-speed internet access and students have access to 1 TB of OneDrive storage through the MS Office 365 cloud service.

Overall, it could be concluded that the ICT solutions employed to support the study programmes are suitable and effective for the educational process.

1.3.5. According to SAR chapter 2.3.5 and based on the assessment visit, the UL recognizes three categories of academic staff: those with permanent academic positions, individuals serving as acting or visiting faculty members, and part-time instructors who do not hold tenure-track positions. Faculty members are selected according to the UL "Regulatory Enactments on Academic and Administrative Positions," which outlines various academic roles, including professor, associate professor, assistant professor, senior researcher, lecturer, researcher, assistant, and research assistant. Positions are established at the faculty level, and candidates are required to deliver an open lecture that will be evaluated by a panel of reviewers. Each candidate must also meet specific minimum qualifications. (SAR 2.3.5)

When assessing candidates, the UL considers their experience in occupational safety, encompassing both academic and professional backgrounds. Faculty members actively engage in various scientific and practical conferences, both domestically and internationally. Moreover, many faculty members participate in organizations such as the Ergonomists' Association, Mission Zero, the Latvian Confederation of Free Trade Unions, and the Latvian Employers' Confederation. (SAR 2.3.5)

The faculties at UL determine the specific needs for positions within their departments. Information regarding these positions, including responsibilities and required qualifications, is communicated through multiple channels: the UL website (available in Latvian at https://www.lu.lv/par-mums/vakances/ and in English at https://www.lu.lv/en/about-us/vacancies/), the National Scientific Activity Information System, and the State Employment Agency's vacancy portal. Applications are welcomed from anyone who meets the criteria established by the Law on Higher Education Institutions. (SAR 2.3.5)

Additionally, the UL frequently invites industry professionals to serve as guest lecturers, delivering specialized lectures, leading practical classes, and supervising student internships. It was observed during the assessment visit that the UL engages both graduates and employers as guest lecturers, which ensures that the curriculum stays aligned with current industry trends. This strategy also helps maintain a network that can be accessed for future guest lecturers when required.

1.3.6. According to SAR chapter 2.3.6 and findings from the assessment visit, the UL Strategy for 2021-2027 (available at: https://www.lu.lv/en/about-us/documents/sustainable-development-goals/) outlines a commitment to fostering faculty development, growth, and renewal. The strategy aims to establish a performance-based personnel management system that includes competitive compensation while enhancing career development opportunities for academic staff. Additionally, UL seeks to attract both local and international faculty, as well as emerging talent, and promote international mobility.

The professional development of the academic staff is guided by specific Cabinet Regulations, including No. 569 and No. 129, which outline the necessary qualifications and development frameworks for higher education educators. Many faculty members within various study fields are actively involved in providing informational, consultative, and methodological support to their colleagues. For instance, program directors have led and coordinated projects aimed at developing internationally competitive study programs aligned with the national economic landscape. (SAR 2.3.6.)

To facilitate skill enhancement, the UL offers numerous professional development opportunities, such as the Faculty of Humanities' Applied Linguistics Center's course on "Enhancing the Scientific and Academic English Proficiency of Academic Staff," which has been successfully completed by four faculty members in the past two years. (SAR 2.3.6)
The study programmes actively promote peer learning and the sharing of best practices in teaching. Faculty members engage in peer observations to refine their pedagogical skills, with the support particularly focused on developing junior faculty. While the COVID-19 pandemic posed challenges for in-person observations, faculty adapted by observing online lectures and classes. (SAR 2.3.6.)

In addition, professional development courses specifically designed for working with first-year students have proven popular among faculty, contributing to the effective integration of new students into academic life. The data presented in SAR Table 2.3.6.1 indicates that faculty members have shown strong engagement in professional development activities, with a significant number attending national and international conferences to further their expertise and collaborative networks.

Surveys conducted to ascertain the professional development needs of academic staff have guided the creation of relevant training programs, ensuring that faculty have access to support that aligns with their educational responsibilities. (SAR 2.3.6.) Faculty expressed satisfaction with their roles within the study programs during the assessment visit and recognized opportunities for further growth and professional development.

Altogether, the UL Strategy 2021-2027 reflects a comprehensive approach to faculty development, emphasizing the importance of continual learning, collaboration, and the integration of innovative practices to ensure high-quality education that meets modern academic standards.

1.3.7. Based on the findings in SAR chapter 2.3.7 and the assessment visit, a significant number of academic staff, totaling 52, are involved in the study field and relevant study programmes. On

average, each faculty member teaches approximately 3-5 courses, and concurrently supervises student projects, bachelor's theses, master's theses, doctoral dissertations, and student internships. The programme's directors are responsible for coordinating faculty involvement. Almost all faculty members are employed full-time.

To ensure the programme's success, industry experts and representatives from employers are involved in the delivery of the study programmes. Guest lecturers and professors from both Latvia and abroad also contribute to the teaching. Annex 13 (see annex: Annex_13_Statistics on incoming and outgoing mobility of teaching staff.docx) of the report provides an overview of faculty mobility, both incoming and outgoing, from the 2013/2014 to the 2021/2022 academic years. As the study programme's recognition grows both domestically and internationally, so too does faculty mobility. The Erasmus+ programme is the most widely utilized for faculty mobility.

During the assessment visit, it was confirmed that the teaching staff is highly motivated and eager to give their best to ensure quality education and the development of future generations. They hold the environment provided by the UL in high regard, and therefore are also willing to contribute significantly. However, a subtle underlying desire was expressed for a better balance between work and family life. This suggests that while everything is currently going well, continuing at the same level in the long term may lead to burnout. Therefore, it would be beneficial to consider conducting a workload analysis as the next step to find an optimal solution for both the employer and the employees.

1.3.8. As outlined in SAR chapter 2.3.8 and confirmed by the assessment visit, UL provides students with academic, career development, and psychological support.

Academic support offers students information and guidance throughout their studies. This support is provided by a range of staff including academic advisors, administrative staff, study advisors, mentors, the Student Council, the study programmes directors, and the Student Services Department. Students receive information on the programme's content, course selection, regulations, and study skills such as note-taking, reading academic literature, active listening, managing exam anxiety, time management, and utilizing library and internet resources. (SAR 2.3.8) During the assessment visit, students highlighted the importance of this support, especially when starting their studies.

Career development support is provided by the Career Development Center within the Student Services Department, in collaboration with faculties. Services include individual consultations, career planning, and support for transitions within and beyond the study programmes, including job market entry. Workshops on career planning skills, such as "My First Job Interview," are also organized. These services are complemented by the Career Center's website and the electronic resource "E-karjera," which help students find and apply for job vacancies. (SAR 2.3.8)

Psychological support is provided by a consultant psychologist within the Student Services Department. Students receive assistance with various conflicts through both in-person and remote consultations. Special orientation events are organized for international students to familiarize them with Latvian culture and traditions. (SAR 2.3.8) During the assessment visit, it became clear that the students were aware of the available opportunities and utilized them based on their needs. Even in cases where the need might not have been significant, they felt that since such assistance was available, they would rather take advantage of it and gain richer experiences. This is a good example of how the services offered are not just a formality on paper but enrich the learning environment and provide students with a sense of security, knowing that help is close at hand when

needed.

A successful collaboration with the disability association "Apeirons" encourages students with disabilities to pursue higher education. The association's expertise in assessing workplace risks for individuals with disabilities and developing recommendations for ergonomic workplaces is invaluable to study programmes. Given Latvia's labour shortage, there is a growing emphasis on encouraging employers to hire people with disabilities, as well as pre-retirement and retired individuals. (SAR 2.3.8.)

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

In summary, the UL demonstrates a robust compliance with the criteria, showcasing strengths that include a well-structured financial support system, adequate infrastructure, effective educational tools, a commitment to staff and student support, and a collaborative environment. However, addressing the identified weaknesses can lead to further improvement, particularly in ensuring safety and enhancing faculty mobility, which are essential for maintaining high standards in higher education.

Strengths:
1) The study field and relevant study programmes benefit from a dedicated faculty with experience in both academia and the occupational safety field. UL fosters faculty development through training opportunities and encourages international collaboration.
2) Modern classrooms equipped with technology, a well-stocked library with industry-specific materials, and readily available software tools support effective teaching and learning.
3) A wide range of academic, career development, and psychological support services are provided to students throughout their studies.

Weaknesses:
1) While faculty members have good opportunities for domestic training and professional development, international mobility has been somewhat limited. This could restrict faculty exposure to global best practices and peer networks.
2) A potential weakness is the workload of academic staff, which may necessitate careful monitoring to ensure sustainability. Faculty members often occupy multiple roles and responsibilities, indicating a need for a structured system to evaluate and adjust workloads. Without this, there is a risk of burnout, which could ultimately compromise the quality of teaching and research.

1.4. Scientific Research and Artistic Creation

Analysis

1.4.1. UL has the main goal to provide research-based and innovative civil and occupational health and safety studies, including their newest concepts - ergonomics, human factors using modern and competitive educational technologies, promoting the development of higher level studies, scientific activities of students and staff, multi-disciplinary, subject-oriented approach SAR (p. 18). UL Strategy 2021-2027 (available at: https://www.lu.lv/en/about-us/the-university-of-latvia-brand/mission-vision-values/) establishes ambitious objectives, including an average of 7 citations per publication by 2027, a target of 10% for the proportion of young academic staff relative to the total number of academic staff by the same year, and an objective for 83% to 85% of employers to be satisfied with the knowledge and skills of UL graduates by 2024. These goals are further supported by the Quality Policy.

Study Field “Internal Security and Civil Protection” objectives include promotion of scientific and applied research, also study programmes implements the main theses of the Bologna Declaration (SAR, p. 19). The study courses in English in the Bachelor's and Master's programmes of the Short-cycle professional higher education study programme "labour protection” have so far been hampered by the specifics of the Latvian labour market and the legal framework (SAR p. 19). During an assessment visit it was explained by the programme directors that currently only doctoral study programmes are provided in English and currently only one foreign student is attracted. However, students and alumni were very positive about the future possibility to receive studies in English, it is enhancing collaborations and future development of scientific/applied research. Additional dissemination activities may be necessary to attract more students, however, during assessment visit, it was noted that market research has already been conducted to assess student needs.

According to the SAR (p. 21) the scientific research directions of the study field are adequately designed to meet the industry's needs for qualified professionals who can effectively manage workplace safety and compliance with occupational safety regulations. The study field has a long-standing successful cooperation with occupational health and health promotion study programmes in other Latvian universities (SAR, p. 21).

The process of selecting academics involves a thorough assessment and review to ensure that academics meet the requirements and are competent in their fields. This includes assessing the experience and qualifications of teaching staff, as well as evaluating pedagogical, scientific and practical achievements (SAR, p. 76).

The UL is ranked 482nd in Times Higher Education, so it has high goals. As for Academic Doctoral (Third-cycle) Study Programme “Human Factors, Occupational Safety and Health” 12 major projects align with strategic goals, 15 (100%) are engaged in strategic research initiatives (SAR, p. 243-251).

All research areas have been identified for the field of study and the corresponding study programmes (SAR, p. 83). Research focuses on applied aspects of labour protection, such as the development and implementation of safety management systems and the evaluation of workplace hazards, aligning with the strategic goals of the UL to promote practical and applicable research (e.g. more than 100 papers from the research of the lecturers of the programme in the field of labour protection has been published in scientific journals). (SAR, p. 171).

According the annexes offered (see annexes: Annex_1_List of the Main Internal Normative Acts and Regulations of the University of Latvia_03-04-2024.docx, Annex_2_Management structure of the institution of higher education.docx and Annex_3_Development plan of the study direction.docx) the Study Field “Internal Security and Civil Protection” research directions align with institutional goals and industry needs, making it highly relevant and applied in the field of labour protection. (SAR, p. 7).

It could be concluded that as it is emphasized in the SAR (p. 22) as well as in the annexes (see annexes: Annex_3_Development plan of the study direction.docx, Annex_10_List of cooperation agreements.docx) the study field research activities are created to address the challenges faced by industries in Latvia and the broader European context, such as compliance with EU regulations on occupational health and safety. The study field plays a significant role in producing graduates who are well prepared to contribute to safety management practices in various industries, emphasizing the relevance and applicability of its research focus.

1.4.2. The development plan for the Study Field "Internal Security and Civil Protection" for

2020-2025 (see annex: Annex_3_Development plan of the study direction.docx) is well elaborated. It includes provisions for organizing an annual meeting with academic staff involved in the study programs to ensure the interconnection of study courses, which is regularly implemented (SAR, p. 74). Additionally, the number of scientific seminars, or think tanks, in which teaching staff and researchers from various sub-fields participate in discussions and review research results is expected to increase from 2 in 2024 to 4 by 2027. Furthermore, the objectives of the Study Field align with the strategic objectives of the UL (SAR, p. 18).

The study field "Internal Security and Civil Protection" fully integrates applied research into the study process, enabling students to engage in projects that reflect contemporary trends in labour protection. For example, courses such as "Introduction to Labour Protection" and "Safety Management Systems" incorporate case studies and research findings, ensuring that students learn from current industry practices (SAR, p. 87, Annex 1. List of the Main Internal Normative Acts and Regulations of the University of Latvia_03-04-2024.docx, Annex_5_Analysis of survey results for students, alumni and employers.docx, Annex_6_Basic information regarding the teachers involved in the implementation of the study direction.xlsx).
The study field promotes a practical approach to learning, requiring students to participate in internships and project-based learning experiences that involve research and the application of health and safety practices (SAR, p. 12). Furthermore, the study field encourages an interdisciplinary approach by integrating insights from engineering, management, and legal studies, providing a comprehensive understanding of labour protection within the study field structure (Rector’s Consolidation Proposal from 16.11.23, see also annex 5 and annex 10 referenced above).

During the assessment visit the programmes directors presented and clarified the latest integrated teaching methods used in the courses, including risk evaluation techniques, which confirmed that the integration of research and applied learning into the study process is logical and well-justified, equipping students with essential practical skills and knowledge.

According to SAR (p. 84-85), as well as it was confirmed during the assessment visit that the use of research results is foreseen in the orientation courses, especially at master's and doctoral level Course descriptions are regularly updated to include the latest specialized literature, scientific articles and databases. Graduates demonstrate the ability to manage large-scale occupational health and safety projects at national and international level. Scientific research is a regular part of the study process: both within individual study courses (reports, essays) and in coursework and final projects.

The topicality and significance of the research carried out by academic staff is demonstrated by their active participation in several state-funded projects, including projects of the State Research Programme, such as “Development of internationally competitive study programmes promoting the development of Latvian national economy at the University of Latvia” (SAR, p. 88).

Cooperation with other universities in research enables UL to stay up-to-date with current trends at both local and foreign institutions, thereby enhancing the content of the study programmes within the study field. The involvement of industry representatives in the study process is emphasized, as illustrated by partnerships with organizations such as the Latvian Ergonomics Society (SAR, p. 21). Collaboration with employers is crucial for providing students with internship opportunities, supported by memorandums signed with the Business Efficiency Association and the Latvian Ergonomics Society, which facilitate access to industry organizations and help students effectively secure internships. (SAR, p. 21) This cooperation not only contributes to the further development and updating of study program content in alignment with national priorities and employers'

requirements, but was also confirmed during the assessment visit by feedback from alumni and employers.

1.4.3. International collaboration in scientific research within the field of study is demonstrated during the assessment visit through various means, including the involvement of academic staff in international projects, participation in international scientific conferences, organization of such conferences, and serving as chairs of conference sessions. Additionally, faculty members engage with international and regional research networks, organizations, and associations.

UL has very tight connection with International Ergonomics Association (www.iea.cc), European Federation of Ergonomics Societies (www.ergonomics-fees.eu), European Centre for Registration of Ergonomists (see: www.eurerg.eu/), etc. During the assessment visit the employers also confirmed an informal cluster network devoted to Health and Safety. Formally UL has a high capacity thanks to the extensive network with foreign partners, including universities - more than 180 bilateral agreements between universities and within the Erasmus+ programme (see annex: Annex_10_List of cooperation agreements.docx).

During the reporting period, on average 2-4 international research projects were carried out per year, including cooperation with partners from the USA, Estonia, Spain, etc. Successful cooperation in Master's and Doctoral programmes has been established with several internationally renowned professors and researchers in the field of project, research and conference organization, for example prof. Andris Freivald (USA), Prof. Eda Merisalu (Estonia), Prof. Marina Jarvis (Estonia); prof. Victor Oltra (Spain), etc. (SAR, p. 86). It should be noted that successful research cooperation has also been established at the national level (Riga Technical University, Riga Stradins University, Latvian University of Life Sciences and Technologies), which is often reflected at the international level. Academic staff and scientists are active members of several international institutions/organizations (SAR, p. 87). Active research and cooperation agreements with proactive activities were emphasized during the assessment visit by academic staff as well as by the study programmes directors.

International cooperation within the UL primarily focuses on the Latvian and European regions, facilitating the development and research efforts of its programs. Collaborative partnerships with universities and organizations in health and safety across Europe enable joint projects and promote knowledge exchange, thereby broadening the program's international reach (SAR, p. 21-22).

The strategies set forth in the University of Latvia Strategy 2021-2027 (available at: https://www.lu.lv/en/about-us/the-university-of-latvia-brand/mission-vision-values/) aim for a significant increase in joint publications with international partners, targeting a range of 53 to 55% in the SCOPUS and Web of Science databases by 2027. Additionally, there is a goal to reach 35 to 40 joint publications with industry indexed in SCOPUS.

Cooperation agreements have been established with several institutions, including the Estonian University of Life Sciences, Penn State University (USA), the University of Valencia (Spain), and Tallinn University of Technology (Taltech). These collaborations significantly contribute to attracting foreign guest lecturers, enriching the educational offerings at UL (SAR, p. 20). Furthermore, memorandum of cooperation have been signed with Latvian institutions such as the Latvian Ergonomics Society and the Business Efficiency Association, thereby enhancing access to industry organizations for student placements. (SAR, p. 20)

The study field also engages with various stakeholders, such as the Employers' Confederation of Latvia, the State Labour Inspectorate, and several NGOs, including the Latvian Ergonomics Society

and the Association of Occupational Safety and Health Specialists. Partnerships with academic institutions, like the RSU Institute of Occupational Safety and Environmental Health, and companies in the labor market, including StoraEnso and Cēsu Alus, ensure a robust network that supports the curriculum and research initiatives (SAR, p. 92). Regular guest lectures by legal and safety experts are conducted each autumn semester, providing students with insights into the latest changes in labor protection laws (SAR, p. 93).

In 2022, representatives from the Latvian Ergonomics Society, including students, doctoral candidates, and faculty, participated in training sessions for middle-level managers and inspectors in labor protection and ergonomics, underscoring the collaborative spirit of the study field (SAR, p. 94). Cooperation platforms, such as ERASMUS+, Campus Europae, and ISEP exchange programmes, along with various bilateral agreements, further enrich the international engagement of the study field (SAR, p. 95).

Although some examples of cooperation referenced in the SAR date back to 2016 (SAR p. 96-97), insights gathered during the assessment visit highlighted the ongoing collaboration efforts, particularly with leading ergonomics associations like the Latvian Ergonomics Society and industry leaders such as Schwenk and Knauf.

Additionally, the study field actively supports and hosts international workshops and seminars that are regularly attended by faculty, enriching the academic environment with global insights (see Annex 3 and Annex 5 referenced in chapter 1.4.2). In this context, UL fully embraces international cooperation to enhance research and academic exchange.

The study field encourages student and faculty mobility through initiatives like ERASMUS+, allowing participants to gain valuable international perspectives and experience (see annex: Annex_6_Basic information regarding the teachers involved in the implementation of the study direction.xlsx). UL boasts over 150 ERASMUS+ cooperation agreements (SAR p. 98). While ERASMUS travel has seen an increase, particularly for faculty, overall student participation remains low, with only 12 students participating since the establishment of the study field. For faculty, there were 8 incoming and 9 outgoing staff members within the last five years, predominantly programme directors (see annexes: Annex_12_Statistics on outbound and incoming mobility of students.docx and Annex_13_Statistics on incoming and outgoing mobility of teaching staff.docx).

During the assessment visit, concerns related to international mobility were discussed, particularly regarding fear and the need for more promotion and additional support for these opportunities. These challenges have been outlined in the SAR (p. 78), emphasizing the importance of addressing these barriers to encourage greater participation among students and faculty in international programmes.

1.4.4. Faculty members are supported by management to participate in applied research projects and industry collaborations, supported by institutional strategies such as research funding and professional development opportunities. Study field has a development plan 2021-2027 to involve staff in the conference participation (see annex: Annex_3_Development plan of the study direction.docx) from 20 to 25 till 2026 as well to increase SCOPUS/Web of Science publications from 25 to 35 till 2026. Private sector funding for research (EUR) to increase till 1 200 000 EUR till 2027 which is stated also in the UL Strategy 2021-2027 (available at:https://www.lu.lv/en/about-us/the-university-of-latvia-brand/mission-vision-values/).

The involvement of teaching staff in research develops their expertise and contributes to high-

quality teaching (SAR, p. 75-79). Research findings and industry developments are regularly incorporated into teaching materials, ensuring that the curriculum remains relevant and state of art. (See annexes: Annex_3_Development plan of the study direction.docx, Annex_14_Recommendation Timeout Report 2703.docx). The mechanisms for faculty staff involvement in study field research are well-established and effective, supporting the programme's academic goals. Talent development for Human Resources is present in UL Strategy 2021-2027 (available at: https://www.lu.lv/en/about-us/the-university-of-latvia-brand/mission-vision-values/) as well as research funding from international resources in relation to one full-time equivalent (in EUR) of the academic staff to increase from 17 000 to 20 000 till 2027.

Study programmes directors are opinion leaders and thought leaders in the field of occupational health and ergonomics in Latvia (SAR, p. 26). During the assessment visit, the study programmes directors confirmed a high communication and motivation approach.

In the study field, the involvement of teaching staff in scientific research is actively encouraged (SAR, p. 87). Providing material support for publication in category Q1 or Q2 in the Web of Science database, providing material support for publication in category Q1 or Q2 in the Web of Science database. Research and studies focus heavily on cooperation with social partners, including the Employers' Confederation of Latvia (SAR p.88).

Mobility indicators are not impressive - 3 in 2022, 4 in 2024 and 5 planned for 2027 (see annex: Annex_3_Development plan of the study direction.docx) also summary of statistics on inbound and outbound mobility of teaching staff during the reporting period (2013/2014 - 2021/2022, see annex: Annex_13_Statistics on incoming and outgoing mobility of teaching staff.docx). However, during the assessment visit, it was evident that the teaching staff was open to mobility, and examples were provided where there was initially some apprehension about it. Later, however, they felt very grateful for having taken advantage of that opportunity. This suggests that increasing mobility requires just a bit of support and encouragement, as well as the sharing of experiences from those who have participated, in order to help a larger number of faculty members who are hesitant to lean towards utilizing mobility opportunities.

1.4.5. Study field has a development plan 2021-2027 to involve students in the preparation of publications (see annex: Annex_3_Development plan of the study direction.docx) from 10 to 12 till 2026. UL has developed requirements and selection criteria for attracting new doctoral students in the framework of the project “Growth and Employment” (SAR, p. 75).

Students are involved in research work, producing final theses for each study programme, in particular the final theses for the Master's and Doctoral programmes are of high scientific novelty. Students in the programmes have the opportunity to volunteer as research participants in research carried out by the academic staff of the programme, thus gaining a better understanding of the research process. For example, students participate in the organization and implementation of various surveys, collecting the necessary data and processing and analyzing the results (SAR, p. 85). During their bachelor studies, students prepare their first independent scientific work - a course paper analyzing the chosen topic. Students have the opportunity to participate free of charge in large-scale international and representative scientific conferences and guest lectures, organized by the University (SAR, p. 89).

Students have good opportunities to participate in research led by academic staff during their studies and to publish results in scientific journals, e.g. in 2014-2022, 5 MSc students were actively involved in publishing scientific manuscripts on such topics (SAR, p. 90). It was confirmed during an

assessment visit by students about possibility to participate (it is also obligatory requirement in scientific grants), while some students were asking for more serious involvement.

To develop support tools for talented low-income young people to make university studies more accessible, it is essential to focus on increasing the number of students receiving merit scholarships. Currently, the percentage of students receiving such scholarships from both the UL and the UL Foundation remains unchanged at 2%, as outlined in the UL Strategy 2021-2027 (available at:https://www.lu.lv/en/about-us/the-university-of-latvia-brand/mission-vision-values/). During the assessment visit, many students and alumni noted that the opportunities for free education require considerable effort to secure selection. State budget support is crucial for achieving this goal. As of 2022, state funding accounted for 62% of income across universities, while it constituted 50% of UL's income (SAR, p. 9 and 13; see also https://www.izm.gov.lv/lv/media/24807/download?attachment).

Additionally, the Latvian Ergonomics Society provides students opportunities to participate in educational events and conferences organized by UL during the reporting period. For instance, they recently hosted the 82st Scientific Conference of the University of Latvia, focusing on human factors, ergonomics, and industrial engineering (see https://www.konference82.lu.lv/en/).
According to the Study Field development plan (see annex: Annex_3_Development plan of the study direction.docx) the number of students who worked in scientific projects is planned to be increased from 4 to 6 by 2026. Working with industry conference organizers to give students the opportunity to attend industry exhibitions and conferences free of charge (SAR p. 27). Master's student consultancy project team: employers can apply for a consultancy project in which students carry out market research and develop a strategy for a real-life occupational health and safety issue within a limited timeframe. It was confirmed during assessment visit meeting with students and academic staff that there is a mechanism for forming student interest groups in different sectors with mentors.

It is planned as an organization of international cooperation with the Institute of Technology of the Estonian University of Life Sciences in the field of ergonomics for ERASMUS mobility (SAR, p. 27). But currently, as it is referenced above (Annex 3), the mobility indicators among students are not impressive - 1 in 2022, 2 in 2024 and 4 planned for 2027.

The Study Field actively supports students' participation in part-time work (SAR, p. 25) by adjusting class schedules and module timetables to accommodate their work commitments. During the assessment visit, students expressed their awareness of mobility activities; however, they also noted that while part-time jobs can be beneficial, they are very time-consuming. With most students balancing part-time work, finding opportunities to travel can be quite challenging.

The alumni club webpage (https://www.ak.lu.lv/) - which is designed to promote involvement of alumni has only 2 events dated 2023. During the assessment visit it was explained that informal clusters are more popular (e.g. whatsapp chats), also informal connections with study programmes management are very intensive.

Student involvement in research is effectively supported, with mechanisms encouraging active participation and practical application. Students are actively involved in applied research projects that are referenced to labour protection issues, with collaboration to industry partners for practical experience (SAR, p. 19 and 27). The study field provides platforms such as internships, workshops, and industry projects, encouraging students to engage in meaningful research activities (see annex: Annex_5_Analysis of survey results for students, alumni and employers.docx). Research components are integrated into the study programme with courses requiring students to complete research-

based projects and projects (see annexes: Annex_8_Summary of qualitative data regarding the scientific activity of the study direction.docx, Annex_9_ List of teaching staff publications for the reference period.docx, Annex_11_Statistics on foreign students and teaching staff.docx, Annex_14_Recommendation Timeout Report 2703.docx)

1.4.6. According to the study field development plan (see annex: Annex_3_Development plan of the study direction.docx) courses across all programmes of study using innovative methods, digital tools, instrument demonstrations, proportion is planned to be increased from 30% to 35% by 2027. Also there is a plan to increase the overall proportion of interdisciplinary courses in the direction of studies, promoting interdisciplinary approaches in study courses, attracting guest lecturers, and the proportion will be increased from 20% to 25% by 2027. Digitalization is also monitored study courses of major study programmes in which mid-term exams and student self-assessment tests are provided in the moodle environment from 60% are going to increase till 70% by 2027. Organizing seminars and experience exchange events for staff and students for innovative change at least 1.

In particular on innovations in the study process – teachers use a variety of interactive tools such as kahoot, menti.com, etc., and new methods such as integration of playing in case games, etc., in educating students (SAR, p. 75). During the assessment visit, interactive tools were demonstrated on Moodle, along with innovative methods. One particularly interesting approach was the use of video stories to attract students.

Innovative technologies and digital tools are used in the study field to enhance the learning experience, such as online simulations and interactive safety training modules. These tools help students develop practical skills necessary for modern labor protection roles. (SAR, p. 38, as well as annexes 3, 5, 6, 8 and 9 are confirming the information). Strong collaboration with industry partners ensures that the programmes in the Study Field incorporate the latest safety technologies and practices, maintaining study programmes relevance (see annex: Annex_10_List of cooperation agreements.docx). The study programmes are regularly updated to reflect advancements in labour protection technologies and methodologies, fostering a contemporary learning environment (see annex: Annex_14_Recommendation Timeout Report 2703.docx).

Innovative solutions are effectively applied through industry and international collaboration, positively impacting the study process and ensuring students are prepared for contemporary industry challenges. During the assessment visit, real equipment solutions were demonstrated on-site at the UL facility, as well as through Moodle presentation.

For example, in the Professional Master (Second-cycle) Study Programme “Work Environmental Protection and Expertise,” study course "Work Environment Expertise" has been improved with the latest globally popular methods of work environment risk assessment, risk matrices, and computer programmes, which are discussed in the monograph "Methods of Work Environment Risk Assessment" (Riga, Latvian Educational Foundation, 2008, p. 242), LEAN organized workplace: 6S practical advice (SAR p. 31). For teaching and research purposes, specific application software (ArcGIS, Bemese, CRYSTAL14, CrysTraMo, DFHBF, Eviews, FiMar, Geomatica, Idrisi, Mathematica, Matlab, Photomod, WUFI) is also available (SAR p. 63). The UL Library ensures free online access to the e-resources repository of UL at https://dspace.lu.lv/dspace/ (SAR p. 66), as well as subscriptions to e-resources in selected fields. Students have access to the Microsoft (henceforth – MS) Office 365 application package (SAR, p. 70).

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

In conclusion, the University of Latvia demonstrates a strong commitment to aligning its scientific research and applied studies with institutional development goals and industry needs within the Study Field "Internal Security and Civil Protection." The Study Field is well-aligned with the University's strategic objectives and national and European occupational safety standards, ensuring it effectively reflects industry needs and contributes to the broader strategic goals of workforce development in labor health and safety.

The study field emphasizes research-based education and contemporary concepts like ergonomics, focusing on practical aspects of labour protection that provide students with relevant skills for their future careers. By integrating applied research with practical learning experiences, such as internships and industry projects, the study field promotes active student engagement and ensures education remains applicable to workforce demands.

Moreover, UL has established strong international collaborations, including partnerships with European universities and participation in initiatives like ERASMUS+. However, current ERASMUS statistics for both students and staff highlight the need for greater participation and attention in this area, along with the development of English-language courses, which is still in its initial phase.

Faculty involvement in research and curriculum development is well-supported, and students have extensive opportunities to engage in research projects and industry collaborations. The study field also incorporates innovative teaching methods and technologies, such as digital simulations and interactive learning platforms, enriching the overall learning experience.

This comprehensive approach positions UL as a leader in higher education, particularly in the fields of safety management and occupational health, effectively preparing graduates to meet the demands of the industry.

Strengths:
1) Alignment with UL development goals and Industry contemporary challenges.
2) Integration of Research and Practice (practical application of real projects and case studies).
3) Good interdisciplinary Approach: The study field incorporates insights from engineering, management, and legal studies, providing a comprehensive understanding of labour protection.
4) UL has formed over 180 bilateral agreements and is actively involved in networks such as the International Ergonomics Association, offering students and staff numerous opportunities for international research and exchange.
5) The study field integrates innovative teaching methods and technologies, such as digital simulations and interactive learning platforms.
6) Motivated staff for research work and the involvement of students in research.

Weaknesses:
1) While there is awareness of mobility activities among students, the assessment visit indicated that more promotion and support are needed to encourage participation in these opportunities.

Assessment of the requirement [2]

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The Study Field is well-aligned with the UL's strategic goals towards scientific research. The

research directions focus on the practical aspects of labour protection, consistent with industry demands and regulatory requirements. Students are effectively integrated in applied research with practical learning experiences. The SF has established strong local and international collaborations, including partnerships with European universities. The study field integrates innovative teaching methods and technologies.

