

Expert group joint opinion

Evaluation Procedure: Assessment of Study Field

Higher Education Institution: Baltic International Academy

Study field: Law

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

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Baltic International Academy (BIA), established in 1992 as the Baltic Russian Institute and renamed in 2006, offers a comprehensive range of study programmes in the field of law, covering all levels from college to PhD. BIA academic offering in the study field "Law" includes 5 study programmes: professional short cycle study programme "Science of Law", academic bachelor programme "Science of Law", academic and professional master study programmes "Science of Law", and doctoral study programme "Law". In 2021, the short-cycle and academic bachelor study programmes were assessed as good, the other programmes as average. The study field "Law" got 2 years accreditation term.

The study programmes are appreciated by social partners, in particular in Liepaja and Daugavpils, where BIA runs short-cycle and (or) academic bachelor study programmes. These educational initiatives foster regional growth and stability, with graduates playing a vital role in bolstering the local economy. The academy is also praised for its flexible approach to remote learning, accommodating diverse student schedules and responsibilities. However, the lack of standardized requirements for blended and hybrid studies affects the consistency and quality of education. Additionally, BIA's facilities are not fully optimized for hybrid learning or accessible to students with disabilities.

BIA puts continuous efforts to improve the quality of studies. However, stakeholder engagement is insufficient, with a minimal involvement of graduates and employers in curriculum development. The feedback system is incomplete, lacking a structured process for responding to stakeholder input. There are gaps in the regulation of academic ethics, particularly regarding AI tool usage. Other areas needing improvement include the appeal system, where the absence of recorded oral exams limits transparency.

Additionally, the students have difficulty passing the State Exam resulting in no access to a lawyer's qualification after a professional master study programme, indicating potential deficiencies in teaching methods and curriculum alignment. All study programmes experience noticeable student drop-out rates, which indicate potential issues with students' preparation, academic support, or external pressures affecting students' ability to complete the study programmes. There is also no systematic approach to professional and didactic development for teaching staff.

BIA boasts a strong research position in criminal law and criminology, and shows emerging leadership of young scholars in medical law. Students are actively encouraged to participate in research activities, supported by mechanisms such as funding and administrative assistance. Establishing a doctoral school further enhances BIA's research capacity, providing a structured framework for developing future scholars. However, the BIA's international research collaboration is weak, with limited involvement in externally funded research projects and few high-impact journal publications. This is crucial for the development of all academic study programmes, in particular doctoral studies, where international research collaboration, particularly of senior staff, is the foundation for early career researchers' development. The promotion of scientific activity within BIA is in place, however, it needs to be revised to encourage more prolific and high-quality research outputs from faculty members.

BIA maintains a robust number of internship agreements, facilitating practical experience for students, in particular in professional study programmes. The positive feedback from public sector

employers highlights its engagement with national and regional social partners. The academy's solid cooperation foundation within the Erasmus+ programme shows its potential, however, students' mobility under the Erasmus+ Programme is extremely low, and the support for international exchanges is inadequate. BIA's efforts to implement short-term internationalization activities, such as lectures of incoming professors or summer schools, are commendable and highly appreciated as part of internationalization at home activities.

In summary, while BIA exhibits the strength in its comprehensive academic offerings, its flexibility in the provision of studies, addressing its weaknesses is essential to enhance its educational quality, research impact, and international standing. Improving assessment standards, stakeholder engagement, blended and hybrid studies provision and hybrid study infrastructure, and international research collaboration are crucial steps towards achieving these goals.

I - Assessment of the Study Field

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1.1 Management of the Study Field

Analysis

1.1.1.

According to the self-assessment report (SAR), the strategic aim of the study field "Law" is to provide students with a high level of professional legal education that is competitive in the Latvian, European, and international job markets. The programmes aim to enhance students' research skills and competences and foster strong relationships with employers. BIA claims that the study field has been developed in alignment with the National Development Plan 2021-2027, particularly under the action direction "Science for Society Development, National Economic Growth, and Security." This includes efforts to attract human resources for research and capacity building by increasing financial resources to boost the number of doctoral students, attracting foreign researchers, and enhancing international cooperation.

In theory, the study field's aims are clearly defined, however, highly ambitious. There are concerns about the quality of professional education provided and the ability of graduates to compete in European and international job markets. Given comparably low level of internationalization at BIA (see section 1.5 of this report for more detailed analysis), it is evident that graduates can be more prepared for the Latvian job market rather than European or international markets. In fact, the SAR acknowledges that the primary focus of the "Law" study field is on Latvia, aiming to meet the economic interests of the Latvian state while providing students with comprehensive and high-quality academic and professional knowledge at the bachelor's, master's, and doctoral levels. The delivery of the study programmes is highly regarded by regional employers, as confirmed during meetings in Liepaja and Daugavpils. Regional employers recognize that the provision of studies in the field of law, especially at the first cycle and bachelor's levels, addresses several social issues, including emigration and the trend of leaving small towns for the capital. This appreciation underscores the positive impact of these programmes on local communities.

While the study field "Law" has a clear formal structure and logical connection, the content of the study programmes requires better alignment. This alignment is necessary to ensure that students can successfully pass the Uniform State Professional Qualification Examination of a Lawyer (State Exam) and obtain the professional qualification needed for traditional legal professions. Additionally, it is essential to meet international standards to enable graduates to access the global labor market. Increasing the harmonization of study programmes and enhancing the international components of

the study field are crucial steps toward improving the competitiveness of BIA graduates in a broader job market. There is insufficient interconnectivity between the bachelor and professional master's study programmes, which may hinder students' preparation for the State Exam. The lack of harmonized standards for assessing students in the study courses that are part of the State Exam results in inconsistencies in student preparedness (see section 1.1.5 of this report).

1.1.2.

The SAR submitted to the experts contains two SWOT analysis: one within the BIA Strategy of activities and development for 2022-2025 (https://bsa.edu.lv/docs/nolikums/strategija_2022_en.pdf, p. 9) and the other within part 2.1.2 of the SAR. During the site visit, the experts learned that SAR's development primarily falls under the responsibility of programme directors, with minimal involvement from QA personnel, and unclear engagement of students, employers, and alumni (the target groups were not involved in the development of the document).

Discrepancies were noted between the two SWOTs; for instance, the linguistic competences of professors are noted as a weakness in the strategy's SWOT but are absent in the more recent analysis, despite only 12 teachers receiving certification at the required level of English. Additionally, while the institution highlights the ability to balance work and study activities as a strength, it was observed that students at all levels struggle with time management between work, family, and studies. Poor results of the students at the state exam are not mentioned in the part of threats or weaknesses. These aspects indicate a rather formal approach taken by BIA towards the analysis of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats without addressing critical issues comprehensively.

To reduce the weaknesses of the study field and to avoid threats by exploring the academy's strengths and external opportunities, BIA has elaborated development plan for the study field (2023 to 2029). The plan does not mention possible improvements relating to the preparation of students for the State Exam or better harmonization of the study programmes for the same purpose. There is commitment to sign new cooperation agreements with partner universities in the EU and other countries to build stronger Erasmus+ capacity. However, there is no clear vision on how BIA will promote Erasmus+ long-term mobility activities, as the staff is aware that the students are unwilling to participate in the Erasmus + activities due to job or family reasons.

To improve the accuracy and comprehensiveness of the SWOT analysis, it is recommended to revise the procedures and practices to ensure broader stakeholder involvement in strategic self-assessment and related documents. Engaging a diverse group of stakeholders, including students, alumni, and employers, can provide more nuanced insights and help identify areas needing improvement. This approach would lead to a more thorough and actionable SWOT analysis, ultimately enhancing the strategic direction and effectiveness of the study programmes.

1.1.3.

The management structure of the study field "Law" is an integral part of the BIA management system (see SAR Annex No.1. Structure of BIA University.jpg). BIA Study Quality Assurance System was approved at the BIA Senate meeting on April 27, 2023. This system categorizes the processes of study field management into three groups: top management processes, essential education management processes, and resource management processes.

The study programme director plays a central role in the development of the study field, receiving support from other administrative staff. Since BIA is a private institution and its governance is centralized, the decision-making takes place quickly. However, during the discussions with different

target groups the experts observed a lack of involvement in the decision-making procedure of academic staff, students and other stakeholders. For example, employers have not participated in the discussions on improvement of the study programmes from their perspective; there was no collective workshop for academic staff after students failed to pass the State Exam (see more in section 1.1.5. of this report). Their limited participation is a significant gap, as their insights and feedback are crucial for aligning the study field with current industry standards and academic advancements.

1.1.4.