1.5. Cooperation and Internationalisation

Analysis

1.5.1. The achievement of learning outcomes and competences of students completing UL (all degree programmes) is at a high level according to the data in SAR (p. 91-94) and assessment visit. The study programmes is conducted in cooperation with the Employers' Confederation of Latvia, the Free Trade Union Confederation of Latvia, the Latvian Ergonomics Society, the Business Efficiency Association, the Latvian Association of Labour Protection Specialists, the Labour Department of the Ministry of Welfare, the Ministry of Education and Science, and other organizations. The selection criteria for cooperation partners are based on current trends in study and research content, the labour market and in academic and public debate. The cooperation of the study area with Latvian institutions is based to a large extent on the many years of academic and practical experience of the lecturers involved in the study area and the resulting network of cooperation partners (SAR, p. 94). Representatives of the practice regularly participate in the development of new or the updating of existing curricula and programmes, which guarantees their relevance and adequacy to the requirements and needs of the labour market. The main driving force for promoting cooperation and improving study programmes is new management and directors of study programmes.

During the assessment visit and discussions with representatives of the teaching staff, administration, alumni and employers, the expert team gained the impression that a very high level of cooperation has been achieved within the degree programme, which contributes to better quality and delivery of all studies. The UL study field regularly cooperates with Latvian state institutions, companies, industry associations, various organizations, and other higher education institutions.

This applies in particular to the number of cooperating organizations presented in the form of Annex 10 (see annex: Annex_10_List of Cooperation Agreements). There are a total of 143 agreements for internships covering all study programmes and 12 agreements and memoranda of cooperation. Collaboration takes place through institutional collaboration agreements and through the results of the networking of the academic staff of the study area in active research and practice activities and participation in the specialities implemented in the study area (SAR, p. 92). According to SAR (p. 92) and assessment visit, cooperation with various Latvian institutions is in line with the achievement of the study area's development goals, the implementation of study programmes and related research. Cooperation takes place with labour market actors including companies and employers (StoraEnso, Ventspils Oil Terminal, Cēsu Alus, Brabantia Latvia, KATE SIA, Rīga HES), labour market organizations (Employers' Confederation of Latvia, the State Labour Inspectorate, non-governmental organizations, The Latvian Ergonomics Society, the Association of Occupational Safety and Health Specialists), municipalities, non-governmental organizations, scientific organizations (RSU Institute of Occupational Safety and Environmental Health), and other higher education institutions (a long-term successful scientific, academic cooperation with other Latvian higher education institutions - RTU, RSU, LBTU, Banku augstskola).

Students, doctoral students, graduates and lecturers of the study field participated in several visits to companies (Jēkabpils PMK, Ventspils nafta Termināls, Stora Enso Packaging) where they have

both acquired in-depth practical knowledge, skills and competences related to occupational and civil protection, occupational safety, ergonomics, as well as provided added value to the companies by offering and implementing training for company representatives, assessing the company's occupational safety management and operational processes, e.g. in LEAN efficiency (SAR, p. 94).

The close collaboration with the academic community manifests itself in joint activities such as: collaboration on professorial and dissertation councils, professors of the Study Field and professors of other higher education institutions cooperate in the final examination committees of bachelor study programmes, professors and professors of other higher education institutions, doctoral students and master students cooperate in international scientific projects, scientific and academic conferences, seminars, scientific publications and textbooks, academic staff participate in exchanges of experience with lecturers, doctoral students and postgraduate students of other universities, students of the Study Field have the opportunity to study the study courses of interest also at other higher education institutions in free elective Part C study courses (SAR, p. 92).

Regarding the partnership with the practice at the national level, it can be said that it is satisfactory. Cooperation activities are carried out in the study and research process through guest lectures, study visits, case studies in study process activities and research papers, consultations and other activities directly in the study and research process in the Study Field. According to SAR (p. 94) in cooperation with one of the partners of the field of study, the Latvian Ergonomics Society, in 2022 several students, doctoral students, graduates, lecturers, guest lecturers and invited experts of the study field participated in the organization of training for middle-level managers and inspectors of the Riga Municipal Police and SJSC "Latvijas Dzelzceļš" in the field of labor protection and ergonomics.

During the assessment visit, it was noted that the Master's programme is recognised by employers and they hope that doctoral studies and research will contribute to strengthening inter-institutional cooperation in the future.

Collaboration with other universities is not yet very advanced, but major changes are expected in the near future due to legislative changes. Collaboration with industry is particularly strong due to its practical nature of the BSc programme. There is close collaboration with RTU's Faculty of Materials Science and Applied Chemistry and its institute, the Institute of Polymer Materials, in the field of study, which is reflected in joint research work on nanoparticles, polymers, silicates and ceramic composites (SAR, p. 93). Joint conferences are also organized with the RTU. There is also cooperation with the Institute of Occupational Safety and Environmental Health at Riga Stradiņš University in the field of occupational medicine and occupational health and safety. Students can complete internships in various healthcare institutions and participate in the RSU's annual scientific conferences with lectures. Several graduates decide to write master's theses on the effects of occupational risk factors on workers' health. RSU agency staff provide advice and perform the necessary laboratory measurements in the areas of occupational physiology, physical and chemical risk assessment if required for the Master's thesis (SAR, p. 94).

According to SAR, p. 92-93, the involvement of employers and professional organizations in studies and research is based on: Preparation of study programmes, guest lectures, meetings of alumni with students, internships for students, internships of students in companies and institutions, joint seminars with employers, participation in final examination committees, participation in the work of the study programme council, participation in surveys on the quality of study programmes, participation in academic conferences, participation in career days, etc.

In the future, the establishment of an academic center for the development of student research is expected in order to achieve recognition of its unique range of courses in the EU. Discussions with the programme directors revealed that the integration of the programme into society and the community contributes to better recognition, which is highly commendable. In this sense, the continuity and cycle of 4 different degree programmes in the same professional field is justified, with a particular focus on research within the doctoral programme in collaboration with the Ergonomics Society. At the conference, they organized a special thematic area to promote the profession. In doctoral research, they see development opportunities towards good business models and opportunities and implementation in the IT sector, which can contribute to the development of the profession at a higher level. In the future, they want to set up a laboratory for applied research in collaboration with industry, although the limitation is the lack of financial resources.

During the assessment visit and discussions with employer representatives, great interest was expressed in joint co-operation and market supervision in order to further develop the profession. The vast majority of professionals have completed these programmes (60-70%), giving them a high reputation.

Employers also expressed the wish that cooperation within the Council should continue to their mutual satisfaction and that discussions and dialogues should be held on the development and modification of study programmes and not just on the implementation of traditional surveys. The development of mutual trust between industry and the education sector in relation to human resource development, the development of micro-qualifications and seminars for employers and the implementation of new and topical subjects in the curriculum are particularly emphasized. Also, during the assessment visit it was pointed out that most practice partners cannot help much with material resources. A good possibility is the development of joint projects. According to the employers, help is not only measured in terms of technical equipment, but also in terms of time, staff and resources allocated to carry out learning placements for students. The possibility of a work placement is extremely beneficial for students, as they can test the knowledge and skills acquired in lectures in practice and thus gain a better idea of the methods, means and procedures involved in carrying out the activities in question. As part of the research, it would be interesting to observe new changes in the environment such as climate change, stress, bullying as new modern threats to safety and work. Employers expressed great interest in developing current and future co-operation on the basis of a joint partnership relationship. This applies in particular to the initiative to change and modernize study programmes.

1.5.2. The objectives of the international cooperation of the study area include the promotion and implementation of internationalization activities, including participation in international projects, the presentation of the study area in relevant international specialist organizations and the improvement of the study programmes in accordance with international standards. The most important areas of international cooperation are listed in section 2.5.2 of the SAR (p. 94-97). They are expressed in the form of guest lectures by representatives of companies/organizations, visits to companies, participation of teaching staff and students in scientific conferences and seminars. There is close co-operation with the Estonian University of Life Sciences, which fully covers the travel and accommodation costs of the two students. The agreement provides for further cooperation in the area of student and lecturer exchanges, joint seminars, conferences and congresses in the field of occupational safety and ergonomics.

Further strong collaborations exist with: Penn State University, USA, and the University of Valencia, Spain, as well as the University of Marseille, France. The cooperation is defined above all by participation in final examination committees for Bachelor's, Master's and doctoral degree

programmes, international scientific projects, scientific and academic conferences, guest lectures, seminars, preparation of scientific publications and textbooks; exchange of experience with lecturers, doctoral and Master's students from foreign universities, participation of academic staff in the preparation of degree programmes, study trips, work of the study area and the departmental council; scientific advice on doctoral theses.

A very good example (SAR, p. 96) is the German company KATHREIN-Werke KG and the cooperation on the topic - "Business administration, occupational health and safety management in the company, production organization, LEAN management, human factor and ergonomics", at Volvo Cars, learning ergonomics and human factor analysis in automotive engineering.

According to Annex 13 (see annex: Annex_13_Statistics on teacher mobility 2022/2023) - 4 incomings and 4 outgoings, the mobility of teachers are available and in the reporting period, there were 10 incoming and 13 outgoing mobilities. The COVID-19 period reflects these activities as they were all in the EU, but the activities after this period show that UL is working very hard in the area of internationalization. Most collaborations are with the USA, Czech Republic, France, Germany, Spain, Slovenia, Estonia, Lithuania, Austria, Iceland, Poland and Serbia.

In order to attract employers to the field of study, there is a mechanism based on partnerships with companies and organizations active in the field of occupational safety and health, which are invited to participate in the development of study programmes, give guest lectures, organize internships and participate in the delivery of study courses (SAR, p. 95).

According to SAR (p. 95), the mechanisms for attracting suitable employers and cooperation partners are as follows: employers and cooperation partners with close links to educational institutions, research institutes specializing in occupational safety and health. Consideration has been given to partners who can offer expertise, resources and opportunities for joint research projects or the development of new technologies and solutions; collaboration with companies and organizations active in the field to promote practical training, workplace risk assessment or offer work placements to students. The ability of partners to make a practical contribution to the study programmes by providing examples of real-life situations and imparting practical knowledge and skills was also rated as important cooperation with associations in the field of occupational health and safety (Latvian Society of Ergonomics, Business Efficiency Association), which can help to ensure that the study programmes are relevant and up to date with industry requirements and standards, and can also provide valuable support in networking students, expanding career opportunities and learning about the latest developments in the study programmes. Working with national authorities responsible for occupational health and safety issues and legislation can help ensure that study programmes are aligned with national regulations and requirements. These partners can also provide expertise and support in the development and evaluation of study programmes.

The mechanisms for attracting employers and co-operation partners are based on expertise, resources and the opportunity to develop joint research projects and develop new technologies and solutions in the field of occupational safety and health. Particularly noteworthy is the development of cooperation with companies and institutions in the implementation of practical courses, workplace risk assessment and learning from practical examples based on the model of problem-orientated speaking. In collaboration with various associations, programme content and practices for degree courses to be aligned with industry requirements and standards in the future, student networking, career development and understanding of legislation will be highlighted. However, it is clear from the examples presented in the SAR that the geographical scope of this cooperation is the EU

Member States.

According to SAR (p.95) as well as assessment visit, UL has strong contracts with: ERASMUS+, Campus Europae, ERASMUS+ Global Mobility, ISEP exchange programmes. In terms of numbers, these are more than 150 ERASMUS+ cooperation agreements with universities across Europe and the EEA and 18 Campus Europa cooperation agreements with European universities. ISEP exchange students also have the opportunity to spend a semester at a US university or at a partner university as part of a bilateral agreement.

The general impression is that UL is working on development and internationalization, understands the need for this element of the development of study programmes and that in the future it should further develop cooperation on concrete projects that will contribute to the application of theoretical knowledge in practice.

1.5.3. The mobility of teaching staff is shown in Annex 13 (see annex: Annex_13_Statistics on teacher mobility 2022/2023), according to which 4 incomings and 4 outgoings, the mobilities of the teaching staff are available. There were 10 incoming and 13 outgoing teachers in the reporting period. The COVID-19 period reflects these activities, as they all took place in the EU, but the activities after this period show that UL is working very intensively in the area of internationalization. Most collaborations are with the USA, Czech Republic, France, Germany, Spain, Slovenia, Estonia, Lithuania, Austria, Iceland, Poland, and Serbia Annex_13_Statistics on teacher mobility (2022/2023).

As far as student mobility is concerned, it is not very pronounced, especially in the area of incoming mobility. One of the reasons for this is that the degree programmes are offered exclusively in Latvian, which limits the opportunities for incoming mobility. During the assessment visit, it was noted that the study programmes offered by UL provide specific professional and legal knowledge for Latvia, and this is another element that reduces the interest in the arrival of foreign students. However, regardless of these specifics, it is very important to provide models that attract foreign students but also give local students the opportunity to gain experience at other institutions. In this context, according to the interviews with the heads of degree programmes, BIP programmes were organized which showed a great interest in mobility among students. The low number of exchange visits among Erasmus students is due to the fact that they all work alongside their studies, and it is difficult to find equivalent study programmes and corresponding courses in Europe due to the different laws and regulations on occupational health and safety in the various member states of the European Union.

The strengths are the international cooperation and the guest lecturers, 10 of whom gave very interesting and important lectures (SAR, p. 98). Opportunities for student and lecturer exchange will be opened in the new cycle, particularly in the area of doctoral studies, which will also be conducted in English.

The opportunities for student exchanges under the Erasmus+ programme will be used, despite the difficulties reported in the SAR with the specific requirements of the legal framework of Latvia. However, opportunities for student mobility are sought and found at the university, both within the framework of Erasmus+ and in the implementation of various projects.

During the discussions with students at UL, one of the main problems related to student mobility abroad was pointed out, namely that they do not want to be separated from the educational process for six months and prefer shorter mobility if possible (e.g., one week). At the same time, this process is complicated by the fact that, despite numerous agreements within the Erasmus+ programme, it is

difficult to achieve mobility in similar bachelor’s degree programmes at partner universities.

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

On the basis of the documents analyzed and the SAR, as well as discussions during the assessment visit, it can be concluded that UL is aware of the importance of national and international cooperation with external stakeholders - universities, organizations and companies. In this context, the co-operation achieved on the basis of good practice and the commitment of individual teachers and programme directors speaks for the high level of this standard. However, as in all areas, there is room for improvement, which should focus in particular on the revision of numerous co-operation agreements and the creation of a concept that ensures continuous development of the profession and knowledge. From the examples, it appears that there is more cooperation in some areas of the profession, e.g. ergonomics, while other areas are less well represented.

In further developing the study field, it is important to operationalise the suggestions from other institutions and introduce some innovations and follow trends in the area of education for climate change, stress and burnout, which can only contribute to the attractiveness of the study field. With regard to Erasmus cooperation, it is particularly important to analyze the subjects that can be taught in English in all study programmes and to offer opportunities for incoming mobility on this basis. The administration's decision in favor of the English-language doctoral programme is to be welcomed, which will create and open up new perspectives for students and colleagues in terms of research, uniqueness in the EU and the world.

It is important to continue the BIP programmes as they allow for a quick and easy exchange of students. The focus should be on partnerships to ensure international mobility for domestic students. Regardless of the type of unit programme, there are always commonalities with some fields of study such as crisis management, environment and health or sanitary engineering. With this in mind, the analysis of study programmes available in the EU should be expanded to broaden cooperation with institutions. This also applies to various professional and scientific organizations that cover this area, such as the CONRIS network.

Further cooperation within the Erasmus+ programme should be encouraged and, in addition to the mobility opportunities offered, joint Erasmus+ funded projects with partners from the EU should be secured that can contribute to the acquisition of new knowledge and skills. Building on this, internationalization should be developed in the direction of new technologies, projects and research, but good practice to date should also be continued.

Strengths:
1) A large number of domestic and foreign partners from the professional environment.
2) Good cooperations with other Universities.
3) High recognition of the professor's expertise.
4) Management commitment to the development of internationalization.

Weaknesses:
1) Low number of cooperating academic and professional associations.
2) Low student’s interest in outgoing mobility, as well as in incoming mobility, with the exception of the BIP programme.
3) Uneven distribution of professional and scientific cooperation in other professional areas with the

exception of ergonomics.
4) Lack of courses provided in English.
5) Lack of an internationalization strategy.

Assessment of the requirement [3]

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The general impression is that UL is working on development and internationalization, understands the need for this element of the development of study programmes and that in the future it should further develop cooperation on concrete projects that will contribute to the application of theoretical knowledge in practice.
Further cooperation within the Erasmus+ programme should be encouraged and, in addition to the mobility opportunities offered, joint Erasmus+ funded projects with partners from the EU should be secured that can contribute to the acquisition of new knowledge and skills. Building on this, internationalization should be developed in the direction of new technologies, projects and research, but good practice to date should also be continued.

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

Analysis

1.6.1. According to the SAR (p. 99-102) and annexes provided (see: Annex_14_Recommendation Timeout Report 2703.docx, Joint report of experts about the study Programmes of the University of Latvia in the direction: work environment protection and exercise, agreement nr 2011/0012/1DP/1.1.2.2.1./11/IPIA/VIAA/001), the UL has actively engaged with recommendations from the previous accreditation related to the study field "Internal Security and Civil Protection." Overall, these recommendations have been systematically addressed, leading to significant improvements in the study field and its associated programmes.

Based on the above mentioned annexes and the information from the assessment visit, it could be concluded about the key recommendations and their implementation of the study field “Internal Security and Civil Protection”:

- Joint Degree Programmes: The initial recommendation to create a joint programme was rejected by other universities (SAR, p. 100). However, during the assessment visit, it was recognized as an understandable situation resulting from legislation that does not support such cooperation in financing matters. The development and implementation of the programmes under the study field “Internal Security and Civil Protection” have aligned with expert recommendations, enhancing their integration into the scientific community and collaboration with industry. This effort has led to the successful licensing of new programmes, such as the doctoral study programme in "Human Factors, Occupational Safety and Health." Furthermore, the updated curricula now feature a clear logical sequence and structure that promotes the principles of lifelong learning.

- Learning Environment: The initial recommendation emphasized the need to improve the learning environment, specifically in the area of laboratories, suggesting that existing facilities might require upgrades or modernization. However, a subsequent assessment visit to the new UL complex in Torņkalns, where studies have been held since 2016, revealed that the learning environment fully

meets modern educational requirements. Practical learning possibilities and well-equipped laboratories were showcased during the visit, demonstrating the commitment to a high-quality learning environment.

- Student and Faculty Exchange: The development plan prioritizes student and faculty exchange, a crucial aspect of lifelong learning. This emphasis reflects a significant improvement compared to the previous accreditation cycle. Positive feedback from students about the quality of studies and knowledge transfer underscores the program's success in this area. However, student mobility is limited by the fact that many students are employed and unable to commit to long-term exchange programs. Despite this, there has been a noticeable increase in short-term mobility, a trend that is expected to continue.

- Cooperation with Other Universities: The recommendation to promote cooperation with other universities has been fulfilled through the involvement of faculty from RTU, LBTU, and RSU in teaching.

Mobility and International Collaboration: While positive steps have been taken, there is still room for enhancing student and faculty mobility and international collaboration. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic should be considered, but there is a need to develop strategies for increasing participation in international exchange programmes.

- Attracting Younger Academic Staff: Attracting younger academic staff is a key aspect of the development plan, aligning with the “University of Latvia Strategy 2021-2027”, which emphasizes attracting and retaining young talent. The goal is to create a diverse academic community that reflects a range of experience and perspectives, ultimately benefiting the quality of teaching and research. While some metrics should be reassessed to avoid any perception of discrimination, it's important to remember that achieving this goal doesn't always have to be age-related, as career changes during midlife are increasingly common, allowing individuals to contribute significantly for many more years. However, to support this goal, initiatives have been implemented, such as the active involvement of 7 PhD students in the study process during the academic year 2022/2023, as well as the recruitment of Doctoral students from other universities and study programmes.

- Balancing Master's Programmes: The Professional Master's programme has been balanced an
d developed in accordance with expert guidance, incorporating new courses aligned with current labor market trends and student feedback. Significant updates have been made in response to feedback, such as increasing course hours and updating course content to include current practices and principles, reflecting legislative changes etc. The inclusion of industry-relevant topics and inviting guest lecturers have also played a vital role in keeping the curriculum aligned with market needs. (SAR, p. 101-102)

- Addressing Changes in Legislation and Regulations: The study programmes have been adapted to incorporate changes in laws and regulations concerning work environment protection, ensuring the quality of studies. The most significant changes have been made in the "Work Environment Protection and Expertise" programme.

As it can be seen in the SAR (p. 99-102) and its annex 14 (see annex: Annex_14_Recommendation Timeout Report 2703.docx), recommendations have generally been taken into account and efforts have been made to implement them. However, several aspects still revealed potential for development during the assessment visit. At the same time, it is understandable that it has not been possible to promote mobility and international collaboration at the desired speed and scale,

especially considering that the assessment period included the COVID-19 pandemic, during which many activities had to be halted. Nevertheless, it is evident that recommendations are being gradually implemented, and relevant indicators are on an upward trend. For example, during the assessment visit, it was presented that the short-term mobility has increased significantly, rising from 2 to 6 participants, which certainly represents meaningful progress despite the small numbers.

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

In conclusion the UL demonstrably committed to maintaining and enhancing the quality of its "Internal Security and Civil Protection" study field. The implementation of recommendations from the previous accreditation, combined with continuous self-assessment and a focus on improvement, position the programmes to maintain their relevance and contribute effectively to the field of study. While some observations and recommendations from the same field persist in this current assessment, it is acknowledged that various independent circumstances (such as legislation, COVID-19, etc.) have prevented indicators from rising to the expected levels. The expert group recognizes that UL has made every effort to implement previous recommendations.

Strengths:
1)The UL has addressed nearly all the recommendations from previous assessments, demonstrating a commitment to continuous improvement and responsiveness to expert feedback.
2) Moving the study programmes to the new UL complex in Torņkalns has significantly improved the learning environment, meeting modern academic and infrastructural standards.
3) The curriculum has been updated to include current trends and employer requirements, enhancing the relevance and quality of education provided. This includes expanding the content of certain courses and introducing new ones that respond to labor market needs.
4) Although student mobility remains a challenge, faculty mobility has improved markedly, facilitating knowledge exchange and integration of international academic standards into the local context.
5) Engaging with international faculty from institutions such as the University of Valencia and Pennsylvania State University has enriched the PhD programme and helped integrate global perspectives into the curriculum.
6) Feedback from students and faculty about changes, such as those seen in the doctoral study programme, has been favorable, indicating successful implementation and satisfactory academic outcomes.

Weaknesses:
1) While most recommendations were implemented, some aspects, such as complete integration with other universities through joint degree programmes, were not fully realized.
2) Despite improvements in faculty exchanges, student mobility remains limited, primarily due to working students' reluctance to engage in long-term exchanges. This limits the intercultural and international exposure that students could benefit from.

Assessment of the requirement [4]

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Implementation plan is provided which gives sufficient evidence of the UL commitment and

willingness to implement these recommendations, nevertheless all of them are not fully compliant yet. The external factors (legislation, covid 19 etc) should be taken into account which affect UL and the activities outlined in the development plans. Therefore, it is proposed that the recommendations be regarded as fully implemented, although some are also highlighted in this report as activities that require further enhancement.

1.7. Recommendations for the Study Field

Short-term recommendations

1. Creating of an internationalization strategy to define the priorities of international cooperation, including sub activities (2 years): 1.1 Revise existing cooperation agreements and operationalize future agreements with specific activities to enhance the development of the study field; 1.2 Foster the development of all professional areas under the study field by enhancing scientific and professional cooperation, ensuring that all aspects of the profession are equally represented; 1.3 Consider promotion activities to increase awareness of international mobility opportunities (specially the short-term mobility) and decrease the fear or uncertainty for both students and faculty, for example experience stories from people who have been in mobility, exchange of experience seminars etc, as well as communication about the benefits of the mobility could be promoted to employers; 1.4 Consider the creation of comparisons with similar programmes under the study field at the European level, which could provide a broader perspective and help maintain competitiveness; 1.5 Develop and revise existing study programmes to include more courses taught in English, ensuring that key subjects are available to international students and local students who prefer English-language instruction as well as investing in professional development for teaching staff to enhance their English language teaching skills.

Long-term recommendations

1) Consider implementing a structured system for evaluating/analyzing and adjusting the workloads of academic staff to ensure sustainability to help manage their multiple roles and responsibilities, mitigate the risk of burnout, and maintain the quality of teaching and research. (continuously)
2) Develop targeted recruitment strategies to address the demographic challenges in Latvia, focusing on increasing awareness of higher education opportunities and attracting a larger pool of prospective students (including international students) to improve enrollment figures in the long term. (continuously)
3) Actively seek increased funding to support research initiatives and project development. This can include applying for grants, establishing partnerships, and exploring alternative funding sources to bolster resources available for enhancing the study field. (continuously)

II - "Labour Protection " ASSESSMENT

II - "Labour Protection " ASSESSMENT

2.1. Indicators Describing the Study Programme

Analysis

2.1.1. The Short-cycle Professional Higher Education Study Programme “Labour Protection” 41862 (Short-cycle SP ‘’Labour Protection’’) is implemented within the study field "Internal Security and

Civil Protection" (study field). The Short-cycle SP ‘’Labour Protection’’ is closely related to the professional qualification that is acquired by completing the degree programme. The Short-cycle SP “Labour Protection” is developed in accordance with the requirements of the study field “Internal Security and Civil Protection” and in compliance with the sector-specific regulatory framework, the relevant education standard and the qualification is provided in study programme annexes (see annexes: ANNEX 17.1_Conformity of the study programme with the State Education Standard_ ENG.docx; ANNEX 18_1_Compliance of the Short-cycle higher professional study program LP with the professional standard.docx and 30_1_Conformity of course content of the StP LB o the regulatory enactments of the Republic of Latvia - kopija.docx).

The Short-cycle SP ‘’Labour Protection’’ aligns with the study field and students are trained as specialists in labour protection. They can contribute to ensuring the protection of the work environment in commercial enterprises, state or municipal institutions or public organizations by organizing the system of working environment protection in accordance with the requirements of external legislation, modern labour market trends and the latest scientific findings (see annex. Annex 17.1. Compliance of the short-cycle (first-level) professional higher education study program "Labour protection" with the national education standard).

2.1.2. The title of the Short-cycle SP ‘’Labour Protection’’ aligns directly with the objectives of the study field which is part of civil protection and internal security. The name also refers to the purpose of the degree programme and emphasizes the focus on occupational safety and health stated in the degree programme (SAR, p. 144).
The title of the Short-cycle SP ‘’Labour Protection’’ corresponds to the educational classification code 41862 with the last three digits (862), the group of educational programmes “Occupational safety and health”, while the code 41 corresponds to the short cycle (1st level) higher vocational education according to Cabinet Regulation No. 322 “Regulations on Classification of Education in Latvia”.

Graduates of the programme are not awarded an academic degree, but the qualification of a professional labor protection specialist is awarded (SAR, p. 144 and Anex 15.1. Model diploma to be issued for the acquisition). According to SAR, p. 144, the professional qualification of the short-cycle professional higher education Short-cycle SP ‘’Labour Protection’’ aims to provide theoretical knowledge and practical skills for professional competence at the level of the 5th (previously 4th) qualification level of the professional standard PS 179 “Labour protection specialist” (standard approved on 13.10.2021) classification (code of the profession classifier of the Republic of Latvia 3119). A secondary school diploma is required for enrollment in the Short-cycle SP ‘’Labour Protection’’: the admission requirements are available on the UL website: https://www.lu.lv/en/admission/admission-procedure/.

The content of the study programme fully complies with the labour standard PS 179 “Labour protection specialist” (standard adopted on 13.10.2021). The content is competitive and relevant to the requirements of today's labour market (According to Chapter 1, Article 1 of the Labor Protection Law). It is fully subordinated to the achievement of the objectives of the Short-cycle SP ‘’Labour Protection’’, as it includes general education courses and specific training courses that ensure the correspondence of knowledge, skills and competences with the acquired professional qualification and the national standard. The tasks within the Short-cycle SP ‘’Labour Protection’’ are defined in such a way that the objective is achieved and graduates have the competences described in professional standards.

Students are prepared theoretically and practically to organize and control labor protection measures and to carry out internal monitoring of the working environment. The title of the study

programme and its content indicate a modern acquisition of knowledge, skills, and competences in a specific field, which enables the preparation of professional labour protection specialists in accordance with current developments in the protection of the working environment in Latvia and Europe.

The Short-cycle SP ‘’Labour Protection’’ has a scope of 80CP (120 ECTS) with a study duration of 2 years for full-time regular studies and part-time regular studies with 2 years and 3 months (5 semesters). The Short-cycle SP ‘’Labour Protection’’ is conducted in Latvian and due to the specifics of legislation, labour market and employability, it is not planned to conduct the study programme in any other language.

Based on the learning outcomes of the programme and interviews with students and graduates, it is felt that this programme is a good introduction to training personnel in this profession. Of particular note is the fact that the learning outcomes of the programme are aligned with the level and the context is clearly outlined and constructively aligned with the course outcomes. Student satisfaction with this programme and the continuation of education at a higher level of the programme was undoubtedly expressed.

The title, code, and professional qualification of the Short-cycle SP ‘’Labour Protection’’, aims, objectives, learning outcomes, and admission requirements are interrelated.

2.1.3. No changes were made to the parameters of the Short-cycle SP ‘’Labour Protection’’ during the last six years or the reporting period (SAR, p.144).

2.1.4. The Short-cycle SP ‘’Labour Protection’’ is fully relevant to labour market demand. In this regard, scientific institutes, ministries (RSU Institute of Labour Safety and Environmental Health, Ministry of Welfare, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development, labour and environmental administration institutions (State Labour Inspectorate, State Environmental Service, State Environmental Bureau, Radiation Safety Centre, etc.), public organizations (Latvian Association of Labour Protection Specialists, Latvian Ergonomics Society, Latvian Employers Confederation, Latvian Free Trade Union Confederation) have been identified. According to the institutions and information centers identified (Lursoft, etc.), the labour market is still not saturated. Employers are also interested in graduates, as shown by the fact that most students in higher professional education are paid by the employer, given that the Short-cycle SP "Labour Protection" does not provide budget places for students in the part-time studies (SAR, p.146).

The Short-cycle SP ‘’Labour Protection’’ is accredited for full-time regular studies and part-time regular studies, however, currently only part-time regular students are enrolled in the programme. It meets the demand of the labour market, as evidenced by the stable number of graduates since 2017, with the majority of students working in both public administration and private companies, thus their studies have been accepted by the management of the companies (SAR, 146).

Number of students matriculated in the first year of study in the period from 2017 until 2023 ranged on average about 19 students. Only in the period 2022/2023 the lowest number of matriculated students was observed (6 students, of which one student withdrew in the first semester) and in the 2022/2023 period an increase was observed - 13 students. (SAR, p. 149)

Analyzing the drop-out rate by year (see annex: ANNEX 16.1._Statistics on students in the reporting period Labour Protection_ ENG.docx) the most significant reason for dropping out is self-determined

(from 1 to 7 students), which most often indicates that students lack the ability to finance their studies or are unable to combine their studies with work. At the same time, there is a balance of students planning to defend their qualifications, with at least 10 new labour protection specialists from the programme defending their qualifications by autumn 2023 (SAR, p.149).

A survey is conducted among graduates to gather information that needs to be implemented to improve the teaching process. According to SAR (p. 148), survey data shows that graduates are on average more than 80% satisfied with the overall content of the programme and successfully apply the acquired knowledge to improve the working and environmental conditions of a commercial company or organization. The majority of graduates started planning their professional development during their studies and also believe that the study programme prepared them for the labour market and plan to work in the future in line with their education. The graduates' feedback emphasizes that the higher professional education programme is very necessary and relevant, as Latvia's accession to the European Union has significantly increased the requirements in the field of labour protection, but the number of competent specialists in the field of labour protection is insufficient.

During the assessment visit, the satisfaction of the students with the completed studies was confirmed, together with the wish to organize more diverse guest lectures from professionals in the future, to organize closer cooperation with employers to promote the programme in order to facilitate the exchange of knowledge and experience.

The Short-cycle SP ‘’Labour Protection’’ fulfills its function and is sustainable as it provides the labour market with labour protection specialists who have acquired professional knowledge and skills (SAR, p. 148).

It is very important to analyze the individual elements and questions in the surveys. Specifically obtained results. For example, the indicative answer to the question The opportunity to participate in improving the quality of the study process gives 67% satisfied results, while the rest refers to a neutral statement. The importance of changes in the organization of teaching is also important because it shows the desire of graduates to reduce the part related to seminars and independent work, while the need to increase lectures was expressed. In relation to global, innovative and research skills, the desire for additional training was expressed. Since a high percentage of students want to continue their studies, it is necessary to act from the beginning in a way that motivates them for additional education.