According to the SAR (section 2.1.) the "Enrolment rules and matriculation procedure at the Baltic International Academy" regulates the enrolment of graduates to the BIA. An enrolment commission is established for the current academic year by order of the BIA Rector or branch director. Prospective students are informed about admission rules through the BIA homepage. The recognition of professional experience and previously acquired formal and non-formal education for students who wish to continue their studies at the BIA at a later stage is regulated by the respective Regulation of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Latvia.

Currently, students entering the doctoral programme are not required to have English language skills. Instead, professional English is taught as part of the doctoral curriculum. However, proficiency in foreign languages is critical for the internationalization of doctoral studies, enabling students to participate in internships abroad and access research from other countries. Additionally, publishing in Scopus-indexed journals, a requirement for completing doctoral studies, is not feasible in the Latvian language for the field of law. Given these considerations, it is advisable to establish a minimum English or other foreign language proficiency threshold for admission to the doctoral programme. This requirement would ensure that students are better prepared for the demands of international academic and professional environments. Enhancing language skills prior to admission would not only improve the quality of research and publications but also broaden students' opportunities for global collaboration and career advancement.

Additionally, during the meeting with alumni in the regions, the interest in continuing their academic careers with doctoral studies was demonstrated. However, there was limited knowledge about the possibilities of becoming a doctoral student and conducting teaching practice in the region without the necessity to go to Riga. Given that BIA needs academic staff in the regions, it is advisable to make a concerted effort to target alumni as prospective doctoral candidates. Enhancing communication about doctoral opportunities, providing clear and accessible information, and offering support can help cultivate a pipeline of qualified academic professionals who can contribute locally.

1.1.5.

According to the SAR (section 2.1.5.), the description of the study course specifies the scope and content of students' independent work and the methods of its assessment. The BIA e-environment publishes the assessment requirements, criteria, and methods for giving grades for each course of study and an explanation of the grades. The institution's teaching staff employ various methods to assess student skills and knowledge, including written tests, oral discussions, and papers. While the evaluation strategy across the programmes is somewhat standardized for better students' comprehension, the teaching staff still enjoys academic freedom in choosing methods for assessing student skills in their respective study courses.

However, there are concerns regarding how these methods align with actual competences' assessment. Notably, lecture participation is frequently used as a basis for assessment without a

clear explanation of how this participation translates into the evaluation of specific skills and knowledge (for example, study courses “Administrative procedure law”, “Administrative law”, “Insurance law”, etc.). This approach does not align with ECTS requirements, which emphasize the assessment of learning outcomes over mere physical presence.

Additionally, it is essential to establish minimum harmonized assessment criteria for the study subjects that are part of the State Exam, incorporating theoretical questions and case studies similar to those in the State Exam. During the site visit, the expert team learned that one academic staff member already implements such practices. However, other academic staff members teaching law subjects were unaware of any systematic discussions reviewing the results of the State Exam and students’ success. There were also no systematic guidelines on how to adapt assessments in the study courses to ensure that students simulate the State Exam during their evaluations at BIA. Implementing these measures is crucial to increasing the success rate in the State Exam, thereby opening access to traditional legal professions and ensuring the completion of the professional master programme.

Consequently, it is recommended to revise the assessment strategies to ensure they are focused on evaluating the competences acquired by students, rather than their attendance. Additionally, in the professional master programme the relevance of assessment methods and procedures should be revised to make sure that the students pass State Exam.

1.1.6.

The system addressing academic integrity violations and plagiarism at BIA is based on the BIA-approved Code of Academic Integrity and Ethics, applicable to students, researchers, and academic staff. When signs of plagiarism are detected in a student's work, the lecturer reports to the study programme director. The Academic Integrity and Ethics Committee handles violations reported by academic staff and reviews reports of student violations. There is an example in the SAR demonstrating how the system works in practice - in June 2023, the Academic Integrity and Ethics Commission considered the issue of student, who used someone else's work while completing a relevant study course, which was announced by lecturer (section 2.1.6 of the SAR).

However, there are still gaps in the regulation and practice related to the use of emerging technologies in study and research. Specifically, there are no clear rules or instructions for academic staff or students regarding the use of AI tools. With the increasing prevalence of AI tools in education, it is crucial to establish guidelines outlining acceptable use, limitations, and consequences for misuse. These tools can include AI-based writing assistants, plagiarism checkers, and content generators, which can significantly impact academic integrity. Without specific policies, there is a risk of misuse, such as submitting AI-generated content as original work. To address this, BIA should develop comprehensive guidelines that define the appropriate use of AI tools, educate both staff and students on ethical considerations, and establish clear consequences for violations. This will ensure that the use of AI tools supports learning and innovation while maintaining academic integrity.