2.1.5. N/A

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

The Short-cycle SP ‘’Labour Protection’’ represents the beginning of the training cycle in this profession and brings with it knowledge and skills that make it unique in the country and in the area. However, regardless of the constant number of students enrolled in this programme, it is necessary to make changes and additions to the programme based on a continuous improvement cycle through the implementation of PDCA. This programme offers education and has an area in the labour market that can absorb future graduates, so it is necessary to work continuously on its promotion. More collaboration is needed with labour market representatives and employers who need to understand the opportunities the programme offers and the quality of students graduating from this programme. The administration should continuously work on improvements, and the six-year period and cycle is a sufficient period to implement new knowledge and technologies, especially in vocational subjects.

Strengths:
1) A unique programme in the country and in the region.
2) A high level of satisfied graduates who can contribute to the development of the programme.
3) Possibility to continue studying at a higher level in the same field.

Weaknesses:
1) Lack of systematic analysis of the labour market and links with companies.

2.2. The Content of Studies and Implementation Thereof

Analysis

2.2.1. The Short-cycle SP ‘’Labour Protection’’ aims to train highly qualified professionals in this field, equipping them with essential knowledge, skills, and competencies in ergonomics, occupational safety, work environment assessment, and the development of protective and preventive measures. Graduates are awarded a fifth-level professional qualification as “Labour Protection Specialists” and have the opportunity to continue their studies in the Professional Bachelor’s (First-cycle) Study Programme “Occupational Health and Safety at Work” 42862 starting in the fifth semester (first-fourth semester studies are arranged between two programmes), which allows them to become occupational safety engineers. (SAR, p. 150)

The Short-cycle SP “Labour Protection” ensures that it meets national standards for higher education and complies with national regulations. (SAR, p.150-151) Comparison is provided in Short-cycle SP “Labour Protection” annexes between:

- “Regulations on the State Standard for Professional higher Education” (Cabinet of Ministers Regulations No. 305 of 21.06.2023 requirements) and Short-cycle SP “Labour Protection” (see annex: ‘’ANNEX 17.1_Conformity of the study programme with the State Education Standard_ ENG.docx’’);

- Professional standard “Labor protection specialist” and Short-cycle SP “Labour Protection” (see annex: ‘’ANNEX 18_1_Compliance of the short-cycle higher professional study program LP with the professional standard.docx”);

- Sector-specific regulatory framework and short-cycle SP “Labour Protection” (see annex: “ANNEX 30_1_Conformity of course content of the StP LB o the regulatory enactments of the Republic of Latvia - kopija.docx”).

The Short-cycle SP “Labour Protection” effectively addresses critical issues such as reducing work-related musculoskeletal disorders, mitigating psychosocial risks, and preventing workplace accidents, positioning itself well to meet the evolving demands of the labour market. A strong emphasis is placed on practical skills through internships and qualification projects, which is crucial for the development of competent professionals who can apply theoretical knowledge to real-world scenarios (SAR, p.150-151).

Regular updates to the Short-cycle SP "Labour Protection" ensure alignment with industry trends, labour market conditions, and scientific advancements (SAR, p. 151-152). During the assessment visit, teaching staff, students, and employers affirmed that continual refinements are made to incorporate the latest developments. A crucial aspect of this process is the collaboration between graduates and faculty, complemented by the involvement of guest lecturers from prominent

companies. This collaboration provides students with valuable insights from industry professionals, effectively bridging the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application. Although the curriculum itself has not undergone significant changes, the increased involvement of experts in teaching, driven by student feedback (SAR, p.152), has ensured that the programme stays current with trends and practices in the field. When the curriculum content meets the expectations of all stakeholders, revising the curriculum is not always necessary.

Despite comprehensive training, students raised concerns during the assessment visit regarding the necessity for separate certification in fire safety and civil protection, which currently requires additional paid training while the studies include the same topics, for example fire safety 2 CP and civil protection 2CP (see “ANNEX 20_1_Mapping of study courses modules for achievement of study results of study programme.xlsx"). Finding ways to offer this certification as part of the study programme could enhance its attractiveness and comprehensiveness. Employers also indicated a desire for broader cooperation and expressed willingness to explore joint research areas, highlighting the need for proactive initiatives from the UL.

The short-cycle SP "Labour Protection" demonstrates a well-structured and logical framework, offering a comprehensive foundation of knowledge in the field (see annex: “ANNEX_22_1_Study course.doc”). While the learning outcomes are clearly articulated, discussions during the assessment visit raised some methodological questions regarding the assurance of achieving these outcomes, which did not lead to definitive responses. However, as the positive feedback and satisfaction with the study programme reflected from graduates and employers, this should not be considered as a concern of the assessment. Experts believe that the UL has effectively outlined the learning outcomes along with the associated assessment methods. Additionally, the quality assurance system should provide insights into the attainment of these outcomes by incorporating feedback from students throughout their studies, as well as input from alumni and employers after graduation.

The expert team was particularly attentive to previous recommendations regarding the need to update mandatory reading materials (see: Annex_14_Recommendation Timeout Report 2703.docx). There remains uncertainty about whether this has been adequately addressed, as a significant portion of the required literature is over 15 years old, with some texts dating back to the previous century. In a rapidly evolving field such as labour protection, it is crucial that educational materials are contemporary and relevant. However, this concern is somewhat mitigated by strong collaboration with employers and a noteworthy number of guest lecturers involved in the SP. Additionally, as neither students nor graduates reported significant issues with the mandatory literature and it was reported by UL as under implementation, this will not be considered a major weakness.

During the assessment visit the employers expressed a high level of satisfaction with the graduates from the UL, indicating that the skills and competencies acquired by these individuals during their studies meet the expectations and demands of the industry. This positive feedback reflects the effectiveness of UL's study programme in preparing students for professional roles in their respective fields.

Additionally, a strong sense of community among students and alumni enhances post-graduation connections. Many employees currently working in the field are graduates of UL, which fosters a network of professional relationships that supports collaboration and mentorship. This close-knit community not only benefits individual career development but also strengthens the overall reputation of the university within the labour market. The ongoing relationships formed during their

studies contribute to a supportive environment where graduates can exchange knowledge and opportunities, further enhancing their professional journeys.

In conclusion, the Short-cycle SP "Labour Protection" effectively prepares students for successful careers in occupational safety and health by providing essential competencies aligned with national standards and the demands of the labour market. Addressing identified weaknesses regarding certification processes and enhancing communication about cooperation possibilities will further ensure graduates remain competitive professionals in their field.

2.2.2. N/A

2.2.3. A comprehensive analysis of the study implementation methods within the Short-cycle SP "Labour Protection" is provided in the SAR (p. 153-154). The varied instructional approaches utilized—ranging from traditional lectures to interactive seminars—are designed to engage students actively in the learning process. This diversity in methods not only facilitates the acquisition and consolidation of knowledge but also nurtures essential skills such as critical thinking, public speaking, and teamwork, which are vital for students in the field of labour protection. (SAR, p. 153-154)

A significant strength of the Short-cycle SP "Labour Protection" is its commitment to a student-centered learning philosophy. The participation of industry professionals as guest lecturers effectively bridges the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application, thereby enriching the overall learning experience (SAR, p. 153-154). During the assessment visit it was reflected also by the students and graduates that this integration of external expertise into the studies enhances their understanding of the real-world challenges encountered in occupational safety, making the studies more relevant and applicable.

Also the feedback received during the assessment visit from both students and teaching staff was particularly impressive and reinforced the observations made in the (SAR, p. 153-155) regarding the open and supportive relationships within the UL, both between students and teaching staff and between management and teaching staff. This dynamic represents a significant strength and asset of the institution. Both teaching staff and students demonstrated high motivation, evident in the willingness to engage in discussions about study course content and assessment methods, which fosters an open and helpful atmosphere.

During the assessment visit, numerous examples illustrated how the teaching staff actively considers previous feedback from students. Students recognized the importance of various surveys for the UL and expressed their readiness to participate, even after providing direct feedback to teaching staff. This demonstrates that communication between students and faculty is productive and transparent. Additionally, the emphasis on situational exercises, group work, and project development encourages collaboration among students, promoting a learning environment that values communication and the exchange of ideas. This approach not only enhances students' understanding of course content but also develops their ability to solve real-world problems, a key competency required in the workforce.

The Short-cycle SP “Labour Protection” also exemplifies assessment transparency, a critical aspect that supports the student-centered approach. By clearly articulating grading criteria upfront and providing timely feedback, students are empowered to monitor their own progress and take ownership of their education. The practice of discussing mid-term results in subsequent classes fosters an environment of continuous improvement and reflection, encouraging students to learn

from their mistakes. (SAR, p. 154)

The flexibility of the Short-cycle SP “Labour Protection” described in the SAR (p. 154), allows students to effectively balance their academic and personal commitments, which is crucial for promoting student engagement and retention, was also reflected very positively by the students during the assessment visit as well as the regular opportunities for individual counseling with teaching staff which reflect a supportive learning environment where students feel comfortable seeking guidance.

Moreover, the involvement of industry professionals as guest lecturers effectively bridges the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application, enriching the overall learning experience (SAR, p. 153-154). Graduates confirmed during the assessment visit that this integration of external expertise into the Short-cycle programme "Labour Protection" enhances their understanding of the real-world challenges encountered in occupational safety, making the education more relevant and applicable.

In summary, the implementation methods employed within the Short-cycle SP “Labour Protection” significantly contribute to achieving the aims and learning outcomes outlined in the study programme. By prioritizing student engagement, practical application, collaborative learning, and continuous feedback, the SP effectively fosters an educational experience that prepares students for successful careers in labour protection. The incorporation of student-centered learning principles ensures that educational practices remain responsive to the needs and interests of learners, thereby enhancing overall educational efficacy and satisfaction.

2.2.4. According to the SAR (p. 155) the Short-cycle SP “Labour Protection” includes two primary internship components primarily designed to enhance students' practical skills and knowledge application in the field of labour protection: internship in specialty (8 CP/12 ECTS), which takes place in the second year and qualification paper internship (8 CP/12 ECTS), which take place in the fourth year. Together, these internships provide students with a total of 16 CP (24 ECTS) of practical training allowing students to demonstrate their knowledge and skills regarding normative documents in labour protection as well as in-depth analysis of work environment risks, implementing risk assessment methods taught in theoretical courses, and engaging with real-world data through employee questionnaires and other assessment tools. (SAR, p. 155)

The learning outcomes of both internships align closely with all nine learning outcomes of the Short-cycle SP “Labour Protection”. Each internship is structured to facilitate the students' understanding of practical applications of their studies and ensure that educational competencies are effectively attained. The internship regulations are crafted in line with the specific field of study, detailing work expectations for students. This information is readily accessible through the e-learning platform, ensuring that students are well-informed before starting their placements. (SAR, p. 156)

After each internship, students engage in self-assessment regarding their learning outcomes, while also receiving written evaluations from their placement managers. This dual feedback mechanism is invaluable for academic reflection and enhancement of the curriculum as it provides insights into both the students' learning and the employers’ perceptions of the relevancy of the study programme. It was reflected several times during the assessment visit that the feedback collected from the employers during the internship is valuable and gives the possibility to improve the studies. However, it was also seen that employers valued students from higher courses or even level studies, as they are understandably more prepared. At the same time they understood the necessity to offer the internship places even if they have had some experiences with not very good examples of

students.

The Short-cycle SP “Labour Protection” emphasizes collaboration with industry experts in both teaching and internship evaluation. Practitioners with substantial experience are involved in supervising internships, providing students with critical insights into the application of their studies in real-world contexts. (SAR, p. 156)

The organization and execution of internships within the Short-cycle SP “Labour Protection” are structured effectively to meet regulatory requirements and ensure alignment with learning outcomes. Emphasizing student involvement, practical applications, and feedback mechanisms, the study programme fosters a rich learning environment that prepares students for successful careers in labour protection. The proactive support from teaching staff and the involvement of industry professionals further enhance the educational experience, ensuring that students are adequately prepared to transition from academic learning to professional practice.

2.2.5. N/A

2.2.6. The final theses of students in the Short-cycle SP “Labour Protection” are closely aligned with the current needs and trends in the labour market. The topics chosen by students demonstrate a clear understanding of both local and global challenges in the fields of ergonomics and occupational health and safety. Selected topics by the students reflect pressing issues within contemporary workplaces, such as the identification and mitigation of workplace risks, the improvement of safety measures in local companies, and the exploration of ergonomic practices to enhance employee well-being. For instance, subjects like the prevention of musculoskeletal disorders from prolonged computer use and strategies for reducing cognitive fatigue showcase a response to common workplace health concerns. (SAR, p. 157)

The theses also address broader issues emerging in response to changes in the labor market, such as increasing work intensity and psychological pressures exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Students investigate psychosocial risks and ergonomic factors that relate to job performance and employee health—an area that has gained prominence due to shifting work dynamics. (SAR, p. 157)

The topics of the final theses are designed in accordance with the learning outcomes outlined in the Short-cycle SP “Labour Protection”. This ensures that students not only fulfill academic requirements (which employ a diverse array of research methods, including literature reviews, interviews, surveys, and observational studies to gather data etc) but also develop practical competencies that are valuable in real-world settings. The focus on assessing risks in various sectors contributes to a deeper understanding of labor protection standards and practices. (SAR, p. 157)

In the SAR (p. 157-158) the range of topics from various academic years (2018-2022) illustrates the Short-cycle SP “Labour Protection” responsiveness to evolving industry needs. According to the expert's group opinion the topics of the submitted theses (from SAR, p. 157-158) reflect a gradual trend towards bolder and more comprehensive research efforts. For example in 2018, the majority of theses focused on improvement of the occupational health and safety system at specific organizations, which is still useful and offers valuable feedback to companies. However, by 2020, there has been a shift towards more wider topics like selecting personal protective equipment and improving labor protection systems denote a focus on regulatory compliance and sector-specific challenges and from 2022 have started to explore more advanced and innovative topics such as ergonomic analysis for specific job roles and an assessment of work environment risks in logistics highlight a forward-thinking approach to modern workplace issues. Some examples which illustrate

the wider and bolder variety of the final theses are (SAR, p. 158):
- “Involvement of the employees in improving the working environment at the University of Latvia” 2022;
- “Improvement occupational safety measures in Riga Technical College laboratories” 2022;
- “Explosive environmental hazard in gas storage” 2022;
- “The impact of online learning on psychological factors in the work of pedagogues”.

The evaluation of final theses generally ranges from 7 to 9 points, indicating a high standard of work. The rare lower scoring reflects minor lapses in methodology, demonstrating that while the majority of students meet rigorous academic standards, continuous improvement and support are necessary to elevate all submissions to the same level of excellence. (SAR, p. 158)

Overall, the Short-cycle SP “Labour Protection” effectively equips students to become knowledgeable labour protection specialists who can apply their skills across various workplace environments. By addressing relevant topics and employing sound methodologies, students are prepared to contribute meaningfully to the enhancement of occupational health and safety practices in their future careers.

The selected topics of students' final theses are indeed relevant to the field of labour protection and correspond closely with the Short-cycle SP “Labour Protection” objectives. They reflect an understanding of contemporary challenges faced within the labour market and underscore students' capability to propose scientifically sound preventive measures in their respective sectors. This alignment with industry needs further validates the effectiveness of the educational approach taken by the programme.

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

The Short-cycle SP "Labour Protection" successfully prepares students for careers in occupational safety by equipping them with essential skills, knowledge, and competencies that align with national standards and industry demands. The programme’s strong emphasis on practical application and continuous feedback mechanisms fosters a student-centered learning environment, making graduates well-prepared to tackle real-world challenges in the field of labour protection.

Strengths:
1) The Short-cycle SP “Labour Protection” is regularly updated to reflect industry trends and scientific advancements, which ensure that the study programme effectively covers essential topics in ergonomics, occupational safety, and work environment assessment and meets the requirements outlined in national regulations, ensuring credibility and recognition.
2) Strong emphasis on practical skills through internships and qualification projects prepares students for real-world applications, as well as through the involvement of guest lecturers and industry professionals enriches the educational experience and bridges the gap between theory and practice
3) Strong communication channels between students and teaching staff, productive discussions and feedback utilization during the studies as well after the graduation. Graduates maintain connections with the university, supporting collaboration and mentorship opportunities in their professional careers.
4) High levels of motivation and engagement are observed among both students and teaching staff, fostering an open atmosphere conducive to learning.

Weaknesses:
1) Although students have selected relevant topics for their final theses, there may be a potential limitation in the diversity of topics explored. A more expansive range of issues could further enhance the depth of research and address broader aspects of workplace health and safety.
2) Students identified the necessity for separate certification in fire safety and civil protection, which currently requires additional paid training.
3) A significant portion of the required literature is over 15 years old, with some texts dating back to previous decades, raising concerns about the relevance of educational materials specially in the area which is changing quite fast because of the technology development etc.

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

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

2.3. Resources and Provision of the Study Programme

Analysis

2.3.1. An overview of the resource base for all programmes within the study field “Internal Security and Civil Protection”, including knowledge resources, information resources (such as the library), material assets, and financial resources, can be found in Section 1.3 of this report. Since the resources are shared across all study programmes under the study field, this section is applicable to each of them and is not duplicated here.

Based on the assessment visit and the description of the Short-cycle SP "Labour Protection" in Section 1.3, the expert team concluded that the facilities for lectures, seminars, and laboratory work are well-equipped to meet the specific needs of the programme. Additionally, the UL library provides a comprehensive collection of scientific research materials available in both Latvian and English.

Additionally, Annex 29 (see annex: Annex 29_List of available technical equipment.pdf) provides a list of equipment available at UL and the Faculty of Chemistry, which is used for student work, demonstrations, and research projects. For instance, students have access to equipment for measuring workplace microclimate, lighting, and vibration factors. They are also taught how to use this equipment correctly, conduct measurements, interpret results, and apply modern risk assessment methods. (SAR, p. 159)

Courses focused on workplace ergonomics provide students with equipment for measuring the ergonomic and health status of workers. Other equipment is available for analyzing powdered substances, liquid samples, and air quality, which is useful for student projects and research. Students are introduced to this equipment in courses such as "Chemical Substances and Their Safety." (SAR, p. 159)

Students and faculty at the University of Latvia have access to a variety of databases, including Scopus, Web of Science, ScienceDirect, SpringerLink, and Wiley, which can be found on the UL website: https://www.biblioteka.lu.lv/resursi/abonetie-e-resursi/. These databases are utilized for updating course materials and conducting student research projects. The director of the Short-cycle Study Program "Labour Protection" frequently organizes workshops to help students improve their

skills in literature reviews and effectively search for scientific publications within UL's databases for their final theses. (SAR, p. 159)

It could be concluded that the availability of these resources ensures the successful implementation of the Short-cycle SP "Labour Protection", supporting independent study and research for students. Additionally, the programme's information resources are consistently updated to align with the needs of both faculty and students.

2.3.2. N/A

2.3.3. The Short-cycle Study Programme "Labour Protection" is primarily funded by tuition fees, as there is no state funding available. A detailed breakdown of the projected student enrollment by study type and anticipated income is provided in SAR Table 3.3.3.1 (see the Study Programme description in Section 3.3). To determine the financial resources needed for the programme, the UL employs a methodology that takes into account the costs associated with delivering the programme, including faculty involvement, projected student enrollment, and other relevant factors, ensuring reliable financial projections (SAR, p. 161).

For these calculations, data from the 2022/2023 academic year is utilized, which includes student enrollment numbers as of October 1, 2022, study plans, and faculty composition. Based on this information, the total annual cost of the programme is estimated to be 134,560 EUR, with a cost breakdown provided in Table 3.3.3.2 (see the programme description in Section 3.3) (SAR, p. 161).

With a total of 40 students enrolled, the cost per student amounts to 1,682 EUR per year. To ensure profitability, the programme requires a minimum enrollment of at least 40 full-time and part-time students (SAR, p. 162).

The summary of projected student numbers, programme income, expenses, and profitability for all study modes indicates that the Short-cycle Study Programme "Labour Protection" is financially viable and capable of supporting its growth. The expert team concurs that projected income surpasses expenses, eliminating the need for additional external funding. This data clearly demonstrates that the University of Latvia possesses adequate financial resources to successfully implement and develop the programme.

Moreover, the programme can also benefit from revenue generated through continuing education and other services, as well as from the faculty's accumulated financial resources. Additionally, the faculty receives financial support from the University of Latvia's Study Quality Improvement Fund, further enhancing the programme's sustainability.

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

The information provided by the assessment visit and the UL SAR offers a detailed overview of a Short-cycle SP ‘’Labour Protection’’ at the UL, focusing on its financial sustainability and resource adequacy. It could be concluded that the study programme’s financial health is robust, supported by a rigorous cost-projection methodology that considers various factors such as faculty involvement and student enrollment. The analysis, based on the 2022/2023 academic year data, indicates that the programme is self-sufficient and does not rely on external funding. Moreover, the Short-cycle SP ‘’Labour Protection’’ demonstrates flexibility, enabling it to adapt to changing circumstances and seek additional revenue streams, such as continuing education services. Beyond financial stability, the programme is well-equipped with the necessary resources to deliver high-quality education.

Overall, Short-cycle SP ‘’Labour Protection’’ is financially sound and well-resourced. It is capable of delivering high-quality education and has the potential for future growth. The programme's flexibility and adaptability further contribute to its sustainability.

Strengths:
1) The Short-cycle SP ‘’Labour Protection’’ is self-sufficient and does not rely on external funding.
2) The Short-cycle SP ‘’Labour Protection’’ is well-equipped with the necessary resources.

Weaknesses:
None

Assessment of the requirement [6]

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The Short-cycle SP ‘’Labour Protection’’ is supported by strong study and research facilities, including a dedicated study base. The programme also exhibits long-term financial sustainability.

2.4. Teaching Staff

Analysis

2.4.1. The Short-cycle SP ‘’Labour Protection’’ and the professional Bachelor’s (First-cycle) Study Programme “Occupational Health and Safety at Work” 42862 share a combined component in their studies, making it logical to consider their statistics together. Both programmes are led by a single director and employ a total of 37 lecturers. Among them, 23 hold a doctoral degree, 13 have a master's degree, and 1 lecturer possesses a level 2 professional higher education qualification (SAR, p. 77). Specifically for the Short-cycle SP ‘’Labour Protection’’ there are currently 21 faculty members, including 3 professors, 4 associate professors, and 4 assistant professors (SAR, p. 168).

The principles of personnel management at the UL in the areas of personnel selection, labour relations, motivation system and personnel development are defined in the UL Human Resource Management Policy (the UL Senate Decision No 264 of 28.01.2019) (SAR, p. 16). One of the indicators monitored is Proportion of study courses in which lecturers' rating is lower than 5.5 to be decreased from 3% to 1% by 2027 (Annex_3_Development plan of the study direction.docx p.3).

The UL Strategy 2021-2027 emphasizes the goal of the development and excellence-oriented personnel policy (SAR, p. 73). Results, problems and challenges were regularly discussed at meetings of the study field Council, which also included representatives from sectors and students' representatives (SAR, p. 74). UL has strategic goal in the Development plan of the Study field (see annex: Annex_3_Development plan of the study direction.docx p.3) M4 to develop talents also in all study programmes, the total number of training seminars organized in companies, attracting industry professionals and labour protection specialists in companies is going to be increased from 10 to 15 by 2027. Teaching staff who have attended professional development courses in at least one of the skills are planned to be increased from 40% to 45% by 2027. The study area develops and improves its academic staff year after year providing seminars (e.g. Latvian Ergonomics Society,

Business Efficiency Association, Association of Occupational Physicians, etc.), conference participation (SAR, p. 21), it is universal for all study programmes in the study field “Internal Security and Civil Protection”.

The teaching staff for the Short-cycle SP ‘’Labour Protection’’ comprises highly qualified professionals who meet the necessary requirements for programme implementation and adhere to relevant regulatory standards. The following annexes are provided with the SAR to support this information:
- ANNEX 17.1: Conformity of the study programme with the State Education Standard
- Annex 6: Basic information regarding the teachers involved in the implementation of the study direction
- Annex 7: Teacher biographies

Based on the information presented in these annexes, it can be concluded that the qualifications of the teaching staff are well-suited to achieving the aims and learning outcomes of the study programme. The faculty includes experts with advanced degrees in fields such as occupational safety, health management, and engineering, all of whom possess practical industry experience that enhances their ability to provide relevant and contemporary insights.

The combination of academic credentials and industry experience among faculty members significantly contributes to the quality and relevance of the programme, as evidenced by statistics showing that 67% hold doctoral degrees, 32% have master's degrees, and a noteworthy portion have extensive industry experience—38% with over 10 years and 27% with over 5 years of experience. (see above-mentioned annexes)

The qualifications of the teaching staff fully align with the requirements for implementing the Short-cycle SP ‘’Labour Protection’’ and are instrumental in meeting its objectives and learning outcomes. (SAR, p. 170-171) During the assessment visit, discussions with academic staff and students revealed that the faculty is highly motivated and actively engaged in ongoing professional development, further empowering their ability to achieve the programme's aims and learning outcomes.

In conclusion, it can be stated that the Short-cycle SP ‘’Labour Protection’’ benefits from a highly qualified teaching staff and robust personnel management policies, ensuring that the programme effectively meets its objectives and learning outcomes. The alignment of faculty qualifications with programme requirements, combined with a commitment to ongoing development and support for faculty, positions the programme for continued success and relevance in the field.

2.4.2. The UL has taken proactive measures to ensure that changes in teaching staff do not compromise the quality of the Short-cycle SP ‘’Labour Protection’’. These initiatives include succession planning, comprehensive training programmes, and an effective hiring process designed to maintain continuity and uphold teaching excellence. Notably, the number of professors has risen from 2 to 3, and the number of associate professors has increased from 3 to 4, although the overall composition in percentage terms has remained relatively stable during the reporting period. (SAR, p. 169) This is a positive trend, further bolstered by the University's aim to increase the proportion of young academic staff from 6% to 10% by 2027, as outlined in the University of Latvia Strategy 2021-2027 (available at: https://www.lu.lv/en/about-us/the-university-of-latvia-brand/mission-vision-values/).

The UL has established clear guidelines for onboarding new faculty members, ensuring they become

acquainted with the structure and teaching methods of the programme. Currently, 6 members are involved in mentorship roles. The corresponding faculties are responsible for determining the necessity of certain positions (SAR, p. 72). Vacancies are published on the UL website, as well as in the National Scientific Activity Information System and the State Employment Agency of the Republic of Latvia vacancy portal. Applicants for academic positions are required to deliver an open lecture, which is evaluated by two reviewers who provide feedback on the quality of the presentation (SAR, p. 72).

During the accreditation period, the process for selecting faculty in the study field was organized in line with these established criteria, with particular focus on the academic and professional experience relevant to labour protection. This includes assessment of professional and scientific achievement, as well as recognition from governmental and non-governmental organizations (SAR, p. 72). Professional development activities for the academic staff have been integrated into the UL's plan for the development of academic personnel for 2018–2023, which includes a model for the renewal and succession of academic and scientific staff (SAR, p. 75).

The Short-cycle SP ‘’Labour Protection’’ also promotes collaboration between new and existing staff to facilitate a smooth transition and maintain high teaching quality (SAR, p. 171-172, Annex_3_Development plan of the study direction.docx, Annex_6_Basic information regarding the teachers involved in the implementation of the study direction.xlsx). Following the implementation of each programme, surveys and evaluations are conducted among participants to assess staff quality (SAR, p. 75). During the assessment visit there was strong positive feedback regarding personnel management by the teaching staff, and students also expressed satisfaction with the current staff composition.

Furthermore, the UL has developed specific requirements and selection criteria for attracting foreign academic staff (SAR, p. 76). Throughout the reporting period, changes in staff composition have been minimal, with the total number of involved staff remaining constant at 21, highlighted by the appointment of a new director and the election of professors (SAR, p. 77, p. 168).

2.4.3. N/A

2.4.4. The faculty's publications and professional accomplishments closely align with the requirements for the Short-cycle SP ‘’Labour Protection’’ contributing significantly to its success. The teaching staff actively participates in research through their publications in peer-reviewed journals, attendance at conferences, and involvement in industry-related projects (see annex: Annex_9_List of teaching staff publications for the reference period.docx).

This level of engagement is consistent with the Law on Higher Education Institutions and plays a vital role in promoting the academic excellence of the Short-cycle SP ‘’Labour Protection’’. Faculty members regularly publish in both international and national journals, thereby enriching the body of knowledge in occupational safety and health (see annex: Annex_7_Teacher biographies.pdf). Many faculty members bring extensive professional experience to the classroom, enhancing their teaching methods with practical, state-of-the-art insights and case studies, which further supports their contributions to research and academic discourse.

2.4.5. The UL has established a strategic goal, M6 Organizational Culture, to enhance staff involvement across all study programmes. The Short-cycle SP ‘’Labour Protection’’ features a well-structured mechanism for fostering cooperation among teaching staff, ensuring the achievement of the programme's objectives and the interconnection of study courses. The number of study courses

involving junior academic staff working alongside professors is set to increase from 3 in 2024 to 5 by 2027. This mechanism promotes collaboration, knowledge sharing, and curriculum integration. For instance, the number of meetings where students discuss internship results and teaching experiences is expected to reach 2 in 2024. Faculty members regularly engage in departmental meetings, workshops, and collaborative projects to align teaching strategies and course content. Interdisciplinary collaboration is also encouraged, which can positively enhance the learning environment for students (SAR, p. 177, see annex: Annex_3_Development plan of the study direction.docx).

Since 2018, the initiative "Promoting the Colleague Experience Exchange of Academic Staff" has introduced regular peer observation, allowing faculty to review one another's teaching methods (SAR, p. 74). During the assessment visit, faculty confirmed that this peer review process serves as a valuable opportunity for mutual learning.

Furthermore, the average satisfaction rating regarding the flow of information among personnel involved in the study field is monitored through an annual student satisfaction questionnaire on a 7-point scale. There is a target to increase this rating from 6 in 2024 to 6.5 by 2027 (see annex: Annex_3_Development plan of the study direction.docx). This mechanism applies across all study programmes and was affirmed by academic staff during the assessment visit as being highly effective in fostering cooperation.

These initiatives ensure a seamless interconnection among study courses while preventing content overlap. The content of the study programme and individual courses is regularly discussed at meetings of the Board of the Field of Study, with all mentioned initiatives supporting the successful achievement of the programme's aims.

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

The teaching staff of the Short-cycle SP ‘’Labour Protection’’ is highly motivated and possesses the necessary qualifications and experience to ensure a high-quality education that aligns with the programme's goals and regulatory standards. The institution has implemented comprehensive measures for faculty development, which helps maintain continuity and quality in teaching. Additionally, the teaching staff is actively engaged in research and publications, further enhancing their expertise and contribution to the field. The programme promotes cooperation among faculty members and encourages interdisciplinary collaboration, creating a dynamic educational environment that benefits both students and the institution as a whole.

Strengths:
1) The teaching staff possesses high qualifications and extensive experience, ensuring that the Short-cycle SP ‘’Labour Protection’’ delivers high-quality education aligned with programme goals and regulatory standards. This is supported by the faculty's academic credentials, industry certifications, and relevant practical experience.
2) Good succession planning, mentoring programmes, and structured onboarding processes that maintain continuity in academic staff careers.
3) Academic staff is well involved in research, publications, and industry projects, which significantly enhances the programme's academic environment.

Weaknesses:
None

Assessment of the requirement [7]

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Short-cycle SP ‘’Labour Protection’’ is fully compliant with requirement qualification of the academic staff and visiting lecturers set in HEI regulating law (Regulatory Enactments on Academic and Administrative Positions at the University of Latvia, fully comply with Article 55 (1) of the "Law on Higher Education Institutions" of the Republic of Latvia.)

2.5. Assessment of the Compliance

Requirements

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Annex (17_1_pielikums_Pirma Limena Prof programmas DA _Atbilstiba_valsts_izglitibas_standartam.docx) confirms that the Short-cycle SP ‘’Labour Protection’’ fully complies with Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No. 305 “Noteikumi par valsts profesionālās augstākās izglītības standarti”

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Annex (18_1_pielikums_PirmaLimena DA_profesijas_standarta_kartejums LV.docx) confirms that the Short-cycle SP ‘’Labour Protection’’ fully complies with the professional standard of Labour protection specialist (approved on October 13, 2021).

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Annex (22_1_Pielikums_Studiju kursa apraksti_ LV.docx) confirms that all descriptions of all study courses have been prepared in Latvian (only language in which study programme is implemented). All descriptions comply with the requirements set in Section 56.(1), paragraph 2 of the Law on Higher Education Institutions.

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The sample of diploma and it's supplement in Latvian (15_1_pielikums_Par studiju programmas apgūšanu izsniedzamā diploma un tā pielikumu paraugs_LV.docx) and in English (Annex

15.1_Model diploma to be issued for the acquisition of _EN.docx) fully complies with the procedure described in Cabinet of Ministers regulations No. 202 “Kārtība, kādā izsniedz valsts atzītus augstāko izglītību apliecinošus dokumentus”.