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

While BIA excels in offering a comprehensive range of study levels and aligning its curriculum with the Latvian legal system, several critical weaknesses need to be addressed to enhance the overall effectiveness of its legal education programmes. On the one hand, the BIA promotes academic freedom allowing to choose teaching methods, but the current challenges faced by students in passing the State Exam highlight potential gaps in curriculum alignment and teaching strategies.

The lack of interconnectivity between bachelor's and master's programmes due to unharmonized assessment standards complicates student preparedness and success. Insufficient stakeholder engagement may limit the practicality and relevance of the curriculum. To improve, BIA must refine its curriculum, ensure compliance with ECTS standards, foster greater involvement from graduates and employers, and establish standardized assessment criteria, thereby ensuring its programmes are both relevant and effective in preparing students for traditional legal professions.

Strengths:

- 1) Comprehensive study levels: all levels of studies are offered, starting from short-cycle programmes to doctoral studies.
- 2) Reflection of regional needs: graduates in the regions support regional growth and stability.

Weaknesses:

- 1) No access to the regulated legal professions: since students have problems passing the State Exam, there may be potential deficiencies in teaching and learning methods and curriculum alignment.
- 2) Unharmonized assessment standards: there are no harmonized standards for assessing students in the study courses that are part of the State Exam, leading to inconsistencies in student preparedness.
- 3) Non-compliant assessment practices: participation in lectures is used as part of the assessment, which is contrary to ECTS requirements.
- 4) Insufficient stakeholder engagement: graduates and employers are not sufficiently engaged in the development of the study field and decision making, limiting the relevance and practicality of the curriculum.
- 5) Gaps in regulation of academic ethics: there are gaps in the regulation and practice regarding the use of AI tools, in study and research, necessitating the establishment of clear guidelines to ensure ethical use and maintain academic integrity.

1.2. Efficiency of the Internal Quality Assurance System

Analysis

1.2.1.

BIA has established and implemented a quality policy, which is publicly available on the BIA website: https://bsa.edu.lv/docs/nolikums/quality_policy.pdf. The BIA quality assurance system outlines and references the goals for quality assurance, defining roles, responsibilities, tasks, and follow-up processes. This system is designed to achieve the aims and learning outcomes of the study fields and implemented study programmes.

During the on-site visit's meeting with the quality assurance (QA) management, it was mentioned that BIA's quality assurance system will align with the UK standard Investors in Excellence once the implementation procedure is finalized. Additionally, a new quality assurance manager was appointed in 2023. This manager brings extensive experience from various sectors and is knowledgeable in implementing standards such as ISO 9001.

Various groups of stakeholder representatives have noted during the on-site visit that, since the last accreditation process, there have been significant improvements in the QA mechanisms, which were previously quite weak.

Appointing a responsible person that takes care of QA system implementation in the HEI as well as

formal system of monitoring student satisfaction with their studies online on the Moodle platform after every study course were mentioned as examples of such improvements during meetings with management of the branches and in Riga and QA representative. The established system demonstrates strong potential for ensuring continuous improvement, development, and efficient performance of the study fields and their associated study programmes. However, additional effort from the entire institution is necessary to address certain shortcomings in the implementation of mechanisms that ensure continuous improvement, particularly in involving stakeholders in the QA processes. A detailed analysis of these aspects is provided in the following sections.

During the on-site visit, the expert group discovered that the studies' delivery at BIA is specifically tailored to meet the students' needs. This includes a flexible study mode that allows for a balanced 50/50 organization of online and in-person learning. Although students appreciate this approach, ensuring the quality of studies requires a tailored quality assurance approach - specific quality guidelines and mechanisms for organizing the learning process where part of the studies is conducted online and in hybrid mode. The methodology of teaching and learning in these formats is different and requires adjustments. This necessitates not only the development of tailored teaching approaches but also specific training for personnel focusing on the methodology of teaching and learning in online and hybrid environments. Additionally, the learning environment in Moodle must be adjusted to accommodate different modes of study, ensuring that it supports both online and hybrid learning effectively. Clear guidelines and specialized training are essential to ensure that the quality of education remains high across all modes of delivery. Although a standardized course structure within Moodle exists, currently Moodle is primarily used as a database of study materials rather than as a comprehensive learning management system to assist in acquiring knowledge and organizing the learning process.

1.2.2.

The procedures for the development, approval, and review of the study programmes at BIA have been defined and approved by the BIA Senate in the governing document for the approval, development of study programmes (https://bsa.edu.lv/docs/nolikums/Studiju_programmu_izstrade_09072020.pdf). However, there is still room for improvement in the established feedback mechanisms.

First, the feedback loop remains incomplete across all branches where the "Law" study field programmes are implemented. Meetings with student representatives revealed that students are involved in the QA processes, with their study course evaluations being analyzed regularly once per semester. Based on student suggestions and comments, changes can be made to the study content or the form of the study process (https://bsa.edu.lv/docs/nolikums/Studiju_programmu_izstrade_09072020.pdf). However, BIA has not established mechanisms for systematic informing and providing feedback to students and other stakeholders regarding survey results and the follow-up changes. This fact was confirmed by BIA representatives at the administrative level during on-site meetings.

Additionally, the expert group learned during meetings that alumni engagement in enhancing study programmes is minimal, both through surveys and participation in programme development meetings. Graduates indicated that while there is communication, it occurs through informal channels. While alumni maintain informal contact, there is no official alumni association to facilitate or stimulate their involvement in these activities. Establishing and implementing strategic initiatives to create an official alumni association would provide a structured platform for alumni to contribute meaningfully to the continuous improvement of study programmes and the broader academic community. This would not only strengthen ties between the institution and its graduates but also

leverage their experiences and insights for mutual benefit.

During meetings with employer representatives, it was noted that employers are actively involved in internships and work placements for BIA graduates and students. Their primary involvement in BIA's QA mechanisms is through internship surveys, which are used to evaluate students' knowledge and preparedness for the job market. Additionally, some employers participate in the evaluation of BIA students' theses, providing valuable industry perspectives and feedback. However, none of the employers in all three groups reported participating in the employer survey. This indicates that, despite the surveys' existence, it is not systematically conducted.

1.2.3.

Based on the information provided during the on-site visit meeting with the QA manager and information accessible in the SAR (p. 35), BIA has a mechanism in place for submitting student complaints and suggestions. BIA Senate has developed and approved a document titled "Procedure for submission and consideration of student applications, proposals, and complaints" (https://bsa.edu.lv/docs/nolikums/BSA_sudziba_09072020.pdf).

During a meeting with the BIA management, it was confirmed that students can directly reach out to Members of the Board for any complaints or issues. Students may come alone or accompanied by the study field director, with prior notice during visiting hours. According to a QA representative, complaints submitted online are first reviewed by the Study Centre and the study programme director. Typically, students prefer to approach the study programme director in such situations. If a complaint involves a specific lecturer, the Ethics Commission reviews the matter to determine the validity of the complaint. For complaints involving lecturers who also teach at the Daugavpils branch, the branch manager participates in the decision-making process.

While the procedures for student complaints and appeals are in place, it was noted by students that such procedures are rarely utilized. The expert group during the on-site visit clarified in various meetings, including with academic staff and students, that oral exams are not recorded. In the experts' opinion, this complicates the appeal procedure, as there is no actual proof of how the exam took place. Thus, enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of the appeal process is crucial.

In summary, while procedures for student appeals exist, certain practices may discourage their use therefore may not be considered as effective, as, for example, the lack of recordings for oral exams makes it difficult to objectively assess appeals, highlighting the need for improvements in the appeal process.

1.2.4.

Based on the information gathered during the on-site visit, it can be stated that BIA has established a unified system for collecting and analyzing statistical data, which is collected by various responsible parties. The BIA Data Centre processes and analyzes this information and statistical data. Once analyzed, the data is summarized, and the results are delivered to the BIA Board, management, the head of the study field, and study programme directors during operational meetings or directly via communication channels.

During the on-site visit the experts discovered that surveys are not systematically conducted for alumni and employers. For employers, internship surveys are primarily used to evaluate students' performance, rather than conducting separate, comprehensive surveys with employers for their preparedness for the job market. Therefore, it can be concluded that the feedback collection, analysis, and presentation process is not systematic. Additionally, the results of these surveys are

not consistently communicated back to the stakeholders involved in a summarized form.