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Annex “6_pielikums_Pamatinformācija par studiju virziena īstenošanā iesaistītajiem mācībspēkiem_LV.xlsx” and Study field director's signed confirmation (annex: 7_1_Pielikums_Virziena vadītāja apliecinājums par studiju programmu īstenošanā iesaistīto mācībspēku valsts valodas zināšanām_LV.pdf) fully complies with Cabinet of Ministers regulations No. 157 “Noteikumi par valsts valodas zināšanu apjomu, valsts valodas prasmes pārbaudes kārtību un valsts nodevu par valsts valodas prasmes pārbaudi”.

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The sample of the study agreement fully complies with the provisions to be included in the study agreement according to Cabinet of Ministers regulations No. 70 “Studiju līgumā obligāti ietveramie noteikumi”.

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

UL has provided documents (Documents confirming provide students opportunity to continue another SP or HEI.zip) agreement with Riga Technical University (30.07.2022) that confirms that students will be provided with opportunities to continue studies in one of Riga Technical University programmes. While there are opportunities to continue education if the implementation of the study programme is terminated, the expert team suggest continuing exploring the possibilities to offer the better fitting education (at the same level).

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

UL has provided document that confirms that students are guaranteed a compensation for losses if the study programme is not accredited or study programme's license is revoked (annex: Rektora apliecinājums kompensācijai SV_Iekšējā drošiba.edoc)

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

According to annex "30-1_ĪCAPIStP DA kursu satura atbilstība Latvijas Republikas normatīvajiem aktiem.docx" UL has defined a list with other regulations it need to comply and in this document states that contents of these regulations are integrated in study courses.

Assessment of the requirement [8]

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Short-cycle SP ''Labour Protection'' is fully compliant with requirements set in HEI regulating law and Cabinet of Ministers regulations as assessed in joint opinion's chapter 2.5. of this study programme. Although there are options for continuing education if the Short-cycle SP ''Labour Protection'' is discontinued, the experts recommend further exploring opportunities to offer a more suitable programme at the same level.

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

The Short-cycle SP "Labour Protection" marks the beginning of the training cycle in this profession, offering unique knowledge and skills within the country and the region. However, despite maintaining a consistent number of enrolled students, there is a need for ongoing changes and enhancements to the programme through a continuous improvement cycle, implementing the Plan-Do-Check-Act (PDCA) model. This programme not only provides essential education but operates in

a labour market ready to absorb future graduates, necessitating continuous promotional efforts. Increased collaboration with labour market representatives and employers is vital for them to fully understand the opportunities the programme offers as well as the quality of its graduates. Additionally, the administration should prioritize improvements, as the six-year period is ample time to integrate new knowledge and technologies, especially in vocational subjects.

The Short-cycle SP "Labour Protection" effectively prepares students for careers in occupational safety by equipping them with essential skills, knowledge, and competencies that align with national standards and industry demands. Its strong emphasis on practical application and continuous feedback fosters a student-centered learning environment, thereby preparing graduates to tackle real-world challenges in labour protection. Information gathered from the assessment visit and the UL Self-Assessment Report highlights the programme's financial sustainability and resource adequacy. The programme’s financial health is robust, supported by a rigorous cost-projection methodology that considers faculty involvement and student enrollment. The analysis indicates that the programme is self-sufficient and does not rely on external funding. Furthermore, it demonstrates flexibility, allowing it to adapt to changing circumstances and seek additional revenue streams, such as continuing education services.

In addition to financial stability, the programme is equipped with the necessary resources to deliver high-quality education, indicating potential for future growth. The teaching staff of the Short-cycle SP "Labour Protection" is highly qualified and motivated, possessing the experience necessary to ensure educational quality in alignment with the programme's goals and regulatory standards. Comprehensive measures for faculty development have been implemented, maintaining continuity and excellence in teaching. Faculty members are actively engaged in research and publications, enhancing their expertise and contributions to the field.

This collaborative environment encourages interdisciplinary cooperation, benefiting both students and the institution as a whole. Overall, the Short-cycle SP "Labour Protection" stands out as an exceptional offering, equipping students with specialized knowledge and skills closely aligned with labour market demands. By tailoring its curriculum to meet national standards and industry requirements, the programme prepares its graduates effectively for successful careers in occupational safety. While the programme has sustained steady enrollment, ongoing efforts to update the curriculum and strengthen connections with labour market stakeholders are essential for maintaining its relevance and quality.

Overall, the Short-cycle SP "Labour Protection" excels in providing relevant, high-quality education tailored to the needs of students and the labour market and is uniquely positioned as the only programme of its kind in the country and region, equipping students with specialized knowledge and skills aligned with current labour market demands. High levels of graduate satisfaction indicate that alumni feel confident in contributing to the programme's ongoing development and pursuing further studies. The programme is regularly monitored to incorporate industry trends and emphasizes practical skills through internships and industry involvement. Strong communication between students and faculty fosters a supportive learning environment, while the programme's self-sufficiency and highly qualified teaching staff actively engaged in research enhance its overall quality.

Strengths:
1) The Short-cycle SP ‘’Labour Protection’’ is the only one of its kind in the country and region, giving it a competitive edge.
2) High Graduate Satisfaction – Graduates are generally satisfied with the programme and are in a

position to contribute to its ongoing development.
3) Graduates have the option to continue their studies at a higher level in the same field.
4) The Short-cycle SP ‘’Labour Protection’’ is regularly updated to reflect industry trends and scientific advancements, ensuring relevance and credibility.
5) Strong Practical Component – Emphasis on practical skills through internships, qualification projects, and industry involvement.
6) Open communication channels between students and teaching staff, fostering a supportive learning environment.
7) The programme is financially self-sufficient and well-equipped with the necessary resources.
8) The teaching staff is highly qualified, experienced, and engaged in research, contributing to the overall quality of the programme.
9) Good succession planning, mentoring programmes, and structured onboarding processes that maintain continuity in academic staff careers.

Weaknesses:
1) There is a need for a more systematic analysis of the labour market and stronger connections with companies to ensure the Short-cycle SP ‘’Labour Protection’’ meets current and future industry needs.
2) The topics chosen for final theses may lack diversity, potentially limiting the depth of research and exploration of broader workplace health and safety issues.
3) Certification Gaps – Students identified a need for separate certification in fire safety and civil protection, which currently requires additional paid training.
4) Outdated Literature – Some of the required literature is over 15 years old, raising concerns about the relevance of educational materials, especially in a field that rapidly evolves due to technological advancements.

Evaluation of the study programme "Labour Protection "

Evaluation of the study programme:

Excellent

2.6. Recommendations for the Study Programme "Labour Protection "

Short-term recommendations

1) Investigate, in collaboration with the State Fire and Rescue Service, what changes or additions should be made to the curriculum to enable the issuance of fire safety and civil protection certificates necessary for employment alongside the graduation diploma. (2 years)
2) Continue to review and update the required literature. (2 years)
3) Create a systematic analysis of the cooperation between the labour market and the companies they work with in order to improve cooperation, revise existing contracts and promote the study programme. (2 years)
4) It is suggested to continue exploring the possibilities to offer the better fitting education (at the same level) for the students in case the Short-cycle SP 'Labor Protection' is discontinued.

Long-term recommendations

1) Continue to encourage students to choose broader area topics for their final thesis. (continuously)
2) It is suggested to enhance cooperation with companies to foster joint projects that involve professors, students, and the labour market. Given the numerous partnering institutions, it is essential to develop a detailed programme for collaboration that focuses on market-oriented initiatives. This programme should address current trends and anticipate future challenges in the professional field, particularly those related to climate change, stress, and other health-related issues. (continuously)

II - "Occupational Health and Safety at Work" ASSESSMENT

II - "Occupational Health and Safety at Work" ASSESSMENT

2.1. Indicators Describing the Study Programme

Analysis

2.1.1.The Professional Bachelor’s (First-cycle) Study Programme “Occupational Health and Safety at Work” 42862 (First-cycle SP "Occupational Health and Safety at Work") aligns with the "Internal Security and Civil Protection" field, providing theoretical and practical education in health and safety at work. Graduates receive a Professional Bachelor's Degree in Labour Protection and professional qualification as an Occupational Safety Engineer. The First-cycle SP "Occupational Health and Safety at Work" currently available in Latvian, and has a functional part-time mode. Student number trend increased in 2023, and the programme is deemed economically justified based on its curriculum and goals.

The title of the First-cycle SP ‘’Occupational Health and Safety at Work’’ aligns directly with the objectives of the study field and refers to its affiliation with the disciplines of civil protection and internal security. It is closely linked to the degree to be achieved and formulation of the main objective of the degree programme, whereby the occupational health and safety orientation of the title is emphasized (SAR, p. 176).

According to the SAR (chapter 3.1.1) the First-cycle SP ‘’Occupational Health and Safety at Work’’ is undergoing significant transformation to align with the updated occupational standard for "Occupational Safety Engineer." As of 31.12.2024, the programme has been accredited, and graduates will now receive the qualification of Occupational Safety Engineer, reflecting the shift from the previous designation of Senior Labour Protection Specialist. This transition was facilitated by the participation of programme directors and lecturers in developing the new standard, which has led to comprehensive revisions of the curriculum.

Key changes to the programme content include the expansion and adaptation of various courses to meet industry standards and student feedback. Courses such as Basic Macroeconomics, Fundamentals of Entrepreneurship, Hazardous Equipment, and Indoor Air Quality have all been updated to enhance students' understanding of occupational safety in a business context. The programme's aims and objectives have also been revised to ensure that students are equipped with the necessary knowledge, skills, and competencies relevant to their future roles as Occupational Safety Engineers. (SAR, chapter 3.1.1)

It can be concluded that these changes reflect a concerted effort to meet the trends and expectations of the labor market while ensuring alignment with the study field. Furthermore, the

ongoing adjustments enhance the programme's relevance, ensuring that the First-cycle SP "Occupational Health and Safety at Work" effectively produces graduates who are equipped to implement and manage occupational safety systems in accordance with current regulatory standards, thereby improving workplace safety and compliance across various industries.

2.1.2. The First-cycle SP "Occupational Health and Safety at Work" is part of the study field "Internal Security and Civil Protection" (study field). The study programme aligns with the study field and the degree 'Professional Bachelor's Degree in Labour Protection' and the sixth (formerly fifth) professional level qualification 'Occupational Safety Engineer' correspond to the title of the degree programme, include the corresponding branch of science and focus on current trends in occupational safety and expertise in Latvia and Europe (SAR, 176).
The title of the study programme is identified by the study programme code 42862 according to the Cabinet Regulation No. 322 "Regulations on Classification of Education in Latvia", which reflects the content of this study programme, as the classification code 862 corresponds to the group of educational programmes "Occupational safety and health", while 42 corresponds to the first cycle (second level) of higher vocational education (professional bachelor).

It is important to note that in the last accreditation cycle, the First-cycle SP ''Occupational Health and Safety at Work'' underwent changes related to the name and standards of the profession. In this context, the administration and management of the programme have been actively involved in order to meet the requirements of the legislation in the shortest possible time. The scope of the study programme, duration of implementation, parts of the study programme and their scope, compulsory content, professional qualification, basic principles and procedures of evaluation and the scope of training practice, principles of implementation, etc. are regulated by the Cabinet of Ministers Regulation of 13 June 2023 No 305 "Regulations on State Standard of Professional Higher Education" and comply with the requirements set out in the Regulations. Enrolment in the degree programme is fully aligned with the requirements of the central examinations. (SAR, p. 176)

According to SAR, p. 176, the content of the First-cycle SP ''Occupational Health and Safety at Work'' is competitive and relevant to the requirements of today's labour market. Graduates of the study programme in the period from 2019 to 2022 obtained a professional bachelor's degree in occupational safety and a professional qualification "Senior Labour Protection Specialist". The qualification awarded corresponded to the "Occupational Standard for Senior Labour Protection Specialist" but the new occupational standard "Occupational Safety Engineer" corresponding to PQL 5 was approved at the meeting of the Tripartite Sub-Council for Professional Education and Employment in 2022. Due to the adoption of a new standard "Occupational Safety Engineer" in accordance with PQL 5, the qualification to be awarded by this programme has been changed from "Senior Labour Protection Specialist" to "Occupational Safety Engineer".

The professional bachelor's degree fully complies with the highest strategic planning and development documents of the Latvian state, as well as the subordinate normative acts regulating the Latvian higher education space and its quality, which in turn underlie the field of study "Internal Security and Civil Protection" and the corresponding First-cycle SP ''Occupational Health and Safety at Work'' (SAR, p. 176). At the same time, this study programme is in line with the priorities of the Latvian National Development Plan and the Latvian Sustainable Development Strategy 2030 as well as with the priorities of the Latvian Smart Specialisation Strategy (SAR, p. 176).

According to the SAR (p. 179), the First-cycle SP ''Occupational Health and Safety at Work'' consists of a total of 160 credit points (240 ECTS). One significant advantage of the First-cycle SP ''Occupational Health and Safety at Work'' is that it allows for the continuation of studies. Students

who complete the qualification thesis or those who do not finish the entire programme have the opportunity to enter the 5th semester (3rd year) of the First-cycle SP ‘’Occupational Health and Safety at Work’’.

The content of the First-cycle SP ‘’Occupational Health and Safety at Work’’ is fully aligned with the professional standard for "Occupational Safety Engineer." This alignment supports the achievement of the programme's aims and objectives by incorporating both general education courses and specialized training courses. As a result, the programme effectively ensures that the knowledge, skills, and competencies developed are in accordance with the required professional qualification and national standards.
According to the delivery mechanism, the study programme effectively ensures that students achieve the intended learning outcomes, acquiring the necessary knowledge, skills, and competencies for practical working life.

The First-cycle SP ‘’Occupational Health and Safety at Work’’ is open to applicants with secondary education. All admission criteria, the formulae for calculating the admission marks and the admission procedure for the current academic year are published on the LU portal https://www.lu.lv/en/admission/admission-procedure/.

The First-cycle SP ‘’Occupational Health and Safety at Work’’ is conducted in Latvian and due to the specifics of legislation, labour market and employability, it is not planned to conduct the study programme in any other language.

The title, code, degree, and professional qualification of the First-cycle SP ‘’Occupational Health and Safety at Work’’, aims, objectives, learning outcomes, and admission requirements are interrelated.

2.1.3. As part of the improvement of the First-cycle SP ‘’Occupational Health and Safety at Work’’, the suggestions for improvement were analyzed, justified, and supported by UL in their implementation. This relates in particular to the parameters for improving the content of the study programme.

The objectives of the First-cycle SP ‘’Occupational Health and Safety at Work’’ were updated in line with the qualification to be acquired as an occupational safety engineer. According to the objectives, the aim was to achieve study outcomes and student knowledge in maintaining the occupational health and safety management system, identifying norms and requirements of normative laws and standards regulating labour protection. The skills and competences were also updated, taking into account the involvement of occupational safety engineers in the maintenance of the occupational safety system. (SAR, p. 177)

The changes within the First-cycle SP ‘’Occupational Health and Safety at Work’’ were made as part of the expansion or introduction of new subjects, which contribute to the topicality of the programme and ensure that graduates of the programme master the requirements of the professional standard "Occupational Safety Engineer" and are entitled to qualify as an occupational safety specialist.

The subject “Basic macroeconomics” has been expanded. It was revised from 2 to 3 CP and included in the 2019 curriculum. The course has been expanded to provide students with a better understanding of macroeconomic issues that meets professional standards. Fundamentals of Entrepreneurship. Included in the 2019 curriculum, will be replaced by Business Management and Entrepreneurship 4 CP in the 2022 curriculum, as the content is much better aligned with the

qualification to be acquired. Hazardous work equipment and its use will be extended from 2 to 3 CP. Electrical safety in the workplace will be analyzed and revised from 3 CP to 2 CP, as some parts of the lecture correspond to other subjects. Indoor air quality will be changed according to student feedback, the plan includes a revision of the course from 4 CP to 3 CP. (SAR, p. 179).

In addition, the objectives of the First-cycle SP ''Occupational Health and Safety at Work'' have been updated and the outcomes to be achieved in terms of knowledge, skills and competences have been reassessed and updated. The programme objective has been updated by assigning the tasks to the role of a qualified occupational safety engineer, whereas previously the objective was to train senior occupational safety engineers. (SAR, p.179)

2.1.4. The economic and social justification of the First-cycle SP ''Occupational Health and Safety at Work'' is proven and supported by various objective studies such as surveys. Assessment visits and interviews with employers give the impression that the skills and knowledge that graduates bring to the labour market are of a high standard. According to the institutions and information centers identified (Lursoft, etc.), the labour market is not yet saturated. Employers are also interested in the graduates, as shown by the large number of students whose higher vocational training is paid for by the employer (SAR, p.180). Graduates are also included in the register of competent professionals. According to the data in SAR (p. 180), records of students' employability are kept and only two students do not work directly in the field of occupational health and safety, but apply the acquired knowledge in the workplace.

This data shows that graduates of the programme are able to work in a wide range of companies and institutions and ensure the maintenance of a comprehensive occupational health and safety system.

The relevance of the First-cycle SP ''Occupational Health and Safety at Work'' for the demand on the labour market is confirmed by the feedback from Latvian companies, which indicate the importance of the programme for the training of new occupational safety engineers - Ltd "Brīvais vilnis", Ltd "Riga East Clinical University Hospital", Ltd " Cēsu Alus", etc. (SAR, p. 180)

Conducting research and analyzing the results of graduate surveys are of key importance. They provide data on the overall benefit of the study programme and recommendations for further improvement of the study process.

Although the SAR states that (see annex: Annex_5_Analysis of survey results for students, alumni and employers.docx) contains detailed information on employer satisfaction, reading the document gives the impression that only the research and the results of the student surveys are presented, while a survey is being prepared for employers in the new period. However, in the documents submitted to the evaluation team, there is Annex 30 (see annex: Annex 30_References on the implementation of the study field Internal Security and Civil Defence.docx), which contains letters expressing satisfaction with the students and the study programme. The evaluation of the field of study and the corresponding programme is positive, and this is a great need for such a training programme, as the number of competent professionals in the field of corporate environmental protection in the country is insufficient. In particular, the need to strengthen activities related to the acquisition of practical skills and the application of different methods of risk assessment is emphasized.

It is very important to thoroughly analyze the results of surveys conducted among students and graduates. The answers and suggestions, as well as the percentage of those who are satisfied, open

up possibilities for improving the programme, and the use of this tool is extremely important. In addition, it is important to communicate the changes introduced so that all those who participated in the survey receive feedback. In Annex 5 (see annex: Annex_5_Analysis of survey results for students, alumni and employers.docx), analysis of survey results from students, graduates, alumni and employers, the results of the survey are presented, but it is necessary to correct errors in the questions, as the University of Warsaw is mentioned repeatedly, e.g. "Essential opportunities for leisure activities at the University of Warsaw". No data is available on the analysis of graduates of the part-time Bachelor's programme based on the 4.5-year study period, but the reason given is the low number of graduates to date. Average of 7 students per year enrolled in the programme, from 2019. 16 students defended their bachelor theses from 2021 till now.

In conclusion, the economic and social justification for the First-cycle SP "Occupational Health and Safety at Work" is well established, supported by objective studies, surveys, and feedback from employers. Assessment visits and interviews reveal that graduates possess high standards of skills and knowledge, demonstrating strong employability in the labour market, which remains untapped according to institutions like Lursoft. The involvement of employers in funding students' vocational training underscores the demand for qualified professionals in this field. Further data shows that graduates are effectively integrating their acquired knowledge into diverse roles within the occupational health and safety system.

Positive feedback from various companies highlights the programme's relevance and importance in training new occupational safety engineers. However, continuous research and analysis of graduate surveys are crucial for evaluating the programme's overall impact and identifying areas for improvement. Engaging with employers to gather their insights will also enhance the programme’s adaptability to market needs. Therefore, refining the survey process and ensuring accurate feedback communication will be vital for promoting ongoing developments within the programme, ultimately addressing the critical shortage of competent professionals in corporate environmental protection and enhancing practical skill acquisition methods.

In conclusion, there is undoubtedly a demand in the labour market for the First-cycle SP "Occupational Health and Safety at Work", which gives it a great advantage over other programmes and makes it attractive to students. Although there is good cooperation with employers, which was confirmed during the assessment visit, one has the impression that the labour market is only periodically monitored and the opinions of employers are listened to. Employers should be more actively involved in the development of competences and the alignment of the programme with the learning outcomes, as practice is very important at this level of study. The SAR and the annexes referred to in the text lack the results of the surveys, as they were not carried out; therefore, in the future, one should be careful when writing such important documents and not refer to elements that have not been analyzed. It is also necessary to correct the University of Warsaw in the surveys, as this must have been a mistake. It is certainly necessary to continue to follow the trends in the development of the profession, especially in the EU environment, and to adapt some of the subjects to foreign lecturers and students. This will certainly contribute to the attractiveness of the programme. Many companies in Latvia operate internationally and a large proportion use English for official correspondence.

2.1.5. N/A

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

In conclusion, the First-cycle SP "Occupational Health and Safety at Work" is underpinned by strong

economic and social justification, as evidenced by objective studies, surveys, and employer feedback. Graduates demonstrate high-level skills and knowledge, with a strong employability rate in a labour market that still has unmet demand for qualified professionals. The interest from employers funding vocational training for students further underscores this need. Additionally, positive feedback from various companies confirms the programme's importance in developing new occupational safety engineers. Continuous research and analysis of graduate surveys are essential for assessing the programme's impact and identifying improvement areas. Engaging with employers to gather insights will enhance adaptability to market needs, making it crucial to refine the survey process and ensure accurate feedback communication. This commitment will help address the shortage of competent professionals in corporate environmental protection and improve practical skill development methods.

Strengths:
1) First-cycle SP "Occupational Health and Safety at Work" is a powerful and unique programme in Latvia, which opens up the possibility of a high employment rate in this profession.
2) Motivated management to introduce improvements and changes to course content.
3) Graduates and employers are very satisfied with their competences. The rising number of students in 2023 indicates growing interest and demand for the First-cycle SP "Occupational Health and Safety at Work", suggesting its relevance and effectiveness in the labour market.

Weaknesses:
1) Lack of systematic analysis of graduates' satisfaction as well as employers with First-cycle SP "Occupational Health and Safety at Work".
2) To enhance the First-cycle SP "Occupational Health and Safety at Work"attractiveness and relevance, especially for companies operating internationally, there is a need for adapting subjects to include perspectives from foreign lecturers and to potentially offer courses in English.

2.2. The Content of Studies and Implementation Thereof

Analysis

2.2.1. The First-cycle SP ‘’Occupational Health and Safety at Work’’ is aimed to prepare occupational safety engineers for Latvian labour market. The first-cycle SP "Occupational Health and Safety at Work" was initiated from the survey of graduates of the Short-cycle SP “Labour Protection”, which revealed that while they had job opportunities, there were limited pathways for continuing their education at a higher level in their field. Among 25 graduates surveyed in 2017, 93% expressed a desire to pursue a bachelor's degree for advanced qualifications, while 41% indicated interest in obtaining a professional master’s degree in labour protection in the future. This feedback informed the establishment of the First-cycle SP "Occupational Health and Safety at Work", aligning with the University of Latvia's Action Plan to attract undergraduate students to higher-level studies. (SAR, p. 183)

This development is a strong example of progress towards the UL’s strategic goals to provide continued educational opportunities for its graduates and to encourage them to return to the institution for further studies. The First-cycle SP ‘’Occupational Health and Safety at Work’’ has been developed in close connection with the Short-cycle SP "Labour Protection," allowing for an integrated approach as the first four semesters of both programmes share related content and are implemented jointly. This synergy optimizes the costs associated with both programmes and enables the involvement of more experts as guest lecturers. Additionally, students appreciate the flexibility to change their study programme based on their work or personal commitments, they can transition from a Short-cycle programme to a First-cycle programme for advanced qualifications or

vice versa to enter the workforce sooner. (SAR, p. 183) In the joint opinion of the expert team the First-cycle SP ‘’Occupational Health and Safety at Work’’ serves as a bridge between first-level education and master's-level studies, facilitating seamless progression for students.

Graduates of the First-cycle SP ‘’Occupational Health and Safety at Work’’ are awarded a professional bachelor's degree in Labour Protection and professional qualification of occupational safety engineer. (SAR, p. 174) Studies are designed in accordance with the national educational requirements, comparison is provided in First-cycle SP ‘’Occupational Health and Safety at Work’’ annexes between:

- “Regulations on the State Standard for Professional higher Education” (Cabinet of Ministers Regulations No. 305 of 21.06.2023 requirements) and first-cycle SP “Occupational Health and Safety at Work” (see annex: Annex 17_2_Compliance of the professional bach study program with the National Education Standard.docx);

- professional standard "Occupational safety engineer" and first-cycle SP “Occupational Health and Safety at Work” (see annex: “Annex 18_2_Compliance of the professional bach study program with the professional standard.docx”);

- Sector-specific regulatory framework and first-cycle SP “Occupational Health and Safety at Work” (see annex: “30_2_Conformity of course content of the PBStP OHS to the regulatory enactments of the Republic of Latvia.docx”).

Based on the SAR (p. 183-184), it can be concluded that the same strengths, weaknesses, and recommendations applicable to the Short-cycle SP "Labour Protection" provided above also extend to the first part of the studies, as the studies are integrated (SAR, p. 150). Only exception which should be noted is the mandatory literature, which is more contemporary based on the information provided in the SAR annexes (see annex: “ANNEX_22_2_Description of courses of the Occupational health and safety at work.doc”).

However, the main distinction lies in the increased emphasis on analytical work through courseworks, which significantly enhances students' capabilities for independent research.
Additionally, the inclusion of elective courses and specializations adds considerable value to the study programme. (SAR, p. 183-184)

It is important to note that students and some employers were connected to several study programmes under assessment, either as students or guest lecturers, which means that the insights gathered during the assessment visit, as analyzed in this report regarding the Short-cycle SP "Labour Protection”, apply to all programmes. This particularly pertains to the strong and open relationships among employers, students, and teaching staff, as well as the sense of a unified "family" and community that develops during the course of studies and continues thereafter. According to the assessment visit graduates in employer roles are not hesitant to reach out to teaching staff for assistance with questions related to their field or research. This underscores the fact that UL faculty members are recognized and accepted advocates in the market, and their opinions hold significant weight in society.

The First-cycle SP "Occupational Health and Safety at Work" effectively prepares students for careers in the Latvian labour market by addressing identified educational needs. The programme's integration with the Short-cycle SP "Labour Protection" facilitates a seamless transition, while its emphasis on analytical coursework and inclusion of elective specializations enhance independent

research capabilities. Positive relationships among students, teaching staff, and employers foster a supportive community, reinforcing the reputation of UL faculty as respected experts. Overall, the First-cycle SP "Occupational Health and Safety at Work" combines academic rigor with practical application, equipping students with the skills needed for successful careers in occupational safety and health.

2.2.2. N/A

2.2.3. As previously mentioned under the chapter Short-cycle SP "Labour Protection", a comprehensive analysis of the study implementation methods are provided in the SAR (p. 153-154 as well as p.185-186), which highlights a variety of teaching and assessment methods including interactive lectures, seminars, discussions, practical assignments, group work, project development, and study excursions, and hands-on experiences to promote critical thinking and application of knowledge.

As it is mentioned before (Short-cycle SP “Labour Protection” chapter 2.2.3 of this report) one of the key strengths of the UL is its commitment to a student-centered learning philosophy, enhanced by the participation of industry professionals as guest lecturers. This integration enriches the learning experience by bridging theoretical knowledge with practical application, as confirmed by positive feedback from students and graduates during the assessment visit.

The supportive relationships among students, faculty, and management contribute to a dynamic educational environment. The high motivation levels demonstrated by both students and teaching staff foster open communication and constructive dialogue regarding course content and assessment methods. Additionally, the incorporation of peer teaching among senior students enhances the collaborative learning experience and supports the development of students' research competencies, allowing them to analyze and study problems of interest in depth. (SAR, p. 185)

Overall, the first-cycle SP "Occupational Health and Safety at Work" demonstrates a strong commitment to student-centered learning and a well-designed approach to study implementation. The diversity of methods, emphasis on active learning, and focus on real-world relevance create a strong foundation for achieving the aims and learning outcomes of the programme. The programme also demonstrates adaptability and continuous improvement through ongoing feedback and review.

2.2.4. According to the SAR (p. 186-187) the First-cycle SP "Occupational Health and Safety at Work" includes three internship components primarily designed to enhance students' practical skills and knowledge application in the field of labour protection: Practice I (8 CP/12 ECTS), which takes place in the second semester, Practice II (6 CP/9 ECTS), which takes place in the 4th semester and Practice III (6 CP/9 ECTS), which takes place in the 7th semester. Together, these internships provide students with a total of 20 CP (30 ECTS) of practical training allowing students to demonstrate their knowledge and skills regarding normative documents in labour protection as well as in-depth analysis of work environment risks, implementing risk assessment methods taught in theoretical courses, and engaging with real-world data through employee questionnaires and other assessment tools. (SAR, p. 187)

The internship tasks are clearly aligned with specific learning outcomes, ensuring a direct connection between theoretical knowledge and practical application. Importantly, the outcomes of the internships address all nine learning outcomes of the programme, while adhering to the UL's Student Internship Organisation Procedure and complying with the Cabinet Ministers' Regulations. Organized across various sectors, these internships provide students with valuable experience in

diverse work environments, actively involving employers through contracts and letters of support to ensure relevant, industry-specific training. (SAR p.187-188)

The SAR (p. 188) also outlines a structured reporting process for students, incorporating feedback from supervisors and a defense of their internship work, further ensuring a comprehensive assessment. The Internship Defence Commission, composed of professionals from various institutions and backgrounds, exposes students to different perspectives and expertise. During the assessment visit employers gave several examples of how they are involved to different committees, including the internship work defense committee, which gives the opportunity to give the feedback and get the overview of other companies and placements.

As mentioned before it was reflected several times during the assessment visit that the feedback collected from the employers during the internship is valuable and gives the possibility to improve the studies. However, it was also seen that employers valued students from higher courses or even higher level studies, as they are understandably more prepared. At the same time they understood the necessity to offer the internship places even if they have had some experiences with not very good examples of students.

The organization and execution of internships within the first-cycle SP "Occupational Health and Safety at Work" are structured effectively to meet regulatory requirements (educational standard, Latvia Student Internship Organizational Procedure etc) ensure alignment with all 9 learning outcomes. Emphasizing student involvement, practical applications, and feedback mechanisms, the study programme fosters a rich learning environment that prepares students for successful careers in labour protection. (SAR, p. 186-187) The proactive support from teaching staff and the involvement of industry professionals, which was seen during the assessment visit, further enhance the educational experience, ensuring that students are adequately prepared to transition from academic learning to professional practice.

Overall, the first-cycle SP "Occupational Health and Safety at Work" demonstrates a well-designed and effective internship programme. The programme's alignment with learning outcomes, regulatory compliance, employer engagement, and focus on real-world applications make it a valuable asset to the curriculum.

2.2.5. N/A

2.2.6. Based on the SAR (p. 189), the topics of the final theses are highly relevant to the field and align well with the first-cycle SP "Occupational Health and Safety at Work". These encompass various core areas, including physical risk factors (such as noise and ergonomics), chemical risks (like those found in fuel production), and organizational factors (including remote working and psychological risks). The examples cited reflect real-world challenges specific to industries in Latvia, such as Schwenk Latvija SIA, Cewood, and Latvijas Gāze. (SAR, p. 189) This gives the confirmation that the programme emphasizes practical applications and real-world problem-solving, with thesis topics addressing specific workplace issues. They integrate knowledge from various courses, including risk assessment, ergonomics, environmental protection, and relevant legislation. Involvement from specialists in other faculties and industry experts further enhances the practical relevance of the thesis projects.

The high student satisfaction score of 6.67 out of 7 regarding understanding thesis requirements indicates that students are well-prepared for this critical phase of their education. The successful defense of all theses submitted in 2022, with marks ranging from 6 to 10, demonstrates the

effectiveness of the programme in preparing students to conduct research and produce high-quality work. However, one of the graduates defended final work in 2023 and 4 of them were expected to defend in 2024. (SAR, p. 189) Therefore, this could be considered one potential area for development to further increase the graduation rate within the nominal duration of study.

Overall, the final theses for the First-cycle SP "Occupational Health and Safety at Work" are highly relevant, addressing critical real-world challenges in Latvian industries. With a strong student satisfaction score, the programme demonstrates its effectiveness in preparing students for quality research, although the defense of some theses beyond the nominal period indicates a need for further development to improve graduation rates.

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

The First-cycle SP "Occupational Health and Safety at Work" is designed to prepare occupational safety engineers for the Latvian labour market. Initiated based on feedback from graduates of the short-cycle SP "Labour Protection," the programme addresses the need for further educational pathways, with 93% of surveyed graduates expressing a desire to pursue a bachelor’s degree.

The First-cycle SP "Occupational Health and Safety at Work" complies with national educational standards and consists of compulsory, restricted elective, and optional courses, providing a comprehensive educational framework. It emphasizes practical skills and incorporates analytical coursework that enhances students' research capabilities, along with flexibility to adapt studies based on personal or professional commitments.

Strengths:
1) Diverse range of teaching methods, integrated coursework, and three distinct internship placements that provide a gradual progression of practical experience.
2) Actively involved industry professionals and employers in course development and internship placements, ensuring a strong connection between academic learning and practical applications.
3) Prioritized student feedback, open communication, and adaptable teaching methods to ensure a positive learning experience.
4) Emphasize the development of practical skills through hands-on assignments, projects, and real-world problem-solving within these.
5) The internship programme provides a structured and supervised experience in various industries, allowing students to apply their knowledge and gain valuable insights.
6) Incorporates regular student surveys, peer observation among lecturers, and continuous review of course content to ensure ongoing improvement.

Weaknesses:
1) While the SAR highlights programme strengths, it would be beneficial to acknowledge potential challenges, such as finding suitable placements for all students or ensuring consistent employer engagement or how to raise the number of graduates during the nominal study period.

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

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

2.3. Resources and Provision of the Study Programme

Analysis

2.3.1. An overview of the resource base for all programmes within the study field “Internal Security and Civil Protection”, including knowledge resources, information resources (such as the library), material assets, and financial resources, can be found in section 1.3 of this report. Since the resources are shared across all study programmes under the study field, this section is applicable to each of them and is not duplicated here.

Based on the assessment visit and the description of the First-cycle SP "Occupational Health and Safety at Work" in Section 1.3, the expert team concluded that the facilities for lectures, seminars, and laboratory work are well-equipped to meet the specific needs of the programme. Additionally, the UL library provides a comprehensive collection of scientific research materials available in both Latvian and English.

Additionally, Annex 29 (see annex: Annex 29_List of available technical equipment.pdf) provides a list of equipment available at UL and the Faculty of Chemistry, which is used for student work, demonstrations, and research projects. For instance, students have access to equipment for measuring workplace microclimate, lighting, and vibration factors. They are also taught how to use this equipment correctly, conduct measurements, interpret results, and apply modern risk assessment methods. (SAR, p. 190)

Courses focused on workplace ergonomics provide students with equipment for measuring the ergonomic and health status of workers. Other equipment is available for analyzing powdered substances, liquid samples, and air quality, which is useful for student projects and research. Students are introduced to this equipment in courses such as "Chemical Substances and Their Safety." (SAR, p. 191)

Students and faculty at the University of Latvia have access to a variety of databases, including Scopus, Web of Science, ScienceDirect, SpringerLink, and Wiley, which can be found on the UL website: https://www.biblioteka.lu.lv/resursi/abonetie-e-resursi/. These databases are utilized for updating course materials and conducting student research projects. The director of the First-cycle SP "Occupational Health and Safety at Work" frequently organizes workshops to help students improve their skills in literature reviews and effectively search for scientific publications within UL's databases for their final theses. (SAR, p. 190)

It could be concluded that the availability of these resources ensures the successful implementation of the First-cycle SP "Occupational Health and Safety at Work", supporting independent study and research for students. Additionally, the programme's information resources are consistently updated to align with the needs of both faculty and students.

2.3.2. N/A

2.3.3. The First-cycle SP ‘’Occupational Health and Safety at Work’’ is primarily funded by tuition fees, as there is no state funding available. A detailed breakdown of the projected student enrollment by study type and anticipated income is provided in SAR Table 3.3.3.1 (see the Study Programme description in Section 3.3). During the reporting period, no full-time students were enrolled in the programme. However, the programme was offered to part-time students for 9 semesters (4.5 years). (SAR, p. 191)

To determine the financial resources needed for the programme, the UL employs a methodology that takes into account the costs associated with delivering the programme, including faculty involvement, projected student enrollment, and other relevant factors, ensuring reliable financial projections (SAR, p. 191).

For these calculations, data from the 2022/2023 academic year is utilized, which includes student enrollment numbers as of October 1, 2022, study plans, and faculty composition. Based on this information, the total annual cost of the programme is estimated to be 67,200 EUR, with a cost breakdown provided in Table 3.3.3.2 (see the programme description in Section 3.3) (SAR, p. 192).

Tuition fees for both full-time and part-time students are the same at 17,000 EUR per year. Since only part-time students are currently enrolled, calculations are based on the potential enrollment of full-time students after the programme's accreditation. To ensure profitability, the programme requires a minimum enrollment of at least 40 full-time and part-time students with cost per student is 1678 EUR per year. (SAR, p. 192-193).

The summary of projected student numbers, programme income, expenses, and profitability for all study modes indicates that the First-cycle SP ‘’Occupational Health and Safety at Work’’ is financially viable and capable of supporting its growth. The expert team concurs that projected income surpasses expenses, eliminating the need for additional external funding. This data clearly demonstrates that the University of Latvia possesses adequate financial resources to successfully implement and develop the programme.

Moreover, the programme can also benefit from revenue generated through continuing education and other services, as well as from the faculty's accumulated financial resources. Additionally, the faculty receives financial support from the University of Latvia's Study Quality Improvement Fund, further enhancing the programme's sustainability.

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

To ensure a high-quality learning experience, the First-cycle SP ‘’Occupational Health and Safety at Work’’ boasts modern classrooms, well-equipped laboratories, and an extensive library. Students have access to a variety of equipment for practical work and research. These resources are essential for students to gain comprehensive knowledge and practical skills in the field of occupational health and safety.

The First-cycle SP ‘’Occupational Health and Safety at Work’’ is funded by tuition fees. Although in the past only part-time students were enrolled, calculations show that the programme remains profitable even if full-time students enroll. Currently, the First-cycle SP ‘’Occupational Health and Safety at Work’’ income exceeds its expenses, ensuring its sustainability.

To ensure accurate financial calculations, a specific methodology is used to assess the programme's costs and plan for its future development. This approach ensures that the programme is not only financially stable but can also adapt to changing circumstances and provide high-quality education for students.

First-cycle SP ‘’Occupational Health and Safety at Work’’ is well-resourced and financially stable. This allows the programme to successfully achieve its goals and train qualified specialists in the field of occupational health and safety.

Strengths:
1) The First-cycle SP ‘’Occupational Health and Safety at Work’’ boasts modern classrooms, well-equipped laboratories, and an extensive library. This robust infrastructure provides students with the opportunity to conduct hands-on projects, research, and acquire real-world skills that are highly valuable in this field.
2) The First-cycle SP ‘’Occupational Health and Safety at Work’’ is financially sound, ensuring the continuity of high-quality education. This stability allows the programme to invest in the latest technologies, develop the curriculum, and attract qualified instructors.
3) The First-cycle SP ‘’Occupational Health and Safety at Work’’ has a strong focus on practical application. Students gain not only theoretical knowledge but also practical skills that are essential for working in the field of occupational health and safety. This enhances graduates' competitiveness in the job market.

Weaknesses:
None

Assessment of the requirement [6]

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The First-cycle SP ‘’Occupational Health and Safety at Work’’ is supported by strong study and research facilities, including a dedicated study base. The programme also exhibits long-term financial sustainability.

2.4. Teaching Staff

Analysis

2.4.1. The principles of personnel management, the quality of lecturers, policy goals, talent development, and professional development initiatives (including seminars and teaching courses) have been addressed in the chapter above regarding the Short-cycle SP "Labour Protection" (see: chapter 2.4). Therefore, this section will not repeat those details.

However, it is essential to highlight that the First-cycle SP "Occupational Health and Safety at Work" aligns its research activities with institutional objectives and industry needs, concentrating on key areas such as occupational safety standards, workplace ergonomics, and risk management. Comparison with regulatory framework is offered in annexes which are referenced above (see chapter 2.2.1) of this study programme report. This alignment not only enhances the relevance of the educational offerings but also ensures that graduates are well-prepared to meet current and future challenges in the field.

The teaching staff involved in the First-cycle SP "Occupational Health and Safety at Work" possesses the necessary qualifications to ensure the effective implementation of the curriculum. Specifically, the faculty includes 26 lecturers, of whom 19 hold doctoral degrees and 6 have master's degrees, along with 2 guest lecturers who also possess PhDs (SAR, p. 197). This is strong academic foundation is complemented by their relevant degrees in occupational health, safety management, environmental sciences, and engineering (see also annexes: Annex_6_Basic information regarding

the teachers involved in the implementation of the study direction.xlsx, Annex_7_Teacher biographies.pdf)

Moreover, the commitment to a collaborative teaching approach is evident in the shared leadership structure. The First-cycle SP "Occupational Health and Safety at Work" and the Short-cycle SP "Labor Protection" share the same programme director (since 2022), which has led to more effective management of staff qualifications and composition in both programmes. This synergy not only enhances the consistency of educational quality but also fosters a more cohesive learning environment.

Additionally, the programme's emphasis on continuously updating its content to reflect industry standards and emerging trends is vital. Engaging in regular assessments and evaluations, as indicated in the previous chapters, allows for ongoing improvements that keep the curriculum relevant. The involvement of industry professionals in guest lectures and workshops further enriches the students' learning experience and prepares them to effectively address real-world challenges in occupational health and safety.

In summary, the First-cycle SP "Occupational Health and Safety at Work" not only meets but exemplifies the standards set forth by industry and regulatory bodies. With a qualified faculty, a clear alignment with market needs, and a structure that encourages collaboration and continuous improvement, the programme is well-equipped to produce competent professionals ready to contribute to the field.

2.4.2. The strategy for the composition of the teaching staff, including decisions, processes, and requirements, was previously analyzed in relation to the Short-cycle SP "Labour Protection" (see chapter 2.4). As this topic is applicable to the First-cycle SP "Occupational Health and Safety at Work," it will not be reiterated here.

However, it is important to note that the management has established an effective system to facilitate positive changes within the staff, incorporating comprehensive onboarding processes, succession planning, and ongoing training to ensure continuity and maintain teaching quality. The successful integration of new faculty members is achieved through these onboarding and mentorship initiatives, which not only support staff transitions but also ensure that the First-cycle SP adheres to educational standards (see annex: Annex_3_Development plan of the study direction.docx).

During the reporting period, changes in the staff composition have been minimal, focusing primarily on the inclusion of experts in course instruction, with 26 elected members and 12 guest lecturers involved. Changes in the teaching staff predominantly relate to staff promotions, with the overall number of elected faculty remaining unchanged (SAR, p. 197- 199).

The composition of the academic staff is aligned with the aims and objectives of the First-cycle Study Programme "Occupational Health and Safety at Work," with staff selection approved by the Council of the Faculty of Chemistry (SAR, p. 138). This ensures that the programme is supported by qualified faculty members who are equipped to deliver high-quality education.

2.4.3. N/A

2.4.4. The teaching staff actively engage in research, with publications appearing in peer-reviewed journals, participation in conferences, and involvement in industry projects, all of which comply with

the Law on Higher Education. Faculty members possess significant professional experience, allowing them to provide students with valuable practical case studies. Specifically, the academic staff associated with the First-cycle SP "Occupational Health and Safety at Work" have published over 250 scientific articles and more than 220 conference abstracts (SAR, p. 135).

These publications regularly appear in both international and national journals, enriching the body of knowledge in occupational safety and health (see annexes: Annex_8_Summary of qualitative data regarding the scientific activity of the study direction.docx and Annex_9_List of teaching staff publications for the reference period.docx).

2.4.5. The First-cycle SP "Occupational Health and Safety at Work" has established a well-structured mechanism for fostering collaboration among the teaching staff, which supports the achievement of the programme's aims and facilitates the interconnection of study courses. This mechanism enhances collaboration and knowledge sharing among faculty members, with common objectives that include mentoring junior staff, sharing experiences, conducting departmental workshops and projects, and participating in peer observation. Faculty members actively engage in departmental meetings, workshops, and collaborative initiatives, participating in four annual faculty workshops (SAR, p. 145; Annex_3_Development plan of the study direction.docx, p. 7).

Since 2018, the "Promoting the Colleague Experience Exchange of Academic Staff" initiative has established a framework for regular peer observation among academics in the field (SAR, p. 74). During the assessment visit, it was confirmed by academic staff that all lecturers undergo peer review, and they view this process as a valuable opportunity for mutual learning and professional growth.

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

The teaching staff for the First-cycle SP "Occupational Health and Safety at Work" possesses the necessary qualifications and experience, effectively aligning with the programme's goals and regulatory framework. The programme benefits from a low turnover rate and efficient staff transition processes, ensuring continuity and quality in teaching. There is significant faculty involvement in research, evidenced by over 250 publications and strong participation in conferences, which underscores the programme's academic rigor. Additionally, the research activities align with institutional objectives and industry needs, enhancing the programme's relevance.

The established collaborative mechanisms, including regular meetings and peer observation initiatives, foster an interdisciplinary approach and produce meaningful outcomes. Overall, this solid foundation positions the programme to produce competent professionals ready to address challenges in occupational health and safety.

Strengths:
1) A significant percentage of faculty members hold advanced degrees and have extensive industry experience, ensuring high-quality education.
2) Active research and publications participation.
3) Strong mechanisms for faculty interdisciplinary collaboration.

Weaknesses:
None

Assessment of the requirement [7]

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

First-cycle SP ‘’Occupational Health and Safety at Work’’ is fully compliant with requirement qualification of the academic staff and visiting lecturers set in HEI regulating law (Regulatory Enactments on Academic and Administrative Positions at the University of Latvia; fully comply with Article 55 (1) of the "Law on Higher Education Institutions" of the Republic of Latvia).

2.5. Assessment of the Compliance

Requirements

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Annex (see annex: Annex 17_2_Compliance of the professional bach study program with the National Education Standard.docx) confirms that the First-cycle SP ‘’Occupational Health and Safety at Work’’ fully complies with Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No. 305 “Noteikumi par valsts profesionālās augstākās izglītības standartu”

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Annex (see annex: Annex 18_2_Compliance of the professional bach study program with the professional standard.docx) confirms that the First-cycle SP ‘’Occupational Health and Safety at Work’’ fully complies with the professional standard of Occupational safety engineer (approved on June 8, 2022).

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Annex (see annex: ANNEX_22_2_Description of courses of the Occupational health and safety at work.docx) confirms that all descriptions of all study courses have been prepared in Latvian (only language in which study programme is implemented). All descriptions comply with the requirements set in Section 56.(1), paragraph 2 of the Law on Higher Education Institutions.

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The sample of diploma and it's supplement in Latvian (15_2_pielikums_Bak_Studiju_Diplomi_LV ar pielikumu.docx) and in English (ANNEX 15_2 Diploma template and supplement Bachelor program.docx) fully complies with the procedure described in Cabinet of Ministers regulations

No. 202 “Kārtība, kādā izsniedz valsts atzītus augstāko izglītību apliecinošus dokumentus”.

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Annex “6_pielikums_Pamatinformācija par studiju virziena īstenošanā iesaistītajiem mācībspēkiem_LV.xlsx” and Study field director's signed confirmation (see annex: 7_1_Pielikums_Virziena vadītāja apliecinājums par studiju programmu īstenošanā iesaistīto mācībspēku valsts valodas zināšanām_LV.pdf) fully complies with Cabinet of Ministers regulations No. 157 “Noteikumi par valsts valodas zināšanu apjomu, valsts valodas prasmes pārbaudes kārtību un valsts nodevu par valsts valodas prasmes pārbaudi”.

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

In study courses that are conducted in English, the relevant teaching staff has language proficiency at least at the B2 level (according to the appendix: 6_pielikums_Pamatinformācija par studiju virziena īstenošanā iesaistītajiem mācībspēkiem_LV.xlsx).

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The sample of the study agreement (see annex: Tipveida ligumi.zip) fully complies with the provisions to be included in the study agreement according to Cabinet of Ministers regulations No. 70 “Studiju līgumā obligāti ietveramie noteikumi”.

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

UL has provided documents (agreement with other university; annex: Dokumenti_par_iespejam studet citur.zip) that confirms that students will be provided with opportunities to continue studies in Riga Technical university with an option to choose between multiple study programmes (e.g. Professional Bachelor's Degree Programme in Safety Engineering and Professional Bachelor's Degree Programme in Customs and Tax Administration).

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

UL has provided document that confirms that students are guaranteed a compensation for losses if the study programme is not accredited or study programme's license is revoked (annex: Rektora apliecinājums kompensācijai SV_Iekšējā drošiba.edoc)

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Annex " 30_2_PBStP ADD kursu satura atbilstība Latvijas Republikas normatīvajiem aktiem.docx" states that study courses in First-cycle SP "Occupational Health and Safety at Work" complies with industry specific regulations.

Assessment of the requirement [8]

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

First-cycle SP ''Occupational Health and Safety at Work'' is fully compliant with requirements set in HEI regulating law and Cabinet of Ministers regulations as assessed in joint opinion's chapter 2.5. of this study programme.

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

The First-cycle SP "Occupational Health and Safety at Work" effectively addresses the demands of the labour market, making it an attractive option for prospective students. While the programme enjoys good collaboration with employers, as confirmed during the assessment visit, there appears to be only periodic monitoring of labour market trends and feedback from employers. To better align the curriculum with current industry needs, it is essential to involve employers more actively in the development of competencies and learning outcomes, particularly given the importance of practical experience at this level of study.

The programme was developed in response to feedback from graduates of the Short-cycle SP

"Labour Protection," indicating a strong desire among 93% of surveyed alumni to pursue further educational pathways. This programme complies with national educational standards and features a comprehensive framework that includes compulsory, restricted elective, and optional courses, emphasizing practical skills and analytical coursework.

Short-cycle SP "Labour Protection" is well-resourced, with modern classrooms, well-equipped laboratories, and an extensive library that provides students with essential tools for practical work and research. These resources are crucial for developing the knowledge and skills necessary for a successful career in occupational health and safety. Funded primarily by tuition fees, the programme has demonstrated financial sustainability, with income exceeding expenses and the ability to maintain profitability even with full-time enrollments.

The teaching staff is composed of qualified individuals whose expertise aligns with the programme's objectives and regulatory standards. With a low turnover rate and efficient transition processes, the staff ensures continuity and high-quality teaching. Faculty engagement in research is noteworthy, contributing over 250 publications and actively participating in conferences, which underscores the academic rigor of the programme. Established collaborative mechanisms, such as regular meetings and peer observation initiatives, facilitate an interdisciplinary approach and yield meaningful outcomes.

The First-cycle SP "Occupational Health and Safety at Work" is well-positioned to meet the evolving demands of the Latvian labour market, particularly in occupational safety engineering. Continuous analysis of graduate and employer satisfaction will be essential to ensure that the programme remains relevant and maintains alignment with market needs. While the modern infrastructure, financial stability, and qualified teaching staff provide a solid educational foundation, ongoing efforts are necessary to adapt to emerging industry trends and enhance the overall quality of the programme.

Overall, the First-cycle SP "Occupational Health and Safety at Work" has a strong alignment with labour market demands, making it an appealing choice for students. The programme effectively collaborates with employers to ensure that course content remains relevant. Complying with national educational standards, the programme offers a comprehensive framework that emphasizes practical skills and analytical coursework, supported by modern classrooms, well-equipped laboratories, and extensive library resources. Funded primarily by tuition fees, the programme demonstrates financial stability and profitability, facilitating ongoing development and adaptation.

The teaching staff is highly qualified and actively involved in research, contributing to the academic rigor of the programme through numerous publications. Overall, the First-cycle SP "Occupational Health and Safety at Work" is well-positioned to produce qualified specialists and address labour market challenges effectively. Continued efforts to assess graduate and employer satisfaction will further enhance its quality and relevance in a dynamic industry landscape.

Strengths:
1)A powerful and unique programme in Latvia, which opens up the possibility of a high employment rate in this profession.
2) Motivated management to introduce improvements and changes to course content.
3) Graduates and employers are very satisfied with their competences.
4) The programme offers a diverse range of teaching methods, including internships and hands-on projects, which help students develop practical skills.
5) Modern Infrastructure, well-equipped classrooms, laboratories, and a comprehensive library

support the practical and research needs of students.
6) The programme is financially sound, allowing for continued investment in technology, curriculum development, and qualified instructors.
7) Faculty members are highly qualified, with many holding advanced degrees and having significant industry experience, ensuring a high level of education.

Weaknesses:
1) Lack of systematic analysis of graduates' satisfaction as well as employers with First-cycle SP "Occupational Health and Safety at Work".
2) To enhance the First-cycle SP "Occupational Health and Safety at Work" attractiveness and relevance, especially for companies operating internationally, there is a need for adapting subjects to include perspectives from foreign lecturers and to potentially offer courses in English.
3) Adapting to International Trends – There is a need to adapt some subjects to align with international trends, particularly in the EU context, to maintain the SP's relevance and attractiveness, especially for foreign lecturers and students.

Evaluation of the study programme "Occupational Health and Safety at Work"

Evaluation of the study programme:

Excellent

2.6. Recommendations for the Study Programme "Occupational Health and Safety at Work"

Short-term recommendations

1) Development of a tool to systematically analyze the satisfaction of graduates with the study programme and the satisfaction of employers and use the data obtained to improve the study programme. (2 years)

Long-term recommendations

1) Revise numerous co-operation agreements with employers at a formal level and develop operational cooperation at the level of joint professional work. (4 years)
2) The programme needs to address how to increase the number of graduates completing their studies within the nominal study period, ensuring that students are supported throughout their academic journey. (continuously)

II - "Work Environmental Protection and Expertise" ASSESSMENT

II - "Work Environmental Protection and Expertise" ASSESSMENT

2.1. Indicators Describing the Study Programme

Analysis

2.1.1. The Professional Master (Second-cycle) Study Programme “Work Environmental Protection and Expertise” 47862 (Second-cycle SP “Work Environmental Protection and Expertise”) is developed in accordance with the requirements of the study field "Internal Security and Civil Defence" and in compliance with the sector-specific regulatory framework, the relevant education

standard and the qualification, the relevant education standard and the qualification is provided in Annex 17.3. Compliance of the Second-cycle SP “Work Environmental Protection and Expertise” with the national education standard (SAR, p.108).

2.1.2. The title of the Second-cycle SP “Work Environmental Protection and Expertise” aligns directly with the objectives of the study field and refers to its affiliation with the disciplines of civil protection and internal security. It is related to the formulation of the main objective of the programme and underlines the focus of the programme on the protection and expertise of the world of work (SAR, p. 109), including the relevant branch of science and focusing on current trends in occupational safety and expertise in Latvia and Europe.

The Second-cycle SP “Work Environmental Protection and Expertise” specialists at the level of professional Master's degree fully complies with the highest strategic planning and development documents of the Latvian state and subordinate normative acts regulating the Latvian higher education space and its quality. It is in line with the priorities of the Latvian National Development Plan and the Strategy for Sustainable Development of Latvia until 2030 (http://polsis.mk.gov.lv/documents/3323), which are to be transformed into modern education, knowledge base, productive innovation system and polycentric development in order to promote the long-term development of the economic sectors of the Republic of Latvia.

The title of the study programme is identified by the study programme code 47862 according to the Latvian Classification of Education, which reflects the content of this study programme, as the classification code 862 corresponds to the group of educational programmes "Occupational Health and Safety", while 47 corresponds to the second cycle of professional higher education (professional master's degree), SAR, p. 109.

The qualification obtained in this programme is Professional Master's degree in Labour Protection and professional qualification is Senior Specialist in Labour Protection. The duration of this full-time programme is 2 years (4 semesters)or 1 year (2 semesters). Admission requirements are set for both options: Full-time studies - 2 years (4 semesters) needs First cycle higher education (Bachelor's degree or second level professional higher education (or equivalent) in natural sciences or engineering and entrance examination. Full-time regular studies - 1 year (2 semesters) previous education: first cycle higher education (including second level vocational higher education) in labour protection with the qualification "Senior Specialist in Labour Protection" or "Occupational Safety Engineer" or an equivalent professional qualification. https://www.lu.lv/gribustudet/ -Only in Latvian).

That allows „vertical mobility“ and continuation of education for students, which is the strength of this programme.

The entry requirements and a formula for calculating the competitive grade in the entrance examination is set and the entrance examination consists of 3 parts: a test covering basic knowledge in occupational safety and health, a logical solutions test, and a situation analysis. The entrance test takes place on a specific date and each part is timed accordingly. The website (https://www.lu.lv/gribustudet/) contains the programme requirements and the entrance examination, which consists of three parts: a test on basic knowledge of occupational safety and health, a test on logical solutions and a situation analysis.

Depending on the admission requirements, the programme can be completed within two or one academic year, following the established study and time schedules. This duration is important as it provides clarity on how much time students need to dedicate to completing the programme. The

study programme has a total number of credits (80 CP for 2 years and 40 CP for one year) that must be completed in order to obtain the qualification at the end of the study programme. Study courses are assessed on the basis of credits and students must achieve a certain number of credits to successfully complete the programme (SAR, p.109). Admission requirements for the study programme are developed in accordance with the laws and regulations of the Republic of Latvia and the objectives of the study programme.

The content of the study programme fully complies with the professional standard "Senior Specialist in Labour Protection" (https://registri.visc.gov.lv/profizglitiba/dokumenti/standarti/2017/PS-207.pdf - only in Latvian).

The content of the study programme is competitive and relevant to the requirements of today's labour market. This is supported by the comparison of study programmes with other higher education institutions in Latvia and abroad (see Table 3.1.2.1, SAR, p. 110). The content indicates the acquisition of modern and interdisciplinary knowledge, skills and competences. Graduates will acquire the necessary theoretical and practical knowledge of occupational health and safety and the working environment at master's level, which has been consolidated in training practice and transformed into the skills of a qualified professional. The scope of the study programme is in line with the European Commission's first priority: "New priorities for European cooperation in education and training" on building relevant and high quality skills and competences with a focus on learning outcomes, employability and innovation in the modern world of work (SAR, p. 109).

In Latvia, similar study programmes are offered by the Riga Technical University, the Latvian University of Life Sciences and Technologies and the University of Daugavpils. The degree programmes are similar in that they lead to the professional qualification "Senior Specialist in Labour Protection". The analysis of the submitted documents shows that the content of the programme was compared with two faculties outside Latvia - the University of Valencia, Spain, and the National University of Ireland - and certain similarities and differences have been identified, which opens the possibility of cross-border cooperation for this programme. There are some differences in credits but still in line with the course.

The learning outcomes of the programme are clearly defined and linked to the competences. The learning outcomes of the subjects offered by this programme are correlated with the study outcomes.

The management of the study programme has a strong focus on the continuous improvement of the study programme, which gives this programme strength and a bright future. This is particularly evident in Annex 3: Study Program Development Plan and the activities listed in SAR, p.108: cooperation with organizers of industry conferences to promote more active involvement of students by attending various events in labour protection (conferences, exhibitions), Master's student consultancy project team were employers can apply for a consultancy project, more closely cooperation with the Employers' Confederation of Latvia, involving employers more in the process of developing the content of professional education, designing new courses and updating new professional standards relevant to the field of study (e.g. ergonomist, etc.), increasing the number of student practice placements and increasing the involvement of Master's thesis topics in the expertise of work environment risks in sectors defined in Latvia as hazardous industries with a diversity of risk factors.

The Second-cycle SP “Work Environmental Protection and Expertise” is conducted in Latvian and due to the specifics of legislation, labour market and employability, it is not planned to conduct the

study programme in any other language. According to the assessment visit and the interview with the director of the study, one gets the impression that regardless of the specificity of the study programme, which is primarily intended for the Latvian region, there is the possibility of Erasmus mobility and the teaching of certain subjects in English in order to strengthen internationalization.

The title, code, degree, and professional qualification of the Second-cycle SP “Work Environmental Protection and Expertise”, aims, objectives, learning outcomes, and admission requirements are interrelated.

2.1.3. According to SAR (p. 108), no crucial changes were made to the parameters of the Second-cycle SP “Work Environmental Protection and Expertise” during the reporting period but continuous improvements are the main target of the study programme director and management (Annex. 3 - Study Development Plan). However, on SAR (p. 108), it is stated that the Director of Studies is planning continuous improvements and that the study programme envisages closer cooperation with employers to give young people the opportunity to learn the necessary occupational safety and health skills in cooperation with representatives of the business community. In terms of plans and new leadership, it is clear that detailed planning for the new period is being worked on as part of the improvement. Of particular note is the collaboration with business and industry, the creation of consultancy project teams to enable employers to open consultancy project posts where research students can work on health and safety issues within the organization and develop a specific strategy for a particular health and safety problem. It is planned to involve employers in the process of developing changes and additions to the study programme, increase the number of places for student internships and create master's thesis topics in the field of work environment risks in sectors defined in Latvia as hazardous industries with a variety of risk factors.

All corrections made to the study programme’s parameters within the assessment of the study field are analyzed, justified and supported by management.

2.1.4. The Second-cycle SP “Work Environmental Protection and Expertise” continues the bachelor's degree and offers the possibility of continuing with doctoral studies in the same field, which makes this vertical of training and opportunities for students unique. According to the institutions and information centers identified (Lursoft, etc.), the labour market is not yet saturated (SAR, p. 111). Employers are interested in graduates, as evidenced by the large number of students whose higher vocational education is paid for by the employer if the student has not received government funding through a competitive process (UL currently receives government funding for the training of 14 students each year). The evaluations carried out and the interviews with employers during the assessment visits indicate a positive attitude of employers towards the graduates and the programme.

The course provides knowledge of the latest findings in the field of workload ergonomics and cognitive ergonomics, taking into account the importance of the human factor in the work process and linking it to occupational health and safety (SAR, p.112).

Between 2013 and 2022, around 136 employers who employ graduates of the programme, including the relevant institutions, were surveyed. The graduate employment survey shows that more than 95% of graduates are employed in their field of specialization. Employers rated graduates' skills very highly, which was expressed also during the assessment visit: they have good theoretical and practical skills, the ability to acquire new knowledge and skills, the ability to identify and solve a problem, find and process information, work in new conditions and adapt to the environment, work in a team, manage and organize work, have the ability to make and justify decisions and propose

new ideas and solutions (SAR, p. 113).

At the same time the graduates' feedback emphasizes that the higher vocational education training programme is very necessary and relevant, as Latvia's accession to the European Union has significantly increased the requirements in the field of labour protection, but the number of competent specialists in the field of occupational safety and health is insufficient. This is confirmed by the steady annual number of students enrolled in the Second-cycle SP “Work Environmental Protection and Expertise” (SAR, p. 113).

2.1.5. N/A

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

The Second-cycle SP “Work Environmental Protection and Expertise” aligns with the "Internal Security and Civil Defence" field, providing theoretical and practical education in health and safety at work. Graduates receive a Professional Master`s degree in Labour Protection. The Second-cycle SP “Work Environmental Protection and Expertise” currently available in Latvian, and has a functional part-time mode. Student number trend is stable in 2023, and the programme is deemed economically justified based on its curriculum and goals.

Based on the analysis of the documents submitted and the assessment visits, it can be concluded that the Second-cycle SP “Work Environmental Protection and Expertise” meets all the criteria of sustainability and attractiveness. According to the labour market data, there is a need for personnel in this profession, but considering the level of study, it is important to develop students' competences so that they can solve the problems and tasks that the new modern working environments entail. In this context, it is necessary to follow the trends in education in Latvia and other EU countries and give graduates the opportunity to continue their studies.

Strengths:
1) The Second-cycle SP “Work Environmental Protection and Expertise” was developed in cooperation with the employers and the needs in Latvia
2) Continuous improvement of the Second-cycle SP “Work Environmental Protection and Expertise” based on surveys conducted with employers.
3) A good base of alumni who can promote the Second-cycle SP “Work Environmental Protection and Expertise”.

Weaknesses:
1) Lack of implementation of the Second-cycle SP “Work Environmental Protection and Expertise” in English, which would enable the exchange of knowledge and practices outside the Latvian territory.

2.2. The Content of Studies and Implementation Thereof

Analysis

2.2.1. The Second-cycle SP “Work Environmental Protection and Expertise” is designed to train advanced specialists in labour protection, equipping them with extensive knowledge, skills, and competencies in ergonomics, occupational safety, work environment expertise, risk assessment, and t he development of preventive measures. The programme offers courses in labour protection that adhere to occupational standards, international practices, and the latest scientific advancements, while being regularly updated to meet industry trends and labour market needs. (SAR, p.117-119)

Graduates of the Second-cycle SP “Work Environmental Protection and Expertise” are awarded a professional master’s degree in labour protection and professional qualification of senior specialist in labour protection (SAR p. 107). Studies are designed in accordance with a national education requirement, comparison is provided in second-cycle SP “Work Environmental Protection and Expertise” annexes between (SAR p. 119):

- “Regulations on the State Standard for Professional Higher Education” (Cabinet of Ministers Regulations No. 305 of 21.06.2023 requirements) and the second-cycle SP “Work Environmental Protection and Expertise” (see annex: ANNEX_17_3_Compliance of the professional with the national education standard.docx);

- Professional standard “senior specialist in labour protection” and second-cycle SP “Work Environmental Protection and Expertise” (see annex: ANNEX_18_3_Compliance of the study program with the professional standard .docx);

- sector specific regulatory framework and second-cycle SP “Work Environmental Protection and Expertise” (see annex: 30_3_EN_PMSTP_DVAE.docx).

Key focus areas of the second-cycle SP “Work Environmental Protection and Expertise” include addressing work-related musculoskeletal disorders, psychosocial risks, and the challenges posed by an aging workforce. The study programme incorporates courses on occupational safety, ergonomics, production safety, occupational medicine, labor law, environmental sustainability, and management skills. Practical skills are developed through internships in companies and government institutions. (SAR, p.117)

The second-cycle SP “Work Environmental Protection and Expertise” is offered in two formats: a 1-year option for those with prior qualifications in labour protection, and a 2-year option for students with relevant education in natural sciences, engineering, or other fields. The programme also incorporates input from employers, graduates, and labour protection experts, ensuring that its content stays relevant and up to date. (SAR, p.119) During the assessment visit, students highlighted a unified field of study that allows for the creation of various student-centered learning paths, tailored to the students' opportunities and needs. This is a significant strength considering the societal trend towards more personalized learning chunks and gradual acquisition of education. The assessment visit also conveyed the sense that both current and former students have made conscious choices, planning their educational paths further ahead, with the opportunity for continued education being one of the reasons this study field is highly valued (it was also highly valued by employers).

The second-cycle SP “Work Environmental Protection and Expertise” offers students opportunities to engage with scientific research and industry innovations, preparing them for careers domestically and internationally. Graduates are well-equipped to pursue further academic research or doctoral studies. (SAR, p. 119)

In conclusion, the second-cycle SP "Work Environmental Protection and Expertise" trains advanced specialists in labour protection, providing comprehensive knowledge in ergonomics, occupational safety, risk assessment, and preventive measures. It offers courses aligned with occupational standards, international practices, and the latest scientific advancements, regularly updated to meet industry trends and labour market needs. Graduates earn a professional master’s degree and senior specialist qualification in labor protection. The programme emphasizes addressing work-related disorders, psychosocial risks, and challenges of an aging workforce, with practical skills developed

through internships. Offered in 1- and 2-year formats, it supports personalized learning paths and prepares students for both professional careers and further academic research.

2.2.2. The second-cycle SP "Work Environmental Protection and Expertise" is deeply rooted in both classical and contemporary scientific achievements within the field. The programme integrates traditional aspects such as chemical, physical, and ergonomic workplace safety with modern trends like remote work, human factors, and cognitive aspects. For instance, students explore classic fields like biomechanical risk factors while simultaneously addressing modern challenges such as remote working's impact on ergonomics and employee mental health. Courses such as "Occupational Health and Fundamentals of Occupational Medicine" incorporate cutting-edge research, like the implementation of well-being programmes at workplaces to enhance employee safety and health. (SAR, p. 120-121) During the assessment visit, the rise in home office usage and remote work during the COVID-19 period was brought up, along with its impact on the study programme and focus areas. It was confirmed that the content of most courses has been progressively updated to reflect these changes.

The second-cycle SP "Work Environmental Protection and Expertise" is continuously updated to reflect the latest industry needs and scientific advancements. For example, new courses such as "Sustainable Environmental Development in the Context of Labour Protection" and "Fundamentals and Legal Aspects of Labour Law" ensure that students are exposed to the latest trends in both environmental sustainability and labour law. These updates are driven by both the lecturers' active involvement in research and participation in international conferences, as well as close collaboration with industry leaders. (SAR, p. 120-121)

Students also contribute to the field by engaging in research that blends theoretical knowledge with industry practices. Several examples are given in the SAR (p. 121) that students present their research at international conferences, such as the University of Latvia's annual scientific conference, where in the past six years, 19 students have shared their findings in areas like industrial ergonomics and human factors.

Moreover, guest seminars and company visits to major organizations like Riga Hydro Power Plant and Cēsis Beer Factory offer practical insights into industry operations, enhancing students' understanding of workplace safety in diverse sectors. Even during the COVID-19 pandemic, organizations facilitated remote site visits, ensuring that practical training continued despite restrictions. These opportunities allow students to stay current with the latest practices and innovations in labour protection.

In summary, the awarding of the Professional Master's degree of the second-cycle SP "Work Environmental Protection and Expertise" is grounded in contemporary advancements in labour protection science. The programme incorporates findings from current research, fostering an environment where students engage in extensive projects that address relevant issues, such as the ergonomic impacts of remote working during the COVID-19 pandemic. This integration supports the development of new knowledge and practices that are vital for advancing the field.

2.2.3.The implementation methods of the second-cycle study programme "Work Environmental Protection and Expertise" are thoughtfully designed to achieve the learning outcomes of both individual courses and the overall programme. The programme utilizes a variety of pedagogical strategies, including oral, written, and combined assessment methods. The incorporation of remote study tests, alongside a blend of introductory, interactive, summary, and problem-oriented lectures, ensures a comprehensive coverage of theoretical foundations. (SAR, p. 122)

The second-cycle SP “Work Environmental Protection and Expertise” has invited practitioners and professionals from various fields to lead courses and seminars, which effectively links theory with practice. This approach enhances the real-world application of classroom concepts, promoting an integrated learning experience that bridges academic knowledge with practical experience. For instance, students gain hands-on experience through practical training in companies such as Stora Enso Packaging, Knauf, and Riga HES, where they assess workplace risks and propose safety improvements. (SAR, p. 122) During the assessment visit, students highlighted the second-cycle SP “Work Environmental Protection and Expertise” adaptability and the strong connections between students, lecturers, and employers. They highlighted the programme’s sense of community, where experiences are shared, and advice is exchanged, fostering a collaborative learning environment.

The second-cycle SP “Work Environmental Protection and Expertise” focus on research competence is evident in its approach to mini-projects and final theses. Students are encouraged to explore topics of personal interest and integrate research findings from diverse fields, such as combining ergonomics with the LEAN approach. Continuous feedback from lecturers and peers is integral to this process, helping students refine their work and achieve the desired learning outcomes. (SAR, p. 122-123) The significance of feedback was also affirmed during the assessment visit, where it was recognized as a key component of the learning process. Some examples were given where previous feedback led to changes in the study programme.

Student involvement is further supported by the second-cycle SP “Work Environmental Protection and Expertise” flexibility, which allows students to balance their studies with work and family commitments. (SAR, p. 123) This flexibility was validated during the assessment visit, where the importance of hybrid learning options and various support mechanisms for students was acknowledged as essential for maintaining engagement in the programme.

Digital technologies, such as Moodle, are seamlessly integrated into the learning process, providing students with access to course materials and facilitating communication with lecturers. Regular updates to the curriculum, driven by feedback from students, employers, and industry trends, ensure that the content remains relevant and current. For example, new courses like “Sustainable Development of the Environment in the Context of Labor Protection” and “Records Management in Labour Protection” were introduced based on student input, reflecting the programme’s responsiveness to evolving needs. (SAR, p. 122-123)

In summary, the diverse teaching methods, combined with a student-centered approach and practical applications, significantly contribute to the second-cycle SP “Work Environmental Protection and Expertise” success in achieving its goals and learning outcomes. This is further supported by flexible study arrangements, consistent feedback mechanisms, and opportunities for practical training, which ensure that students are well-prepared both academically and professionally. By employing interactive lectures, group discussions, case studies, and practical assignments, and incorporating industry expertise through guest lectures, the Second-cycle SP “Work Environmental Protection and Expertise” effectively fosters a critical engagement with the subject matter and prepares students for real-world challenges.

2.2.4. The second-cycle SP “Work Environmental Protection and Expertise” outlines a sequence of internships that align with the UL regulations (SAR, p. 124-125). During the assessment visit, it was noted that since most Master’s students are already employed, they can complete the majority of their internship within their current workplace. Nevertheless, the UL has established specific learning outcomes that must be met during the internship. For any outcomes that cannot be achieved within the student's own organization, alternative placements are available, and the UL offers support in

finding suitable organizations (some examples were given in the SAR which companies have been suggested). (SAR, p.125)

The initial phase of the internship primarily focuses on procedural analysis, involving risk assessments and identifying process inefficiencies and other key observations. In contrast, the latter phase emphasizes research, information gathering, and presentation, as these are critical components of the required learning outcomes and an integral part of the academic experience. The goal of the internship is to solidify theoretical knowledge through practical application while fostering research skills, analytical and critical thinking, and related competencies. (SAR, p. 125)

During the assessment visit, it became clear that Master's level students are highly valued in the workplace, as they contribute significantly to organizational development and occupational safety at an advanced level. No substantial issues with the internship structure were raised during the assessment visit. However, similar to other areas, there is room for improvement in enhancing international experience through mobility programmes, which can be challenging for employed students and were further constrained during the COVID-19 period. Encouragingly, meetings with institutional leaders highlighted a strong commitment to increasing internationalization, and student interest in short-term mobility opportunities was notably positive during the assessment visit. This is an area the institution should actively capitalize on.

It can be concluded that internships are a vital component of the second-cycle SP “Work Environmental Protection and Expertise”, organized into three distinct phases. Each internship builds upon the knowledge and skills acquired in the classroom, requiring students to conduct risk assessments and propose safety measures in actual work settings. This approach ensures that students can apply theoretical insights to practical challenges. The UL supports students in finding placement opportunities, aiming to align internships with both academic and industry standards.

2.2.5. N/A

2.2.6. The SAR provides an overview of the relevance and quality of the students' final theses in the second-cycle SP “Work Environmental Protection and Expertise”. The topics chosen by students for their final theses are aligned with pressing issues in the labour market, both locally and globally. Locally, students address specific organizational risks and labour protection issues within Latvia, while globally, they tackle broader themes such as the role of ergonomics, human factors in modern work processes, and the LEAN approach in labour protection. (SAR, p. 126)

The relevance of these topics is evident, especially during the Covid-19 pandemic, when there was a notable increase in theses focusing on psycho-emotional stress and ergonomic risks related to remote work. Students demonstrate an ability to analyze classical risks in various economic sectors, employ modern risk assessment methods, and provide scientifically supported results. The theses are not only in line with the study programme's objectives but also meet the needs of the sector and current scientific trends, particularly concerning psychosocial and ergonomic risks. (SAR, p.126)

The range of research topics, such as "Work environment risks and preventive measures for employees in food packaging" (2020) and "Ergonomic risks and health promotion measures for healthcare workers" (2021), reflect students' engagement with current workplace safety challenges. These theses frequently involve the use of diverse research methods, such as literature analysis, interviews, surveys, and experiments, allowing students to thoroughly explore occupational safety and health issues. (SAR, p. 126)

Regarding the grading of Master's theses, the SAR (p. 126) highlights that most theses receive evaluations ranging from 7 to 9 points, with occasional lower marks for those that do not fully meet the expected standards. One thesis, for instance, was awarded 4 points in 2022 due to its failure to include adequate risk assessment methods, while another received a perfect score of 10 in 2021 for incorporating both subjective and objective assessment methods and developing sound proposals.

In summary, the students' final theses in the second-cycle SP “Work Environmental Protection and Expertise” are relevant to both industry needs and academic trends. The topics chosen address real-world issues in labour protection and ergonomics, while the quality of the theses, as reflected in their grades, is generally strong, with some exceptions where the work did not meet the necessary criteria.

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

The Second-cycle SP “Work Environmental Protection and Expertise” offers a comprehensive study that trains advanced specialists in labour protection and equips students with extensive knowledge in ergonomics, occupational safety, work environment risk assessment, and the development of preventive measures. The programme aligns its content with both national and international occupational standards, ensuring that its graduates are well-prepared to address the challenges of contemporary workplaces. Key strengths of the programme include its regular updates to reflect industry trends, the integration of theoretical knowledge with practical skills through internships, and a strong emphasis on scientific research. Additionally, the flexibility of the programme, offering both 1-year and 2-year study options, allows for personalized learning paths catering to different student needs.

Overall, the second-cycle SP "Work Environmental Protection and Expertise" is a well-rounded programme that successfully prepares students for both professional careers and further academic research, while continually evolving to meet the demands of modern labour protection challenges.

Strengths:
1) The content of the second-cycle SP "Work Environmental Protection and Expertise" aligns with current trends and demands in labour protection, ensuring graduates are well-prepared for the workforce.
2) Students acquire practical experience through internships with major companies, applying theoretical knowledge to enhance workplace safety.
3) Updates are made regularly based on feedback from students and industry experts, ensuring alignment with the latest scientific advancements.
4) A mix of interactive lectures, hands-on assignments, and industry-led seminars fosters student engagement, critical thinking, and collaboration.
5) Insights are delivered directly by industry professionals through guest lectures, effectively linking theoretical knowledge with practical application.
6) Students engage in research, presenting findings at international conferences and driving advancements in labour protection.
7) Current research and trends are integrated, offering students exposure to contemporary issues in labour protection and safety.

Weaknesses:
1) Although the second-cycle SP "Work Environmental Protection and Expertise" is strong domestically, opportunities for international experience, such as mobility programmes, are limited,

particularly for employed students. This is an area that could be further developed to enhance the global perspective of students.

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

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The Second-cycle SP “Work Environmental Protection and Expertise” demonstrates full compliance by aligning its content with national and international occupational standards, effectively preparing graduates to meet contemporary workplace challenges. Regular updates are done that reflect industry trends, the integration of theoretical knowledge with practical skills through internships, and a robust emphasis on scientific research.

2.3. Resources and Provision of the Study Programme

Analysis

2.3.1. An overview of the resource base for all programmes within the study field “Internal Security and Civil Protection”, including knowledge resources, information resources (such as the library), material assets, and financial resources, can be found in Short-cycle SP "Labour Protection" section 2.3 of this report. Since the resources are shared across all study programmes under the study field, this section is applicable to each of them and is not duplicated here.

Based on the assessment visit and the description of the Short-cycle SP "Labour Protection" in Section 2.3, the expert team concluded that the facilities for lectures, seminars, and laboratory work are well-equipped to meet the specific needs of the programme. Additionally, the UL library provides a comprehensive collection of scientific research materials available in both Latvian and English.

Nevertheless, it should be emphasized that the infrastructure of the Second-cycle SP “Work Environmental Protection and Expertise” is regularly updated to include the latest information resources, specifically tailored to meet the needs of both academic staff and students. An assessment of the available resources indicates that they fully comply with the requirements for implementing the master's programme and effectively support students in achieving the programme's outcomes.

Surveys conducted with students and graduates further substantiate the adequacy and suitability of these resources. On a 7-point scale, students rated the overall study environment at 5.8, indicating a response between "mostly agree" and "strongly agree." Additionally, the usefulness of the UL library resources received a notably high rating of 5.6. (SAR, p.127)

Graduates emphasized during the assessment visit that the study environment was highly conducive to learning, highlighting the ready availability of essential materials, including literature, databases, and other electronic resources within the UL library and information system. They also expressed satisfaction with their exposure to specialized computer programmes during their studies, which can be utilized for research and practical applications beyond their time at UL.

Overall, this study programme is well-equipped with the necessary resources to deliver high-quality education and its practical focus ensures that graduates are thoroughly prepared for successful

careers in occupational health and safety.

2.3.2. N/A

2.3.3. To ensure the necessary funding for the implementation of the Second-cycle SP “Work Environmental Protection and Expertise”, the UL relies on a combination of state budget grants from the Ministry of Education and Science and tuition fees. An overview of the anticipated student enrollment by study type and projected income is provided in SAR Table 3.3.3.1, as detailed in the Study Programme description in Section 3.3.

To assess the financial resources needed for the programme, UL employs a methodology that calculates the cost per student, factoring in essential elements such as faculty involvement, enrollment projections, and other pertinent costs, thereby ensuring reliable financial forecasts. Data from the 2022/2023 academic year, including student enrollment numbers as of October 1, 2022, along with study plans and faculty structure, is utilized for these calculations. Consequently, the total annual income generated by the programme is estimated at 142,227 EUR, while the total annual costs amount to 136,850 EUR. (SAR, p. 128-129)

With a total enrollment of 40 students, the cost per student stands at 4,231 EUR per year. To maintain profitability, the programme requires a minimum of 37 students. The financial analysis indicates that the Second-cycle SP "Work Environmental Protection and Expertise" is indeed profitable, as projected income surpasses expenses, thereby eliminating the need for reliance on external financial resources to support its implementation and growth.

Furthermore, the Second-cycle SP “Work Environmental Protection and Expertise” can leverage additional revenue from continuing education and other services, as well as benefit from the accumulated financial resources of the faculty. This is complemented by financial support from the University of Latvia's Study Quality Improvement Fund, further contributing to its sustainability and potential for continued development.

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

The Second-cycle SP “Work Environmental Protection and Expertise” is built on a solid foundation of resources and financial sustainability. It provides a comprehensive array of assets, including well-equipped physical infrastructure, a robust knowledge base, and extensive information resources. Student satisfaction regarding these resources is notably high, particularly in relation to the library offerings.

Financially, the Second-cycle SP “Work Environmental Protection and Expertise” demonstrates sustainability, with projected income exceeding expenses. A minimum enrollment threshold has been established to ensure profitability. Collectively, these factors—strong resource availability, financial viability, and positive student feedback—indicate that the programme is well-positioned to deliver high-quality education and foster student success.

To further enhance the Second-cycle SP “Work Environmental Protection and Expertise” , it is recommended that regular assessments of resource adequacy be conducted, opportunities for resource improvement be explored, and strategies for financial diversification and cost optimization be implemented.

Strengths:
1) Excellent Infrastructure: UL boasts modern classrooms, well-equipped laboratories, and an extensive library. This robust infrastructure provides students with the opportunity to conduct hands-on projects, research, and acquire real-world skills that are highly valuable in this field.
2) Second-cycle SP “Work Environmental Protection and Expertise” is financially sound, ensuring the continuity of high-quality education. This stability allows the programme to invest in the latest technologies, develop the curriculum, and attract qualified instructors.
3) The Second-cycle SP “Work Environmental Protection and Expertise” has a strong focus on practical application. Students gain not only theoretical knowledge but also practical skills that are essential for working in the field of occupational health and safety. This enhances graduates' competitiveness in the job market.

Weaknesses:
None

Assessment of the requirement [6]

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The Second-cycle SP “Work Environmental Protection and Expertise” is supported by strong study and research facilities, including a dedicated study base. The programme also exhibits long-term financial sustainability.

2.4. Teaching Staff

Analysis

2.4.1. The general principles of personnel management at the UL, including the quality of lecturers, policy goals, talent development, and professional development initiatives (such as seminars and teaching courses), were previously outlined in the analysis of the Short-cycle SP "Labour Protection" (see chapter 2.4). It could be concluded that the selection process for teaching staff involved in the Second-cycle SP “Work Environmental Protection and Expertise” aligns with UL's staff development strategy.

The policies regarding the renewal, training, and development of academic staff are conducted according to individualized plans developed in collaboration with the UL Rector and the Dean of the Faculty of Chemistry (SAR, p. 133). The high qualification of the teaching staff is evidenced by the fact that nearly all faculty members involved in the programme hold PhD degrees (SAR, p. 131). Furthermore, it was confirmed during the assessment visit that all lecturers regularly enhance the content of study courses and update e-learning materials, demonstrating their commitment to adapt to the evolving educational landscape. They actively participate in UL continuing education programmes, Open Minded courses, courses offered by other institutions, and international conferences. Professional development opportunities also include academic (creative) leave, doctoral studies, guest lectures at foreign universities, and participation in expert groups. (SAR, p. 134)

Quality assurance is strengthened through regular peer observations of lecturers, as confirmed in discussions with the staff. The implementation of the Second-cycle SP "Work Environmental

Protection and Expertise" involves a diverse academic team from the Faculty of Chemistry and other faculties, including 3 professors, 2 associate professors, 4 assistant professors, 1 lecturer, and 5 hourly lecturers from both state and private organizations (SAR, p. 77, p. 133). In total, there are 9 lecturers with PhD degrees and one lecturer with a Master's degree (SAR, p. 80).

The teaching staff for the Second-cycle SP "Work Environmental Protection and Expertise" is highly qualified and meets the necessary requirements for effective programme implementation. Guest experts from the health and safety industry also contribute to the programme, ensuring real-world relevance (see the list in SAR, p. 132). The expertise of the teaching staff significantly supports the achievement of the programme's aims and learning outcomes. Notably, 7 out of the 15 faculty members possess over 10 years of relevant industry experience (SAR, p. 133, p. 98, Annex_7_Teacher biographies.pdf, Annex_6_Basic information regarding the teachers involved in the implementation of the study direction.xlsx). Additionally, the staff's participation in professional development opportunities such as workshops, seminars, and conferences enhances their teaching effectiveness, for instance, SP directors have completed further education in University Didactics—Current Theories and Practice (SAR, p. 139).

2.4.2. The composition of the academic staff for the Second-cycle SP "Work Environmental Protection and Expertise" is determined by the programme's aims and objectives, with selections approved by the Council of the Faculty of Chemistry. The suitability of the academic staff is evaluated based on several factors, including their knowledge and professionalism in teaching, research activity, and compliance with regulatory requirements (SAR, p. 131; Regulatory Enactments on Academic and Administrative Positions at the University of Latvia (Available only in Latvian)- https://www.lu.lv/fileadmin/user_upload/LU.LV/www.lu.lv/Dokumenti/Dokumenti_LV/5._DAZADI/SL_2-3-11-2022__Nolikums_par_akad_l__1_.pdf). Currently, the programme involves 15 members, and the number of lecturers has remained unchanged since the 2012/13 academic year. However, changes during the reporting period have occurred through the recruitment of experts and specialists, as well as ongoing professional development (SAR, p. 131, p. 133, p. 137). Notably, 90% of the academic staff hold doctoral degrees in fields such as chemistry, medicine, economics, management science, or related disciplines (SAR, p. 136).

To retain qualified teaching staff, the Second-cycle SP "Work Environmental Protection and Expertise" implements effective strategies that provide opportunities for career development and foster a supportive academic environment. Mentoring of new staff is fully facilitated, promoting knowledge transfer in both teaching and research (see annex: Annex_3_Development plan of the study direction.docx).

It could be concluded that the current implementation of the Second-cycle SP "Work Environmental Protection and Expertise", characterized by a unified methodological approach involving both elected staff and guest lecturers—who are leading experts in Latvia—is positively evaluated. This strategy ensures a high quality of education and aligns well with the programme's objectives, contributing to the assurance of educational excellence.

2.4.3. N/A

2.4.4. The Second-cycle SP "Work Environmental Protection and Expertise" has established a strong record of publishing in peer-reviewed journals, which significantly contributes to the academic community and ensures the programme's continuity. The teaching staff actively engages in research, presents at conferences, and participates in various industry projects. Lecturers within the

programme have produced over 100 papers in the field of labor protection, published in recognized scientific journals indexed in SCOPUS and Web of Science databases. These findings have been shared at numerous international conferences and worldwide congresses focused on labor protection and ergonomics (SAR, p. 131-133). This active research engagement aligns with the Law on Higher Education Institutions and is a key factor in maintaining the programme's academic excellence.

The teaching staff's commitment to research is further demonstrated through their participation in public organizations such as the Latvian Ergonomics Society, the Latvian Medical Association, and the Latvian Society of Occupational Health and Occupational Diseases Physicians (SAR, p. 134). Their ongoing professional development through these affiliations enriches their contributions to the field and enhances their teaching efficacy. Overall, the active involvement of the teaching staff in research and professional organizations fosters a dynamic educational environment that benefits both students and the broader academic community, as evidenced by the comprehensive list of their publications and contributions (see annexes: Annex_9_List of teaching staff publications for the reference period.docx and Annex_8_Summary of qualitative data regarding the scientific activity of the study direction.docx).

2.4.5. The Second-cycle SP "Work Environmental Protection and Expertise" has established a well-structured mechanism that fosters collaboration among teaching staff, contributing to the achievement of the programme's objectives and ensuring the interconnectedness of study courses. This mechanism effectively facilitates collaboration and knowledge sharing among faculty members. (SAR, p. 138)

Teachers involved in the programme engage in international projects as well as projects sponsored by the Latvian Council of Science and other institutions. In collaboration with researchers from Latvia and abroad, several monographs have been produced (SAR, p. 133). The academic staff further participates in various cooperative activities within specific scientific fields, taking part in the development of projects funded by the Latvian Science Council (LSC), National Research Programmes (NRP), research projects at the University of Latvia (UL), EU Structural Funds (ESF), International Cooperation Projects (ICP), and research contracts with
diverse organizations (see Annex_10_List of cooperation agreements.docx).

The common goals for staff involvement in these cooperative mechanisms—such as mentoring junior staff, sharing experiences, conducting departmental workshops, and engaging in peer observation—are consistent across all study programmes within this field. Several faculty members hold leadership positions in professional associations, including the head of the Latvian Ergonomics Society, and are active participants in the Latvian Medical Association and the Latvian Society of Occupational Health and Occupational Diseases Physicians, as well as being members and experts in the Latvian Business Association (SAR, p. 134).

During the assessment visit, it was confirmed by academic staff that each lecturer undergoes peer review, which is regarded as a positive opportunity for mutual learning. To enhance collaboration among the teaching staff within the study field "Internal Security and Civil Defense," the head of the study field, in conjunction with the directors of each study programme, organizes monthly meetings. These meetings are aimed at fostering a strong understanding of the necessary close cooperation between all study programmes, a conclusion supported by the staff and directors during meetings.

Additionally, students in the Second-cycle SP "Work Environmental Protection and Expertise" are actively involved in research processes and willingly participate in presenting research findings at

the University’s annual scientific conferences (SAR, p. 136). Given these factors, it can be concluded that the cooperation mechanisms within the programme effectively support the achievement of its aims and the planned results.

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

The Second-cycle SP "Work Environmental Protection and Expertise" meets regulatory requirements and effectively supports the achievement of the programme’s learning outcomes. The programme is bolstered by a highly qualified teaching staff, with an impressive holding doctoral degrees, which is crucial for its success.

The teaching staff's commitment to professional development is demonstrated through their participation in workshops, seminars, and conferences, contributing to their ongoing growth and enhancing the quality of the programme. Furthermore, the programme provides a supportive environment that promotes staff retention, career development, and collaboration—all vital for maintaining a high-quality educational experience.

Additionally, the teaching staff actively engages in research, publishing in peer-reviewed journals and participating in industry projects. This research not only aligns with the programme's objectives but also contributes to its academic excellence, fulfilling the standards set by higher education institutions. The programme’s well-structured mechanism for fostering mutual cooperation among teaching staff facilitates collaboration and knowledge sharing, ensuring a comprehensive educational framework that benefits both students and faculty.

Strengths:
1) Highly qualified faculty with a strong combination of academic and industry experience.
2) Faculty members actively contribute to research, enhancing the Second-cycle SP "Work Environmental Protection and Expertise" reputation and academic quality.

Weaknesses:
None

Assessment of the requirement [7]

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Second-cycle SP "Work Environmental Protection and Expertise" is fully compliant with requirement on qualification of the academic staff and visiting lecturers set in HEI regulating law (Regulatory Enactments on Academic and Administrative Positions at the University of Latvia, fully comply with Article 55 (1) of the "Law on Higher Education Institutions" of the Republic of Latvia).

2.5. Assessment of the Compliance

Requirements

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Annex (17_3_pielikums_Studiju programmas atbilstība valsts izglītības standartam.docx) confirms that the Second-cycle SP "Work Environmental Protection and Expertise" fully complies with Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No. 305 “Noteikumi par valsts profesionālās augstākās izglītības standartu”

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Annex (18_3_pielikums_Studiju programmā iegūstamās kvalifikācijas atbilstību profesijas standartam vai profesionālās kvalifikācijas prasībām.docx) confirms that the Second-cycle SP "Work Environmental Protection and Expertise" complies with the professional standard of Senior Occupational Safety Specialist (approved on February 9, 2022).

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Annex (22_3_Pielikums_Studiju kursu apraksti_LV.docx) confirms that all descriptions of all study courses have been prepared in Latvian (only language in which study programme is implemented). All descriptions comply with the requirements set in Section 56.(1), paragraph 2 of the Law on Higher Education Institutions.

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The sample of diploma and it's supplement in Latvian (15_3_pielikums_Par studiju programmas apgūšanu izsniedzamā diploma un tā pielikumu paraugs_LV.docx) and in English (ANNEX_15_3_SAMPLE DIPLOMA TEMPLATE.docx) fully complies with the procedure described in Cabinet of Ministers regulations No. 202 “Kārtība, kādā izsniedz valsts atzītus augstāko izglītību apliecinošus dokumentus”.

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Annex “6_pielikums_Pamatinformācija par studiju virziena īstenošanā iesaistītajiem mācībspēkiem_LV.xlsx” and Study field director's signed confirmation (annex: 7_1_Pielikums_Virziena vadītāja apliecinājums par studiju programmu īstenošanā iesaistīto mācībspēku valsts valodas zināšanām_LV.pdf) fully complies with Cabinet of Ministers regulations No. 157 “Noteikumi par valsts valodas zināšanu apjomu, valsts valodas prasmes pārbaudes kārtību un valsts nodevu par valsts valodas prasmes pārbaudi”.

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

In study courses that are conducted in English, the relevant teaching staff has language proficiency at least at the B2 level (according to the appendix: 6_pielikums_Pamatinformācija par studiju virziena īstenošanā iesaistītajiem mācībspēkiem_LV.xlsx).

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The sample of the study agreement (annex: Tipveida ligumi.zip) fully complies with the provisions to be included in the study agreement according to Cabinet of Ministers regulations No. 70 “Studiju līgumā obligāti ietveramie noteikumi”.

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

UL has provided documents (agreement with other university; annex: Dokumenti_par_iespejam studet citur.zip) that confirms that students will be provided with opportunities to continue studies in Riga Technical university with an option to choose between multiple study programmes (e.g. Professional Master's Degree Programme in Occupational Safety and Health and Professional Master's Degree Programme in Customs and Tax Administration).

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

UL has provided document that confirms that students are guaranteed a compensation for losses if the study programme is not accredited or study programme's license is revoked (annex: Rektora apliecinājums kompensācijai SV_Iekšējā drošiba.edoc)

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Annex “30_3_LV_PMSTP_DVAE.docx” states that study courses in Second-cycle SP “Work Environmental Protection and Expertise” complies with industry specific regulations.

Assessment of the requirement [8]

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Second-cycle SP “Work Environmental Protection and Expertise” is fully compliant with requirements set in HEI regulating law and Cabinet of Ministers regulations as assessed in joint opinion's chapter 2.5. of this study programme.

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

Based on the analysis of submitted documents and assessment visits, it can be concluded that the Second-cycle SP "Work Environmental Protection and Expertise" meets all criteria for sustainability and attractiveness. Labour market data indicate a strong demand for professionals in this field. Therefore, it is critical to develop students' competencies to address the challenges of modern working environments. To this end, the programme must stay attuned to educational trends in Latvia and the broader EU, providing graduates with opportunities for advanced studies.

The Second-cycle SP "Work Environmental Protection and Expertise" offers a comprehensive education that trains advanced specialists in labour protection, equipping students with extensive knowledge in ergonomics, occupational safety, risk assessment, and the development of preventive measures. It aligns its curriculum with both national and international occupational standards, ensuring that graduates are well-prepared to tackle contemporary workplace challenges. Key strengths include regular updates that reflect industry trends, the integration of theoretical knowledge with practical skills through internships, and a strong focus on scientific research. The programme’s flexibility, offering both one-year and two-year study options, caters to various student needs.

The Second-cycle SP "Work Environmental Protection and Expertise" is underpinned by a solid foundation of resources and financial sustainability. It boasts well-equipped physical infrastructure, a robust knowledge base, and extensive information resources, with notable student satisfaction regarding library offerings. Financially, the programme is sustainable, evidenced by projected income exceeding expenses and an established minimum enrollment threshold for profitability.

Together, these factors—strong resource availability, financial viability, and positive student feedback—indicate that the programme is well-positioned to deliver high-quality education and foster student success.

The qualifications of the teaching staff further enhance the programme's quality, with a significant proportion holding doctoral degrees. Their commitment to professional development is evident through active participation in workshops, seminars, and conferences, contributing to their ongoing growth and the overall quality of the programme. Moreover, faculty engagement in research—through publications in peer-reviewed journals and involvement in industry projects—aligns with the programme's objectives and bolsters its academic excellence.

In summary, the Second-cycle SP "Work Environmental Protection and Expertise" has a comprehensive and well-structured approach, strong alignment with national and international labour protection standards, and a clear commitment to both sustainability and attractiveness. The programme delivers a high-quality education that equips graduates with the advanced skills and knowledge necessary to address the complex challenges of modern work environments, positioning them for success in both professional careers and further academic pursuits. Its strengths lie in its strong resource availability, financial viability, positive student feedback, and a dedicated faculty with extensive expertise and a commitment to research. However, to maximize its potential, the programme should address limitations related to internationalization and mobility to enhance the global perspective and experiences for both students and faculty.

Strengths:
1) The Second-cycle SP "Work Environmental Protection and Expertise" was developed in cooperation with the employers and the needs in Latvia.
2) Continuous improvement of the Second-cycle SP "Work Environmental Protection and Expertise" based on surveys conducted with employers.
3) A good base of alumni who can promote the Second-cycle SP "Work Environmental Protection and Expertise".
4) Students gain practical experience through internships and engage in research activities that contribute to advancements in labour protection, making them well-prepared for the workforce.
5) A significant portion of the teaching staff holds doctoral degrees and possesses extensive industry experience, contributing to the programme's academic excellence and relevance.

Weaknesses:
1) Lack of implementation of the Second-cycle SP "Work Environmental Protection and Expertise" in English, which would enable the exchange of knowledge and practices outside the Latvian territory.

Evaluation of the study programme "Work Environmental Protection and Expertise"

Evaluation of the study programme:

Excellent

2.6. Recommendations for the Study Programme "Work Environmental Protection and Expertise"

Short-term recommendations

1) It is recommended that efforts be made to expand opportunities for international experience within the Second-cycle Study Programme "Work Environmental Protection and Expertise," particularly by enhancing mobility programmes for students as well as teaching staff. Given the current limitations, especially for employed students, developing these international opportunities would significantly enrich the students' global perspective and overall educational experience. (continuously)

Long-term recommendations

1) Development of studies in English to ensure the exchange of teachers and students from surrounding countries and to popularize the study programme. (4 years)

II - "Human Factors, Occupational Safety and Health" ASSESSMENT

II - "Human Factors, Occupational Safety and Health" ASSESSMENT

2.1. Indicators Describing the Study Programme

Analysis

2.1.1. The Doctoral (Third-cycle) Study Programme “Human Factors, Occupational Safety and Health’’ 51862 (Doctoral SP ‘’Human Factors, Occupational Safety and Health’’) is implemented in the field of study "Internal Security and Civil Protection" and establishes a full cycle of studies at the UL, covering all levels of higher education (short-cycle professional higher education, bachelor's education, master's education and doctoral education). The relevant education standard is provided in Annex 19 (see annex: ANNEX_19_Correspondence of the study programme to the normative regulation.docx). (SAR, p.205)

The Doctoral SP ‘’Human Factors, Occupational Safety and Health’’ falls under the "Social Sciences" category according to the Latvian classification of scientific branches, specifically identified with the code 51862, which corresponds to doctoral studies in civil and military protection, along with occupational safety. (SAR, chapter 3.1.2)

Open to candidates with a master's degree in various fields including Economics, Law, Psychology, Engineering, and Health Sciences, the programme requires the completion of an entrance examination, which assesses prior knowledge and research proposals. Admission criteria include previous academic performance, research experience, and the relevance and quality of the proposed thesis.

Students must demonstrate a proficiency in English if they opt to study in that language, as well as possess an education equivalent to a Latvian Master of Science degree, which must be verified by the Academic Information Centre (AIC).

Overall, the Doctoral SP "Human Factors, Occupational Safety and Health" appears to be fully compliant with the objectives and standards of the study field "Internal Security and Civil Protection" Its structured approach, commitment to research excellence, and focus on developing competencies directly related to occupational safety and health affirm its alignment with both academic and practical demands within the sector.

2.1.2. The title of Doctoral SP ‘’Human Factors, Occupational Safety and Health’’ aligns directly with

the objectives of the study field and refers to its affiliation with the disciplines of civil protection and internal security. It is related to the formulation of the main objective of the programme and underlines the focus of the programme on the protection and expertise of the world of work (SAR, p. 209), including the relevant branch of science and focusing on current trends in occupational safety and expertise in Latvia and Europe. According to SAR, p. 208, in the Latvian classification of scientific branches and sub-sectors of science (Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No. 595 of 27.09.2022 "Regulations on Latvian groups, branches and sub-sectors of science"), the doctoral programme is is assigned to the scientific branch group "Social Sciences" in sector 5.9 "Other social sciences, including interdisciplinary social sciences and military sciences". The code number is 51862, where 51 corresponds to the doctoral programme, 86 - Civil and military protection, 862 - Occupational health and safety. The corresponding classification and code of the programme were agreed with the Academic Information Centre at the end of the approval process.

Successful completion of the Doctoral SP ‘’Human Factors, Occupational Safety and Health’’ requires earning 120 credit points, passing doctoral examinations, and developing a doctoral thesis, which may take the form of a dissertation, monograph, or a set of published scientific articles. This programme culminates in the award of a Doctor of Science (PhD) degree in Social Sciences. (SAR, chapter 3.1.2)

The Doctoral Study Programme "Human Factor, Occupational Safety and Health" has a scope of 120 CP (3 years), with academic and independent research work of 20 CP per semester, EQF level 8 with objectives, goals and outcomes of the study programme to build a progressive acquisition of knowledge, skills and competences.

The Doctoral SP ‘’Human Factors, Occupational Safety and Health’’ has clear admission requirements and it's open to students with second cycle higher education (Master's degree) in Economics and Business, Law, Educational Sciences, Psychology, Occupational Health, Engineering, Natural Sciences (Biology and Chemistry), Computer Science and Informatics, Environmental Management, Pharmacy, Health Sciences, as well as a professional medical degree or equivalent. The entrance examination to test prior knowledge or entrance interviews are set and candidate submits and orally defends the application for the planned research, which must indicate, among other things, the relevance of the topic of the doctoral thesis and its inclusion in the existing scientific debate and economic (social, governance, subject-specific) activity (SAR, p. 208). The method for selecting and ranking students according to the evaluations of previous studies, the scientific quality of the proposed research, the quality of the presentation of the research proposal and the defense of the topic is clearly defined (SAR, p. 209). The general admission criteria for PhD programmes at the University are available at: https://www.lu.lv/en/admission/admission-procedure/doctoral-studies/

The admission interviews are held in Latvian or English, respectively for studies in Latvian and English. Foreign applicants need to have an education equivalent to a Latvian Master of Science degree. So regarding conducting studies in English, the level of English language proficiency is clearly defined.

The aim, objectives, and outcomes of the study programme are carefully planed and sequenced to build a progressive acquisition of knowledge, skills and competences during doctoral studies, corresponding to EQF level 8.

The study has clearly defined learning outcomes and competences and describes procedures for writing a doctoral thesis. A doctoral thesis is a dissertation, a monograph or a series of at least three

thematically related and consecutive scientific articles published in recognised peer-reviewed indexed journals (e.g. Scopus, Web of Science). In the case of a dissertation in the form of a series of published scientific publications, the doctoral candidate must also prepare and submit an analytical paper on the content of the scientific publication, which corresponds to the abstract of the dissertation (SAR, p.209).
With regard to conducting studies in English, the level of English language proficiency is clearly defined (Annex_7_2_Proof of English proficiency of teaching staff involved in the implementation of the study programme at level B2.pdf).

The title, code, degree of the Doctoral SP ''Human Factors, Occupational Safety and Health'', aims, objectives, learning outcomes, and admission requirements are interrelated.

2.1.3. The Doctoral SP ''Human Factors, Occupational Safety and Health'' was approved in 2022, so no changes were made to the programme itself, except in the part related to the improvement and adoption of the recommendations of the previous evaluation of the Commission. In this sense, the programme was improved in the part where an agreement was concluded with RTU (Agreement on the provision of dissertation defense in the field of interdisciplinary social sciences), literature older than 2016 was revised, negotiations were initiated on cooperation with the Student Business Incubator, Latvian Society of Ergonomics, Business Efficiency Association, Latvian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, individual companies, state financial development institutions, including LIAA, Altum on the development of commercialisation research and financial support was provided for 5 students (SAR, p. 207).

2.1.4. The legitimacy of the Doctoral SP ''Human Factors, Occupational Safety and Health'' in the social context is undisputed, as its content represents an interdisciplinary field and as such contributes to the development of higher education in Latvia. It complements the implementation of a sustainable development strategy for the Latvian economy. The programme has no competition in the wider EU area. There is no similar study programme in the Baltic countries. The closest similar study programmes in Europe are in Portugal in the field of occupational safety and health and in Cyprus in the field of PhD in occupational safety and health, which train researchers with a PhD in occupational safety and health (SAR, p. 209).

PhD studies are in line with the priorities of the Latvian strategy of smart specialization: modern education, knowledge base, productive innovation system, polycentric development aimed at promoting the long-term development of the economic sectors of the Republic of Latvia, which justifies the future and economic importance of this study.

As it is planned to conduct the programme in English, this unique degree programme will have a cross-border impact and therefore has good prospects of playing a certain role in higher education in the EU area.

Highly motivated teaching staff are willing to participate in scientific research with the students, which also contributes to the quality of the programme. The publication of papers in national and international journals gives this degree programme a high status on the educational scale.

The potential labour market for graduates is in all sectors of the economy, both as professionals at management level and as consultants, they set up their own companies and work at universities and colleges as lecturers and researchers in the fields of human factors, occupational health and health, occupational health and safety, industrial relations and management.

In the academic year 2022/2023, 7 doctoral students applied for a full-time Doctoral SP ‘’Human Factors, Occupational Safety and Health’’ and started their studies. During the assessment visit it was confirmed that the English-language programme which was scheduled to start in the academic year 2023/2024 was implemented, however there was only one foreign student.

As the programme is licenced, no budget places are provided for the time being and all doctoral students study at their own expense. The UL offers students support scholarships and 5 PhD students have already successfully taken up these, which is also high motivation for the students, as it was represented during the assessment visit. The other 2 PhD students have not qualified as they are employed as academic staff). There are no dropouts (see annex: Appendix 16: Statistical data on students in the "Human Factors, Occupational Safety and Health programme).

2.1.5. N/A

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

The Doctoral SP ‘’Human Factors, Occupational Safety and Health’’, aligns with the "Internal Security and Civil Defence" field, establishes a full cycle of studies at the University, covering all levels of higher education (short-cycle professional higher education, bachelor's education, master's education and doctoral education) which gives it an advantage over other programmes. This program covers all the priority research areas identified in the LU strategy: scientific excellence, study development, contribution to society, environment and governance, with a focus on green thinking and sustainability and organizational culture. Graduates receive a Doctoral Degree of Science Doctor of Science (Ph.D.) in Social Sciences.

The Doctoral Study Programme "Human Factor, Occupational Safety and Health" currently available in Latvian and English, and has a functional full time mode.

Student number trend is according to expectations, and the programme is deemed economically justified based on its curriculum and goals. Its content covers interdisciplinary topics, is well organized and is geared towards the scientific research work that UL can carry out given the resources at its disposal. A major advantage of the programme is motivated faculty who want to participate in research and publish and patent their research findings. There is also a great deal of support for the programme and a strong commitment from the administration to the development of the doctoral programme and its promotion. As the programme will be conducted in English in the next academic cycle, it will also give other students the opportunity to study and contribute to its recognition and internationalization. In a social context, it will produce highly qualified staff and future members of the academic community.

Strengths:
1) A unique Doctoral SP ‘’Human Factors, Occupational Safety and Health’’ in Latvia and the surrounding area.
2) The possibility of conducting the Doctoral SP ‘’Human Factors, Occupational Safety and Health’’ entirely in English.

Weaknesses:
1) Lack of scholarships and financial support for studying

2.2. The Content of Studies and Implementation Thereof

Analysis

2.2.1. The Doctoral SP ‘’Human Factors, Occupational Safety and Health’’ is a relatively new programme, initially licensed on August 3, 2022 (SAR, p. 211). It aims to develop highly qualified researchers and specialists with advanced knowledge in human factors, occupational safety, and health, while fostering internationally competitive competencies and awarding a globally recognized Ph.D. (SAR p. 203). The programme aligns with the objectives of the "Growth and Employment" project (Objective 8.2.1) and complies with a wide range of external and internal regulations (SAR, p. 212). During the assessment visit, it was noted that such a programme is rare, not only in Latvia but also throughout the Baltics and Europe, with only two comparable programmes identified.

Graduates of the Doctoral SP "Human Factors, Occupational Safety, and Health" are awarded a Ph.D. in Social Sciences. (SAR, p. 205) The programme complies with the relevant regulations, including the Law on Scientific Activity and the Procedures and Criteria for the Conferral of a Doctoral Degree in Science. Detailed correspondence to these regulations is provided in the annexes (see annex: ANNEX_19_Correspondence of the study programme to the normative regulation.docx).

The Doctoral SP "Human Factors, Occupational Safety, and Health" content is described in the SAR as a highly interdisciplinary programme, offering PhD training across multiple fields such as IT and digitalization, occupational and health sciences, safety culture, design, psychology, pedagogy, and management sciences. The management has selectively updated aspects of the programme based on expert recommendations from the licensing process, ensuring continuous improvement.

The Doctoral SP "Human Factors, Occupational Safety, and Health" is structured into two main modules: the science module (96 CP) and the specialization module (24 CP). The Science Module focuses on PhD thesis development (70 CP), research methodology courses (16 CP), doctoral seminars (6 CP), and PhD examinations (4 CP). It is structured over three years, guiding students through theoretical research, practical case analysis, and empirical study, with courses supporting scientific writing, research ethics, and data analysis. The Specialization Module offers courses in human factors, ergonomics, safety, and related fields (14 CP compulsory, 8 CP elective, 2 CP free elective). Courses are aligned with industry trends and provide students with interdisciplinary expertise. (SAR, p. 213-214)

The Doctoral SP "Human Factors, Occupational Safety, and Health" parameters, including learning outcomes and course design, adhere to the Law of Higher Education Institutions. The programme's structure ensures students progressively develop their skills through research, publication, and pedagogical work. Regular evaluations and seminars help maintain high-quality doctoral theses. The interdisciplinary nature attracts students from various fields like psychology, IT, health sciences, and management. The study programme illustrates a strong commitment to academic excellence and student support through various initiatives. The establishment of agreements, such as with RTU for doctoral thesis defenses, reflects a proactive approach in facilitating students' academic progress and maintaining the integrity of the dissertation process. Efforts to update library resources, backed by financial support beginning in 2023, ensure that students have access to up-to-date academic materials. The programme’s engagement with external organizations and businesses fosters partnerships aimed at research commercialization, emphasizing practical applications and potential funding opportunities. Additionally, the strategic evaluation of financing options demonstrates a focus on the programme's long-term sustainability and affordability. The notable success of securing internal LU Doctoral Support Grants for most students further highlights the institution's strong support and the positive environment cultivated for academic success. (SAR, p. 214-217)

During the assessment visit, it was revealed that the intention mentioned in the SAR to offer studies in English (p. 212) has been realized, and in the 2023/2024 academic year, one international student

started the English-language programme. Although this is not cost-effective for the UL, it demonstrates a commitment to moving towards greater internationalization and positioning itself as a market leader not only in Latvia but across Europe.

It could be concluded that the Doctoral SP "Human Factors, Occupational Safety, and Health" is highly topical, addressing current global trends and challenges in workplace safety, ergonomics, and human factors. Its interdisciplinary approach incorporates fields such as information technology (IT) and digitalization, psychology, occupational health, safety culture, and management sciences, reflecting the growing importance of these areas in modern work environments. The programme stays relevant by aligning its curriculum with the latest industry developments and regulatory requirements, as well as by incorporating the latest research findings. Additionally, expert recommendations from the programme's licensing process have been integrated to ensure continuous improvement and alignment with scientific and practical advancements.

The programme's relevance is further supported by the growing awareness of the importance of human factors in improving occupational safety and health, making it essential for professionals in a wide range of fields, such as healthcare, engineering, management, and law. This focus on current scientific and industry trends confirms that the programme remains pertinent and valuable to both Latvian and international students, with an expected increase in enrolment as the field continues to evolve and expand.

In summary, the study programme is characterized by its commitment to relevance, rigorous compliance with standards, proactive updates, and strong support mechanisms for students. The engagement with industry and active management of resources and funding aligns well with best practices in doctoral education.

2.2.2. Based on the information provided in the SAR (p. 218), the awarding of the doctoral SP "Human Factor, Occupational Safety and Health" is grounded in the achievements and findings pertinent to this specific field of science. The studies are meticulously designed to cover priority research areas aligned with the UL strategy, emphasizing scientific excellence, societal contributions, and environmental governance. This focus mirrors current trends and challenges within the domain, ensuring that students engage with relevant issues.

The doctoral SP "Human Factor, Occupational Safety and Health" is designed to encompass a blend of classical components, such as the physical, physiological, and biological factors affecting the workplace, alongside increasingly significant themes like remote working, cognitive aspects, legal and psychological considerations, and the integration of technology in managing processes and resources. This well-rounded approach enriches the understanding of ergonomics, health, safety at work, and overall occupational health, addressing modern challenges that complement traditional views. (SAR, p. 218)

Throughout the studies, students will not only acquire foundational and contemporary knowledge in their fields but also engage in extensive research that intertwines theory with real-world applications. This research is supported by both study programme coursework and independent scientific inquiry, and the findings are disseminated through conferences, publications, and various training programmes aimed at knowledge transfer to practical environments. (SAR, p. 218-219)

As part of the studies, students are required to develop a doctoral thesis, which can take various forms such as a dissertation, a monograph, or a collection of published scientific articles. This flexibility in structure ensures that their work is underpinned by rigorous scientific research,

contributing substantially to the body of knowledge in their field. The selection process for applicants includes a comprehensive evaluation of their prior academic performance, research proposals, and the scientific quality of their intended work. Such an extensive assessment method guarantees that candidates possess the necessary skills and background to undertake meaningful research that advances the discipline. (SAR, p. 218-219)

The selection of candidates was also discussed during the evaluation visit, as there were questions regarding the weight of the average grade from previous studies. Given that some time may have passed since those studies, the average grade may not accurately reflect the candidate's current abilities. It was confirmed that while the average grade does indicate a certain level of capability, the primary focus is on the interview process, which determines the candidate's readiness for research work. Examples were provided where candidates were not admitted due to inadequacies in this area, resulting in vacancies rather than a compromise on quality.

To graduate, students must complete 120 credit points and pass specialty examinations, emphasizing the significance of substantial academic and research achievements in earning their degree. This structured approach reinforces the expectation that students will contribute valuable insights and knowledge to the field. Additionally, there is a strong emphasis on the relevance of the doctoral thesis within ongoing scientific discourse, indicating that student research must directly address current questions and gaps in the field. (SAR, p. 217)

Moreover, the openness to candidates from various academic backgrounds—such as Economics, Psychology, and Engineering—encourages a multidimensional approach to understanding human factors and occupational health. This diversity of perspectives is crucial, as it stimulates innovation and improves problem-solving abilities in this interdisciplinary field. (SAR, p. 217)

The doctoral SP "Human Factor, Occupational Safety and Health" benefits from a practical focus, as many courses are taught by industry practitioners who bring real-world insights into the academic sphere. This collaboration encourages doctoral candidates and faculty to examine the latest achievements in the scientific field while also proposing innovative models that synthesize knowledge in response to evolving practical and scientific trends. Thus, it ensures that its graduates are well-equipped to address current challenges in human factors, occupational safety, and health. (SAR, p. 219)

In summary, it could be concluded that the doctoral degree of the doctoral SP "Human Factor, Occupational Safety and Health" is awarded based on students' rigorous academic and research achievements, alongside their capacity to produce significant findings within the realm of social sciences, with a particular emphasis on human factors, occupational safety, and health. Studies are meticulously structured to ensure that graduates are well-equipped to make meaningful contributions to both academic discourse and practical applications in their areas of study.

2.2.3. The implementation methods of the Doctoral SP "Human Factor, Occupational Safety and Health" are thoughtfully designed to achieve the learning outcomes of both individual courses and the overall programme. The programme utilizes a variety of pedagogical strategies, including oral, written, and combined assessment methods. The incorporation of remote study tests, alongside a blend of introductory, interactive, summary, and problem-oriented lectures, ensures a comprehensive coverage of theoretical foundations. (SAR, p. 220)

According to the SAR (p. 220-223) learning outcomes in the Doctoral SP "Human Factor, Occupational Safety and Health" are carefully designed to reflect a comprehensive set of knowledge,

skills, and competencies that students are expected to achieve throughout their studies. Each course outlines clearly defined learning outcomes that align with both the overall goals of the doctoral study and the specific aims of individual courses. Some examples of the study courses were demonstrated as well during the assessment visit.

This structured approach ensures that students understand the relevance of each course to their professional development and academic growth. At the beginning of their studies, students receive detailed information regarding the organization, content, and assessment criteria associated with each course, which fosters transparency and enhances their understanding of what is expected of them. By articulating specific learning outcomes, the dialogue between students and lecturers is facilitated, enabling students to take ownership of their learning and engage in self-assessment. Moreover, the alignment of assessment methods with intended learning outcomes allows students to demonstrably showcase their achievements and understand their progress, providing a clear pathway towards their academic and research goals. This focus on well-defined learning outcomes is integral in promoting a focused and purposeful learning experience for students in the doctoral SP "Human Factor, Occupational Safety and Health". (SAR, p. 220-223) During the assessment visit, it was highlighted as a strength of the doctoral studies that in-person lectures are conducted on campus. This format facilitates direct interaction with both teaching staff and other students, which is regarded as a significant added value to the learning process and contributes to the achievement of better learning outcomes.

The student-centered approach within the doctoral SP "Human Factor, Occupational Safety and Health" emphasizes creating an active and engaging learning environment that prioritizes the individual needs and experiences of students. A variety of instructional methods, including lectures, seminars, and practical assignments, are utilized to foster communication and collaboration among students, enabling them to address real-world problems while developing critical thinking skills. The inclusion of guest lecturers and industry professionals further bridges the gap between theory and practice, offering students valuable insights into their respective fields. (SAR, p. 220-223)

Students are encouraged to engage in research activities tailored to their interests, allowing them to develop research competencies throughout the series of courses. To support this approach, regular feedback is provided via course evaluations, individualized consultations, and a comprehensive e-learning environment, ensuring students feel empowered in their educational journeys. The use of flexible pedagogical strategies and adaptable teaching practices contributes to an inclusive atmosphere that respects diverse learning styles and promotes personal ownership of the learning experience. Overall, this framework facilitates meaningful dialogue between students and faculty, enhancing the educational process and achieving desired outcomes. (SAR p.220-223) It is important to mention that during the assessment visit, there was a noticeable sense of friendliness, support, and openness among all the stakeholder groups. The strong relationships between students, lecturers, and employers were emphasized, reflecting a sense of community where experiences are shared and advice is exchanged, thereby promoting a collaborative learning environment.

One of the objectives of the doctoral SP "Human Factor, Occupational Safety and Health" is to achieve international recognition (SAR p. 203), which necessitates offering instruction at an international level in both Latvian and English. An overview of the number of foreign lecturers members involved in the study programme is provided in the annexes (see annex: ANNEX_21_4_Full-time study plan of the study program .docx). During the assessment visit, it was revealed that an English-language study has also been initiated, which currently includes one international student. However, a clear strategy for attracting more international students has not yet been established, although there is an understanding that enhanced marketing efforts are

necessary.

In conclusion it could be stated that the implementation methods of the Doctoral SP "Human Factors, Occupational Safety and Health" are designed to achieve well-defined learning outcomes for both individual courses and the overall programme. Utilizing diverse pedagogical strategies, including oral, written, and combined assessments, the programme covers theoretical foundations through various lectures, ensuring comprehensive understanding. Learning outcomes are clearly outlined for each course, aligning with the overarching goals of the doctoral studies, thereby promoting transparency and enhancing students' awareness of expectations.

The student-centered approach fosters an engaging learning environment that prioritizes individual needs, utilizing a range of instructional methods to encourage communication and collaboration. Regular feedback and the inclusion of guest lecturers from industry bridge the gap between theory and practice, empowering students to engage in research activities tailored to their interests. The assessment visit highlighted strong relationships among students, lecturers, and employers, creating a collaborative community that enhances the learning experience.

One key objective of the Doctoral SP "Human Factors, Occupational Safety and Health" is to achieve international recognition, requiring instruction in both Latvian and English. While an English-language component has been initiated, currently with one international student, a clear strategy for attracting more international students has yet to be developed, although there is recognition of the need for improved marketing efforts.

2.2.4. N/A

2.2.5. According to the SAR, the Doctoral SP "Human Factors, Occupational Safety and Health" has clearly defined promotion opportunities regarding the defense of the doctoral thesis. These opportunities are governed by the Regulation of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Latvia No. 1001, as well as Regulation No. 1/95 of the University of Latvia. This establishes a clear legal framework outlining the requirements and criteria for earning a doctoral degree, ensuring that students are informed about the standards necessary for the successful completion of their studies. (SAR, p. 224)

Students are required to conduct original scientific research under the guidance of an experienced supervisor, emphasizing the expectation that they will independently plan, execute, and analyze their research—an essential component of the doctoral process. It should be noted that the actual doctoral dissertation process will not be implemented until 2025. However, all preparatory and organizational steps are being taken for the establishment of the dissertation council in accordance with the regulations. (SAR, p. 225)

The SAR (p. 225) outlines a structured approach to the doctoral dissertation process, consisting of four main steps:
1. Completion of the Study Program, which includes fulfilling required study courses and developing the doctoral thesis over a three-year period.
2. Discussion of the Thesis, where students present a provisional version of their thesis during student colloquia, receiving feedback from thesis supervisors and committee members.
3. Administrative Process, where specific administrative steps must be followed when preparing the dissertation, which includes involvement from the Doctoral Council and support structures at the University of Latvia (UL).
4. Defense of the Doctoral Dissertation, which is the final step of the formal defense of the

dissertation, providing an essential opportunity for the student to present their findings and contribute to academic discourse.

The UL offers support for administrative, organizational, and technical matters concerning the dissertation process, ensuring that students receive necessary guidance at each stage to navigate the complexities of their research and its defense. An interdisciplinary Doctoral Council, comprising a diverse group of experts (as listed in SAR p. 224), has been established to provide students with a well-structured and academically sound framework for their dissertation process. This council is responsible for overseeing the quality and standards expected during the dissertation process.

In summary, the Doctoral SP "Human Factors, Occupational Safety and Health" offers students a well-defined pathway to promotion through the doctoral dissertation process, ensuring clarity of expectations, regulatory compliance, and the necessary academic support for achieving their doctoral degree. However, there will be no dissertation defenses until 2025, as the study programme is relatively new and does not yet allow for the evaluation of its implementation in practice.

2.2.6. The criteria that students must adhere to when selecting and developing their doctoral thesis topics are established by the regulations of the UL. However, the general principle is that students independently choose their topics based on their interests, experiences, and ambitions. The doctoral thesis constitutes an independently carried out original scientific research that generates novelty and provides insights into issues related to occupational health and health promotion, utilizing either qualitative or quantitative research methods. (SAR p.226) During the assessment visit, various impressive laboratories were introduced, which are available for student research.

Since the first group of students started their studies in the 2022/2023 academic year, no doctoral theses have been defended at this time. However, the topics chosen by the current students confirm their alignment with the doctoral SP "Human Factors, Occupational Safety and Health" objectives. Examples of these topics are provided in the SAR, along with their supervisors. (SAR, p. 226) This raised the question during the assessment visit regarding the limited number of supervisors, as only two professors were initially represented. However, through interviews, it became clear that the list presented in the SAR was preliminary. By the current date, the pool of supervisors has broadened, including a significantly larger number of professors.

In comparison to the research topics from previous levels of study, there is a clear improvement in quality, with the selected topics being broader in scope and encompassing entire fields rather than focusing on individual organizations. For instance, the topics include comprehensive issues, for example "The Human Factor in the Latvian Business Environment Regarding Occupational Protection Compliance", "The Human Factor in Health Workforce Performance in Latvia", "Psychological Risks for Remote and Face-to-Face Office Workers and the Role of Sleep Hygiene in Mitigating Them - A New Challenge for Occupational Health and Safety at Work" etc. (SAR, p. 226)

In conclusion, students in the doctoral SP "Human Factors, Occupational Safety and Health" select and develop their thesis topics based on personal interests, guided by institutional regulations. The doctoral thesis represents original scientific research that provides valuable insights into occupational health and health promotion through various research methods. While no theses have been defended yet, the chosen topics align well with the programme's objectives and demonstrate an improvement in quality and scope. The expanded pool of supervisors enhances the support available for students, reinforcing the programme's commitment to fostering a robust research environment that addresses significant workplace issues.

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

Doctoral SP "Human Factors, Occupational Safety and Health" is designed to provide students with a robust educational foundation in interdisciplinary areas such as occupational safety, health, and ergonomics. Graduates of this program earn a Ph.D. in Social Sciences, equipping them with advanced knowledge and research skills necessary for academic and professional success. The implementation methods emphasize student-centered learning through a variety of pedagogical strategies, including practical assignments and collaborative projects, facilitating active engagement with real-world issues. Promotion opportunities are clearly defined, focusing on the defense of doctoral theses that consist of original research relevant to current workplace challenges. The chosen thesis topics reflect a broad scope and are aligned with the program's objectives, ensuring that students contribute significantly to the fields of human factors and occupational health. Overall, the program maintains a strong commitment to academic rigor and relevance, preparing students to excel in their respective disciplines.

Strengths:
1) Interdisciplinary unique doctoral Study Programme "Human Factors, Occupational Safety, and Health", which covers a broad range of fields such as occupational safety, health, ergonomics, information technology, and management sciences, which enriches the educational experience.
3) Student-Centered Implementation Methods, which includes the use of diverse pedagogical strategies, including practical assignments and collaborative projects, encourages active learning and engagement with real-world issues.
4) The clearly defined steps for the doctoral dissertation, guided by experienced supervisors and an interdisciplinary Doctoral Council, enhances the quality and oversight of the research process and emphasizes high-quality research and continuous improvement, ensuring that students are well-prepared to meet industry standards and contribute meaningfully to their fields.
5) Strong connections among students, lecturers, and industry professionals create a collaborative community and provide significant administrative and academic support that enriches the educational experience and fosters an effective research environment.

Weaknesses:
1) Since the Doctoral SP "Human Factors, Occupational Safety and Health" is newly established and has yet to produce graduates, it is challenging to assess its success, including the defense of doctoral theses, as well as the future success of its graduates, which may raise concerns about its proven outcomes and effectiveness.
2) Despite offering courses in English, the Doctoral SP "Human Factors, Occupational Safety and Health" currently has only one international student and lacks a clear strategy for attracting more, compounded by insufficient marketing efforts that hinder its visibility and competitiveness both nationally and internationally.
3) The Doctoral SP "Human Factors, Occupational Safety and Health" effectiveness may rely heavily on partnerships with external organizations and businesses for practical applications and funding, which can introduce vulnerabilities if these partnerships do not materialize or sustain.

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

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The doctoral SP "Human Factors, Occupational Safety, and Health" content encompasses

interdisciplinary topics and is well-organized, focusing on scientific research aligned with the resources available at UL. A key strength of the programme is its motivated faculty, who are eager to engage in research activities and publish their findings. Moreover, there is strong administrative support dedicated to the development and promotion of the doctoral programme, enhancing its overall effectiveness. The Programme emphasizes a robust educational foundation in areas such as occupational safety, health, and ergonomics. Graduates earn a Ph.D. in Social Sciences, equipping them with advanced knowledge and research skills essential for success in academic and professional arenas.

2.3. Resources and Provision of the Study Programme

Analysis

2.3.1. It is stated in the SAR (p. 227) the resources and infrastructure of the UL are well-suited for the effective implementation of the Doctoral SP ''Human Factors, Occupational Safety and Health'', as well as for achieving the desired results. The programme benefits from a robust physical infrastructure, a comprehensive e-learning environment, and a well-stocked library. The regulatory framework governing e-studies is established through various internal normative documents, including provisions for the development and use of e-courses.

The e-learning environment is meticulously organized to adhere to best practices for online education, and it aligns with the experiences of leading international universities. UL's library, which is accredited as a library of national importance, offers access to a wide range of scientific materials, including those relevant to human factors, ergonomics, and occupational safety and health. The library houses more than 100 workstations, including computer facilities designed to facilitate research and learning. (SAR, p. 227) During the assessment visit, it was confirmed that students highly evaluate the learning environment of the UL and all the developments which have been done to be more flexible and supportive for balancing work, study and private life. (SAR, p. 227-228)

The library supports the Doctoral SP ''Human Factors, Occupational Safety and Health'' by offering specialized classes on scientific publishing, bibliography management, and using major research databases such as Web of Science and Scopus. These resources are essential for both students and academic staff, allowing for a comprehensive approach to research and education. (SAR, p. 227-228) Furthermore, UL offers state-of-the-art facilities and equipment, including specialized computer labs, software, and research equipment which were also presented during the assessment visit. These resources are essential for conducting practical research and experiments. The UL also provides access to unique facilities at the Faculty of Computer Science, such as the Perception and Cognitive Systems Laboratory.

The strategic plan of UL emphasizes the continuous expansion of e-resources, aiming to enhance remote access and modernize the database offerings, which includes a variety of platforms that provide a wealth of academic articles and resources. Faculty and students benefit from access to over 15,000 full-text e-journals, approximately 201,060 e-books, and millions of theses, further enriching the academic landscape and ensuring students have what they need for research. (SAR, p. 228)

The UL House of Nature provides the necessary infrastructure to support Doctoral SP ''Human Factors, Occupational Safety and Health'', featuring five computer labs equipped with various operating systems and essential software for teaching and research. Students and staff have complimentary access to Microsoft Office and SPSS software for personal computers during their studies or employment. Specialized application software is also available for teaching and research

purposes, covering a range of disciplines relevant to occupational health and safety. (SAR, p. 228) During the assessment visit, alumni humorously mentioned that once the new academic building was completed, they felt a compelling urge to return to the university and pursue further studies just to enjoy that environment. While this remark was made lightheartedly, it highlights the significance of the learning environment and the opportunities it offers, which are greatly appreciated. Along with other factors, this desire could play a crucial role in their final decision when selecting a place to study.

The Doctoral SP ‘’Human Factors, Occupational Safety and Health’’ is complemented by modern equipment and practical applications related to human factors and occupational safety. Significant collaborations with the Faculty of Computer Science at UL and the Estonian University of Life Sciences provide additional resources, including access to specialized laboratories focused on work technology and occupational safety. (SAR, p. 229)

In summary, the available resources for the Doctoral SP ‘’Human Factors, Occupational Safety and Health’’, encompassing library collections and the overall infrastructure and equipment at the University of Latvia, are adequate and effectively support the implementation of the "Human Factors, Occupational Safety, and Health" doctoral study programme. These resources contribute significantly to both the educational experience and the advancement of scientific research within the field.

2.3.2. According to assessment visit as well as SAR (p. 229-230) the resources and infrastructure of the UL are well-suited for the effective implementation of the Doctoral Study Programme "Human Factors, Occupational Safety and Health", contributing significantly to the achievement of the programme’s objectives. The Study Programme demonstrates a commitment to fostering mutual cooperation among teaching staff, which is essential for achieving its goals and ensuring the interconnectedness of study courses.

Doctoral students have ample opportunities to engage in research activities and participate in projects within the Doctoral Study Programme "Human Factors, Occupational Safety and Health", framework. They actively present papers at international conferences, such as the 81st Latvian University International Scientific Conference in 2023, focusing on Human Factors, Ergonomics, and Work Environment in the section dedicated to Industrial Engineering. They have also represented the university at a conference in Tartu, Estonia, discussing topics related to Ergonomics and Ergodesign, as well as Mental Load and Occupational Safety and Health. Moreover, students play a significant role in organizing Erasmus Week, inviting foreign faculty from various institutions, including the University of Life Sciences in Tartu, Tallinn University of Technology, and the University of Pennsylvania. (SAR, p. 229)

The Doctoral Study Programme "Human Factors, Occupational Safety and Health", equips students with access to necessary subscribed e-resources and measurement equipment. UL has successfully acquired databases that provide continuously updated access to scientific information and publications. Importantly, doctoral students who have completed their programmes but are still finalizing their dissertations also have access to UL's scientific information databases. Additionally, they can publish their research findings in two key journals funded by UL: "Humanities and Social Sciences: Latvia" and "Journal of Economics and Management Research." (SAR, p. 229-230)

The UL Library meets the requirements for establishing and developing scientific research in the Doctoral Study Programme by providing a comprehensive range of resources. In addition to traditional materials such as books and journals, UL offers access to over 170,000 subscribed e-

resources across various scientific fields. To enhance the diversity of courses, new e-learning programs are being developed, and existing methodological materials are being updated and modernized, including the creation of content in English. The principles of the UL Information System (LUIS) dictate that all study courses across programmes are integrated into the e-learning environment, ensuring compliance with UL Regulation No. 1/348 (December 10, 2013). Content improvements in e-learning courses are conducted according to UL Regulation No. 1/277. (SAR, p. 229-230)

The Doctoral Study Programme "Human Factors, Occupational Safety and Health" is well-equipped with practical applications, including measurement devices and data processing software relevant to the field. The faculties implementing the programme possess modern equipment, much of which is unique not only at the national level but also within the Baltic region. Collaborations with the UL Faculty of Computer Science provide doctoral students access to specialized resources in the Perception and Cognitive Systems Laboratory. Additionally, students benefit from access to shared facilities at national research centers across various Latvian institutions. (SAR, p. 230)

Furthermore a cooperation agreement has also been established with the Estonian University of Life Sciences, which is expected to make significant contributions to the doctoral programme's social and engineering education. This partnership will facilitate opportunities for doctoral students to conduct research in specialized laboratories, including the Laboratory of Work Technology, the Laboratory of Physical and Mental Workload, and the Laboratory of Occupational Safety. (SAR, p. 230)

Overall, it could be concluded that the study and research framework for the Doctoral Study Programme "Human Factors, Occupational Safety and Health" encompasses a well-structured design, comprehensive course offerings, and significant support for scientific activities. This includes faculty and guest lecturer expertise, student opportunities for research participation, UL's support for scientific activities (including doctoral grants), accessible literature and equipment, and collaboration with various institutions both domestically and internationally. These factors collectively ensure the effective implementation of the doctoral programme and contribute to the advancement of scientific research across UL, in Latvia, and globally.

2.3.3. The Second-cycle SP "Human Factors, Occupational Safety and Health" relies primarily on tuition fees. An overview of the projected distribution of students by study type and annual income is provided in Table 3.3.3.1 of the study programme SAR.

To accurately assess the required funding, the UL utilizes a methodology developed in-house to calculate the cost per student for its study programmes. This methodology incorporates various costs associated with providing the educational process, as outlined in the "Financial Provision for Studies" section. It also factors in the study programme plan, the involvement of academic staff, projected student numbers, and other relevant elements, ensuring the reliability of financial forecasts. (SAR, p. 231)

For the Doctoral SP "Human Factors, Occupational Safety and Health," data from the 2022/2023 academic year is analyzed, specifically student enrollment figures as of October 1, 2022, study plans, and the structure of the academic staff. Based on this information, the total annual programme cost is estimated at €37,005, which translates to a cost of €2,467 per student. To maintain profitability, the programme requires a minimum enrollment of 15 paying students, taking into account all three years of the study plan and the supervision of doctoral theses. (SAR, p.232)

For the English-language implementation, the programme aims to enroll 5 students over a three-year cycle, with total annual costs amounting to €13,850 and a per-student cost of €2,785. Similarly, the minimum number of paying students necessary for profitability remains at 15. (SAR, p. 232) However, during the assessment visit, it became clear that the first English-language course started with one international student. While this may not be cost-effective, it provides an opportunity to test the effectiveness of the English-language course and later promote it more effectively. This is a risky decision, but it is also a well-considered and strategic move for the future, deserving of recognition from the team of experts.

The financial analysis indicates a positive outlook, with projected income exceeding expenses. This confirms that the Doctoral SP "Human Factors, Occupational Safety and Health" is financially sustainable, negating the need for additional external funding. This robust financial structure and resource allocation not only support the programme's current operations but also facilitate its potential for growth and success in the field of occupational health and safety. (SAR, p. 233-234)

Overall, the effective management of resources ensures that the Doctoral SP "Human Factors, Occupational Safety and Health" is well-equipped to fulfill its objectives and deliver high-quality education, preparing graduates to meet the challenges in their respective fields.

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

The resources and infrastructure at the UL effectively support the implementation of the Doctoral Study Programme "Human Factors, Occupational Safety and Health" contributing to the achievement of its desired outcomes. Previously outlined principles regarding study provision and resource allocation, particularly those related to the Short-cycle Study Programme "Labour Protection," provide a solid foundation for understanding the programme's operational success.

Doctoral students have access to essential resources, including e-resources and measurement equipment, ensuring they can engage in research and academic activities. The programme’s funding is primarily derived from tuition fees, allowing for the full implementation of the study process. UL employs a reliable methodology for estimating funding needs, allowing for accurate financial forecasting.

The analysis indicates a positive financial outlook, with projected income exceeding expenses, which confirms the programme's financial sustainability and negates the need for external funding. This strategic management of resources supports the programme's current operations while facilitating future growth in occupational health and safety.

In conclusion, the effective orchestration of resources and strategic planning ensures that the Doctoral Study Programme is well-positioned to meet its objectives and deliver a high-quality educational experience for graduates, preparing them to address real-world challenges in their fields.

Strengths:
1) The Doctoral SP "Human Factors, Occupational Safety and Health" provides students with ample opportunities to engage in research, offering access to specialized equipment, databases, and international collaborations. Students can participate in conferences, publish their research findings, and conduct research in specialized laboratories, fostering a strong research culture within the program.
2) The Doctoral SP "Human Factors, Occupational Safety and Health" demonstrates a solid financial

foundation, with projected income exceeding expenses. This financial stability ensures the programme can consistently provide the necessary resources and support to its students without compromising the quality of education.
3) The Doctoral SP "Human Factors, Occupational Safety and Health" utilizes contemporary teaching methods, such as e-learning, and provides access to a wide range of electronic resources. This modern learning environment allows students to have flexibility in their studies and access up-to-date information, enhancing the overall learning experience.

Weaknesses:
1) The Doctoral SP "Human Factors, Occupational Safety and Health" reliance on tuition fees raises concerns about financial stability due to low enrollment, particularly in the English-language component, which began with only one student. Achieving the necessary minimum of 15 paying students consistently may also prove difficult.

Assessment of the requirement [6]

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The Doctoral SP ‘’Human Factors, Occupational Safety and Health’’ is supported by strong study and research facilities, including a dedicated study base. The programme also exhibits long-term financial sustainability.

2.4. Teaching Staff

Analysis

2.4.1. The general principles of personnel management at the UL, including the quality of lecturers, policy goals, talent development, and professional development initiatives (such as seminars and teaching courses), were previously outlined in the analysis of the Short-cycle SP "Labour Protection" (see chapter 2.4). It could be concluded that the selection process for teaching staff involved in the Doctoral SP ‘’Human Factors, Occupational Safety and Health” aligns with UL's staff development strategy.

The implementation of the Doctoral SP ‘’Human Factors, Occupational Safety and Health” involves 17 academic staff members, including 7 professors, 4 associate professors, 5 assistant professors, and 1 researcher. All faculty members hold PhDs in diverse fields such as Biology, Design, Economics, Philology, Philosophy, Geography, Geology, Engineering, Medicine, Pedagogy, and Management. Notably, 9 of the faculty members have the status of experts with the Latvian Council of Science (LSC), including 3 individuals (Prof. H. Kaļķis, Assoc. Prof. Z. Roja, and Assoc. Prof. M. Reinvee) specializing in Social Sciences, specifically in interdisciplinary social sciences and military science. (SAR, p. 80, p. 240).

The compulsory and restricted elective components of the Doctoral SP ‘’Human Factors, Occupational Safety and Health” are taught by a select group of qualified faculty, consisting of 5 professors and 3 associate professors, all of whom have been elected to their academic positions at the UL. The qualifications, academic experience, and scientific and practical expertise of the teaching staff are pivotal in achieving the programme's learning outcomes. These qualified experts

and scholars enhance students' understanding in both human factors and ergonomics, supporting their thesis work by addressing theoretical and practical issues. (SAR, p. 234)

Furthermore, the teaching staff plays a critical role in developing students' critical thinking, analytical skills, and advanced research capabilities. Through their qualifications and expertise, they provide valuable feedback and guidance on various aspects of student work, including research methods, data analysis, and overall structure as it was highlighted during the assessment visit as well as it is stated in the SAR (p. 235). They also contribute significantly to students' professional development by sharing their extensive knowledge and industry connections, which was also highlighted during the assessment visit by the graduates that the network they raised during the studies is their "safety net" afterwards - informal chat rooms are available, were several topics are discussed as well as concerns and questions are welcomed.

A portion of the academic staff, estimated at 6-7% by 2027, is expected to earn doctoral degrees abroad, enhancing their qualifications for teaching in English courses. Faculty members are actively involved in ongoing professional development through participation in research projects, conferences, and workshops. This confirmed that the English language proficiency of the teaching staff enables them to effectively teach courses in English. Additionally, their knowledge of the Latvian language complies with the Regulations regarding the Proficiency in the National Language for Professional and Official Duties, ensuring that courses can be taught in both English and Latvian (see annex: ANNEX_27_4_HEAD OF STUDY FIELD DECLARATION.pdf). A complete list of the staff involved in the implementation of the Doctoral SP ''Human Factors, Occupational Safety and Health", detailing their academic degrees, positions, and the courses they teach, is provided in Annexes (see annex: Annex_6_Basic information regarding the teachers involved in the implementation of the study direction.xlsx). The common opinion of the expert team is that an even stronger indication of the teaching staff's readiness to conduct instruction in English is the fact that the Doctoral SP ''Human Factors, Occupational Safety and Health'' has also been established in English. This provides a good opportunity for practical application and demonstrates their capability to do so in real life.

During the assessment visit, discussions with academic staff and management revealed that the current director of the Doctoral Study Programme "Human Factors, Occupational Safety, and Health" is recognized as a thought leader and has established strong connections within the field and the industry.

In conclusion, the Doctoral SP "Human Factors, Occupational Safety and Health" aligns effectively with the UL personnel management principles and staff development strategy. With a highly qualified faculty holding PhDs in relevant fields, the programme ensures the achievement of learning outcomes while promoting students' critical thinking and professional growth. Ongoing professional development initiatives and plans for faculty to pursue doctoral degrees abroad enhance the programme's instructional quality, particularly in English. Additionally, faculty involvement in research and professional networks highlights the programme's commitment to a supportive learning environment, positioning it for success in delivering high-quality education in occupational health and safety.

2.4.2. During the reporting period, there have been no changes in the composition of the teaching staff (SAR, p. 235). The institution has established an effective management system to facilitate positive transitions within the faculty, such as promoting doctoral graduates to lecturers and research positions (SAR, p. 87). This system ensures that such changes do not adversely impact the quality of the programme or its compliance with regulatory requirements. Key measures include

structured onboarding processes, mentorship, and professional development programmes.

The compulsory and restricted elective components of the programme are delivered by 5 professors and 3 associate professors, all of whom have been elected to academic positions at the University (SAR, p. 234). Each year, the head of the study field, in collaboration with study programme directors, prepares a comprehensive report on the operations of the study field and its programmes, which includes an overview of the teaching staff composition, detailing their positions, the number of staff holding doctoral degrees, and staff mobility (SAR, p. 58).

The academic staff consists of elected faculty members—including professors, associate professors, assistant professors, and lecturers—who are appointed for a maximum term of 6 years, as stipulated by the Law on Higher Education Institutions (see annex: Nolikums par akadēmiskajiem un administratīvajiem amatiem Latvijas Universitātē - Regulatory Enactments on Academic and Administrative Positions at the University of Latvia). Furthermore, the faculty's proficiency in the state language meets the legal requirements set forth by the Republic of Latvia, ensuring effective communication and compliance in the implementation of the study programmes.

2.4.3. The Doctoral SP "Human Factors, Occupational Safety and Health" at the UL aims to enhance the involvement of academic personnel in scientific project implementation, targeting an increase from 4 to 6 active projects by 2026 (see annex: Annex_3_Development plan of the study direction.docx). This focus on scientific research at the doctoral level aligns with both the priorities outlined in the Latvian National Development Plan and the Latvian Sustainable Development Strategy 2030 (SAR, p. 210).

The teaching staff is significantly engaged in research activities, contributing to the enhancement of the doctoral programme through leadership in interdisciplinary projects and collaboration on international research initiatives (SAR, p. 244-251). Furthermore, UL is dedicated to creating opportunities for interdisciplinary research, involving young scientists and fostering cooperation. Faculty members actively participate in several state-funded projects, including initiatives from the State Research Programme (SAR, p. 88, p. 91).

The Faculty ensures comprehensive access to scientific publication databases such as SCOPUS, Web of Science, and EBSCO for conferences organized by UL (SAR, p. 91). Additionally, doctoral researchers can utilize shared facilities at National Research Centres within various Latvian research institutions. A cooperation agreement with the Estonian University of Life Sciences has also been established, promising significant contributions to the Doctoral Study Programme “Human Factors” (SAR, p. 237).

The implementation of the Doctoral SP "Human Factors, Occupational Safety and Health" complies with existing regulations, including the Cabinet Regulations No. 617 regarding the standards for obtaining a doctoral degree in professional higher education and the Law on Scientific Activity of the Republic of Latvia (https://likumi.lv/ta/id/350732). This alignment ensures that the programme meets national and international academic standards, reinforcing its commitment to quality scientific education.

2.4.4. The UL Strategic Plan emphasizes the importance of science-based studies, which includes fostering scientific activities among both students and staff. Recognized as a national leader in science (SAR, p. 83), UL boasts a teaching staff with a substantial record of publications and professional accomplishments that comply with the Law on Higher Education Institutions. Specifically, the staff involved in the Doctoral SP "Human Factors, Occupational Safety and Health"

has amassed a total of 334 scientific publications over the past six years (SAR, p. 242; see annex: Annex_9_ List of teaching staff publications for the reference period.docx). This includes contributions to peer-reviewed journals, presentations at international conferences, and leadership roles in industry projects (SAR, p. 242-244).

Research plays a fundamental role in training highly qualified researchers for the Doctoral SP "Human Factors, Occupational Safety and Health", guided by a highly motivated and active programme director. As a result of the doctoral study programme, both graduates and staff have demonstrated their ability to manage large-scale scientific projects related to occupational health and safety at both national and international levels (SAR, p. 85, 237-244). During the assessment visit, it was evident that all parties were highly motivated experts in their fields, willing to contribute more than was expected to ensure that the goals were met and that the education remained of high quality. Such an atmosphere and sense of unity are not encountered very often, making it an invaluable asset. This reflects that the management at all levels, employee contributions, and student motivation are all in alignment, which is a significant strength.

It could be concluded that the research activities of the academic staff are closely integrated with the study process, facilitating the successful transfer of theoretical knowledge, including the adoption of the latest methods. This integration fosters interdisciplinary links, allowing for the continuous updating of course structures to remain relevant and effective within the evolving landscape of occupational health and safety.

2.4.5. The common goals associated with staff involvement in cooperative mechanisms, such as junior staff mentoring, experience sharing, departmental workshops, and peer observation, were previously examined in the context of the Short-cycle Professional Higher Education Study Programme "Labour Protection" (see chapter 2.4). One significant initiative, "Promoting the Colleague Experience Exchange of Academic Staff," has been implemented since 2018 to facilitate regular peer observation among faculty members in the field of study (SAR, p. 80). During the assessment visit, it was confirmed by staff that all lecturers undergo peer review, which they perceive as a valuable opportunity for mutual learning.

Additionally, a close cooperation agreement has been established with the Estonian University of Life Sciences (SAR, p. 65), which will provide PhD students with access to specialized laboratories, including the Laboratory of Work Technology, the Laboratory of Physical and Mental Workload, and the Laboratory of Occupational Safety for future research (SAR, p. 229).

The Doctoral SP "Human Factors, Occupational Safety and Health" has set up effective mechanisms for fostering collaboration among the teaching staff, ensuring the integration of study courses and the achievement of educational objectives. Interaction among lecturers is facilitated through informal meetings and daily cooperation, supported by the director, who serves as a cluster coordinator. Furthermore, the Doctoral Schools at the University aim to enhance research quality by creating opportunities for interdisciplinary collaboration, engaging young scientists, and fostering connections between various departments within the UL as well as with local and foreign universities. (SAR, p. 85)

Successful partnerships have also been established in Master's and Doctoral programmes with several internationally renowned professors and researchers in the field of project implementation (SAR, p. 89). The mutual cooperation of the doctoral teaching staff is further strengthened through joint external initiatives, with active collaboration occurring with organizations such as the Latvian Ergonomics Society, the Business Efficiency Association, and the Chamber of Commerce and

Industry, as well as international cooperation with the International Ergonomics Association. This collaborative approach cultivates a supportive environment for both faculty and students.

Looking ahead, the UL’s strategic goal is to have international academic staff comprising 5% of the total academic staff by 2027 (University of Latvia Strategy 2021-2027), which is expected to positively influence the development of English-language courses. Furthermore, the proportion of academic staff who have obtained their doctoral degrees abroad is targeted to increase to 7% by 2027, from the current 6%.

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

It could be concluded that the qualifications of the teaching staff in the Doctoral SP "Human Factors, Occupational Safety and Health" meet regulatory requirements and effectively support the programme's learning outcomes. The principles of personnel management and professional development are well established, ensuring high-quality education and research.

The faculty's commitment to continuous improvement and active participation in research and professional activities fosters a culture of academic excellence. Additionally, structured mechanisms for collaboration enhance the integration of courses and achieve educational goals, while partnerships with professional organizations strengthen ties between UL and industry.

Lastly, the Doctoral SP "Human Factors, Occupational Safety and Health" strategic objectives to increase international academic staff and develop English-language courses underscore its commitment to expanding its global perspective. Overall, the Doctoral Study Programme effectively meets the criteria for delivering quality education and research, positioning itself for student success.

Strengths:
1) The Doctoral SP ‘’Human Factors, Occupational Safety and Health’’ effectively manages staff changes, supported by structured onboarding and mentorship systems.
2) Strong relations between teaching staff, management, students and industry.

Weaknesses:
None

Assessment of the requirement [7]

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The Doctoral SP ‘’Human Factors, Occupational Safety and Health’’ is fully compliant with requirement qualification of the academic staff and visiting lecturers. Implementation of the doctoral study programme is in line with Law on Scientific Activity of the Republic of Latvia

2.5. Assessment of the Compliance

Requirements

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Annexes “22_4_PIELIKUMS_Studiju kursu apraksti_LV_F.pdf” and “ANNEX_22_4_Study course list.pdf” confirms that all descriptions of all study courses have been prepared in Latvian and English. All descriptions comply with the requirements set in Section 56.(1), paragraph 2 of the Law on Higher Education Institutions.

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The sample of diploma (15_4_pielikums_Par studiju programmas apgūšanu izsniedzamā diploma paraugs_LV.docx) fully complies with the procedure described in Cabinet of Ministers regulations No. 202 “Kārtība, kādā izsniedz valsts atzītus augstāko izglītību apliecinošus dokumentus”.

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

According to study field director's confirmation (annex: 27_4_pielikums_AL_55_pants_Apliecinajums_par_akadem_progr_atbilstibu_LV.edoc) academic staff involved in this study programme complies with the requirements specified in Section 55, paragraph 1, clause 3 of the Law on Higher Education Institutions.

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

According to study field director's confirmation (annex: 25_4_pielikums_Apliecinājums, ka

doktora studiju programmas akadēmiskā personāla sastāvā ir ne mazāk kā pieci doktori_LV.edoc) there is at least 5 staff members with a doctoral degree from whom at least 3 are experts approved by the Latvian Science Council.

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Annex “6_pielikums_Pamatinformācija par studiju virziena īstenošanā iesaistītajiem mācībspēkiem_LV.xlsx” and Study field director's signed confirmation (annex: 7_1_Pielikums_Virziena vadītāja apliecinājums par studiju programmu īstenošanā iesaistīto mācībspēku valsts valodas zināšanām_LV.pdf) fully complies with Cabinet of Ministers regulations No. 157 “Noteikumi par valsts valodas zināšanu apjomu, valsts valodas prasmes pārbaudes kārtību un valsts nodevu par valsts valodas prasmes pārbaudi”.

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

In study courses that are conducted in English, the relevant teaching staff has language proficiency at least at the B2 level (according to the appendix: 6_pielikums_Pamatinformācija par studiju virziena īstenošanā iesaistītajiem mācībspēkiem_LV.xlsx).

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The sample of the study agreement (annex: Tipveida ligumi.zip) fully complies with the provisions to be included in the study agreement according to Cabinet of Ministers regulations No. 70 “Studiju līgumā obligāti ietveramie noteikumi”.

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

UL has provided a justification (annex: Dokumenti_par_iespejam studet citur.zip) that students will be provided with an option to continue studies in UL doctoral study programme Economics and Business (code: 51345).

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

UL has provided document that confirms that students are guaranteed a compensation for losses if the study programme is not accredited or study programme's license is revoked (annex: Rektora apliecinājums kompensācijai SV_Iekšējā drošiba.edoc)

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Annex 19 provides assurance that the study programme meets the requirements of the Scientific Activity Law, which must be followed when implementing doctoral study programmes.

Assessment of the requirement [8]

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Doctoral SP “Human Factors, Occupational Safety and Health” is fully compliant with requirements set in HEI regulating law and Cabinet of Ministers regulations as assessed in joint opinion's chapter 2.5. of this study programme.

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

The Doctoral SP "Human Factors, Occupational Safety and Health" completes the entire educational cycle at the UL, providing it with a significant advantage over other programmes. Its content encompasses interdisciplinary topics and is well-organized, focusing on scientific research aligned with the resources available at UL. A key strength of the programme is its motivated faculty, who are eager to engage in research activities and publish their findings. Moreover, there is strong administrative support dedicated to the development and promotion of the doctoral programme, enhancing its overall effectiveness.

The decision to offer the programme in English not only broadens access for international students but also contributes to its recognition and internationalization. This bilingual approach will cultivate highly qualified professionals who are poised to make substantial contributions to both the academic community and industry.

The Doctoral SP "Human Factors, Occupational Safety and Health" emphasizes a robust educational foundation in areas such as occupational safety, health, and ergonomics. Graduates earn a Ph.D. in Social Sciences, equipping them with advanced knowledge and research skills essential for success in academic and professional arenas. The implementation methods prioritize student-centered learning through diverse pedagogical strategies, including practical assignments and collaborative projects, fostering active engagement with real-world issues. Clear promotion pathways are outlined, focusing on the defense of doctoral theses based on original research relevant to current workplace challenges.

The resources and infrastructure at UL effectively support the implementation of the Doctoral SP "Human Factors, Occupational Safety and Health", facilitating the achievement of its objectives. As noted in prior analyses, particularly regarding the Short-cycle Study Programme "Labour Protection," these principles provide a solid operational foundation. Doctoral students have access to essential resources, including e-resources and measurement equipment, which are crucial for research

activities. The funding for the programme primarily comes from tuition fees, reinforcing its financial sustainability and eliminating reliance on external funding.

The analysis indicates a favorable financial outlook, with projected income surpassing expenses. This well-managed resource allocation not only supports current operations but also positions the programme for future growth in the field of occupational health and safety.

Furthermore, the qualifications of the teaching staff meet regulatory standards, effectively supporting the programme's learning outcomes. The established principles of personnel management and professional development contribute to high-quality education and research. Faculty members' commitment to continuous improvement and active engagement in research fosters a culture of academic excellence. Collaborative structures enhance course integration, while partnerships with professional organizations reinforce ties between UL and the industry.

In summary, the Doctoral SP "Human Factors, Occupational Safety and Health" at the UL stands out as an excellent programme, offering a unique and well-structured educational opportunity within the region. Its strengths include its interdisciplinary focus, dedicated faculty, strong administrative support, and the option of studying entirely in English, making it attractive to both local and international students. The programme's emphasis on research, aligned with industry standards, equips graduates with the knowledge and skills necessary to excel in their fields.

While the programme is still in its early stages, its effectiveness and international appeal could be further enhanced by addressing a few key areas. Increasing financial support for students would enhance accessibility and participation. Expanding promotional activities would attract a wider pool of potential students. Developing a clear strategy to attract more international students would further strengthen the program's global reach.

Despite these minor areas for improvement, the Doctoral SP "Human Factors, Occupational Safety and Health" shows great promise and is well-positioned to become a leading programme in its field.

Strengths:
1) A unique programme in Latvia and the surrounding area.
2) The possibility to conduct the programme entirely in English.
3) Highly motivated teachers and students for scientific research.
4) The use of contemporary teaching methods, such as e-learning and access to a wide range of electronic resources, enhances the flexibility and quality of education.

Weaknesses:
1) Lack of financial support for studies – despite its strengths, the programme suffers from a lack of sufficient financial support for students, which could limit accessibility and participation.
2) Dependence on External Partnerships – The programme's success may rely heavily on partnerships with external organizations for practical applications and funding, which could pose a risk if these partnerships do not materialize or are not sustained.
3) Despite the potential for internationalization, the programme currently has only one international student, highlighting the need for a clearer strategy to attract more students from abroad.

Evaluation of the study programme "Human Factors, Occupational Safety and Health"

Evaluation of the study programme:

Excellent

2.6. Recommendations for the Study Programme "Human Factors, Occupational Safety and Health"

Short-term recommendations

1) Develop a good marketing strategy to attract students and encourage students to continue their studies. (2 years)

Long-term recommendations

1) Continuation of research work and applied research with industry in order to maintain the attractiveness of the degree programme. (continuously)
2) Enhance recruitment strategies for the Doctoral SP "Human Factors, Occupational Safety and Health" by implementing targeted marketing initiatives, offering financial incentives such as scholarships, and strengthening collaborations with industry partners to create tailored internship opportunities. Additionally, continuously assess and adapt the curriculum based on student and market feedback to ensure alignment with evolving academic and industry needs. This comprehensive approach aims to boost enrollment, particularly in the English-language component, thereby addressing financial stability concerns. (continuously)

III - Assessment of the Requirements for the Study Field and the Relevant Study Programmes

III - Assessment of the Requirements for the Study Field and the Relevant Study Programmes

Assessment of the Requirements for the Study Field

Requirements	Requirement Evaluation			Comment
R1 - Pursuant to Section 5, Paragraph 2.1 of the Law on Higher Education Institutions, the higher education institution/ college shall ensure continuous improvement, development, and efficient performance of the study field whilst implementing its internal quality assurance system:	Fully compliant			UL has implemented a quality assurance system and described the necessary quality assurance processes.

Requirements	Requirement Evaluation	Comment
R2 - Compliance of scientific research and artistic creation with the level of development of scientific research and artistic creation (if applicable)	Fully compliant	The Study Field is well-aligned with the UL's strategic goals towards scientific research. The research directions focus on the practical aspects of labour protection, consistent with industry demands and regulatory requirements. Students are effectively integrated in applied research with practical learning experiences. The SF has established strong local and international collaborations, including partnerships with European universities. The study field integrates innovative teaching methods and technologies.
R3 - The cooperation implemented within the study field with various Latvian and foreign organizations ensures the achievement of the aims of the study field.	Fully compliant	The general impression is that UL is working on development and internationalization, understands the need for this element of the development of study programmes and that in the future it should further develop cooperation on concrete projects that will contribute to the application of theoretical knowledge in practice. Further cooperation within the Erasmus+ programme should be encouraged and, in addition to the mobility opportunities offered, joint Erasmus+ funded projects with partners from the EU should be secured that can contribute to the acquisition of new knowledge and skills. Building on this, internationalization should be developed in the direction of new technologies, projects and research, but good practice to date should also be continued.

Requirements	Requirement Evaluation	Comment
R4 - Elimination of deficiencies and shortcomings identified in the previous assessment of the study field, if any, or implementation of the recommendations provided.	Fully compliant	Implementation plan is provided which gives sufficient evidence of the UL commitment and willingness to implement these recommendations, nevertheless all of them are not fully compliant yet. The external factors (legislation, covid 19 etc) should be taken into account which affect UL and the activities outlined in the development plans. Therefore, it is proposed that the recommendations be regarded as fully implemented, although some are also highlighted in this report as activities that require further enhancement.

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

No.	Study programme	R5	R6	R7	R8	Evaluation of the study programme (excellent, good, average, poor)
1	Labour Protection (41862)	Not relevant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Excellent
2	Occupational Health and Safety at Work (42862)	Not relevant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Excellent
3	Work Environmental Protection and Expertise (47862)	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Excellent
4	Human Factors, Occupational Safety and Health (51862)	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Excellent

The Dissenting Opinions of the Experts

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