Furthermore, the experts' group concluded that BIA has not established key performance indicators (KPIs) and lacks a process for collecting data to measure the achievement of set goals. This absence of KPIs and a structured measurement process reveals a significant gap in the institution's ability to systematically track and improve its performance based on measurable outcomes. Addressing this gap is crucial, as it is essential to compare and measure the KPIs between Riga and its branches to ensure an equal level of quality in studies and student satisfaction. Improving this aspect will enable BIA to better monitor progress, implement improvements, and maintain consistent educational standards across all locations.

In summary, while BIA has a framework for data collection and analysis, the system lacks comprehensiveness and formalization, particularly in the areas of alumni and employer feedback. The absence of KPIs and a robust process for measuring goal achievement further hampers the institution's ability to ensure continuous improvement and accountability. Addressing these gaps would enhance the effectiveness of BIA's quality assurance mechanisms and its overall institutional performance.

1.2.5.

The relevant information regarding the study programmes offered at BIA can be easily accessed on the website in both Latvian and English. Additionally, the website is also available in Russian. Information on the accreditation status of the "Law" study field programmes is accessible on the website, with the description stating: "Study direction 'Science of Law' is carried out according to BIA License No.04030. The new accreditation process has started. Agreement Nr.6-2023/11-098. In addition, please be informed that in accordance with the letter No 4-16e/24/17 of the Ministry of Education and Science, you have the right to: 1) to continue and complete your studies in another University programme in the accredited field of study; 2) to complete your studies in another higher education institution, e.g. in the one with which an agreement has been concluded in accordance with Section 55 (8) of the Higher Education Law; 3) take a break from studies." It is desirable that BIA updates the information in the VIIS system in order to reflect the currently realized study programs in the field of study "Law" after the accreditation process ends.

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

BIA has a publicly available quality policy ensuring continuous improvement and efficient performance of study programmes, though it lacks a formal feedback system for graduates and employers. An effective student complaints mechanism exists, but the absence of oral exam recordings complicates the appeals process. BIA has not established KPIs or processes to measure goal achievement. There are no standard quality requirements for blended and hybrid studies.

Strengths:

1) Quality enhancement measures: additional steps have been taken to strengthen the quality of studies, aiming to align with the UK standards Investors in Excellence, demonstrating a commitment to continuous improvement of studies quality.

Weaknesses:

1) Lack of graduate and employer surveys' performance: graduate and employer surveys are not systematically conducted, missing critical systematic feedback from these key stakeholders that could inform study programme improvements and alignment with market needs.

- 2) Incomplete feedback system: there is no systematized process for providing feedback to stakeholders on the improvements made, leaving the quality loop unclosed and potentially diminishing the effectiveness of the feedback collected.
- 3) Loop in the appeal system: oral exams are not recorded, preventing students from fully relying on the existing system of appeals, thus limiting transparency and accountability.
- 4) Lack of standards for blended and hybrid studies: there are no standard requirements for blended studies established at BIA, which could lead to inconsistencies in the delivery and quality of education across different modes of study.

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: Partially compliant

The internal quality system is in place and has seen various improvements since the previous accreditation. However, several improvements are still needed. The assessment strategy in different study programmes must be reviewed to better prepare students for the State Exam, oral exams must be recorded to enable the use of the appeal procedure, the assessments must be fully related to the achievement of intended learning outcomes rather than merely stimulating participation in lectures. There is no systematic gathering of data from graduates and employers, so BIA lacks comprehensive data on the relevance and effectiveness of its study programmes. Additionally, BIA has not established KPIs associated with the strategic goals, and there is no process to collect data or measure the achievement of set goals. BIA lacks a comprehensive internal professional qualification development system.

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The BIA has established a quality policy and procedures for assuring the quality of higher education. It is supported by such documents as quality policy - https://bsa.edu.lv/docs/nolikums/quality_policy.pdf. There are various procedures implemented such as submission of complaints and proposals and review and development of study programmes that are specified in the analysis.

- 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

BIA has accepted the mechanism for the development and internal approval of the study programmes of the BIA:

https://bsa.edu.lv/docs/nolikums/Studiju_programmu_izstrade_09072020.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: Partially compliant

Formally, the criteria, conditions, and procedures for ensuring the achievement of learning outcomes have been developed and are publicly available. BIA study results developed and

approved at BIA Senate on 09 July 2020 at the meeting of the BIA Senate, Minutes No.143.

The criteria for the evaluation of students' performance are reflected in course descriptions, which are developed by the respective course of study and accessible in the annex sections of all the study programmes implemented in the study field of law.

However, there is a need to review the assessment strategy to better prepare students for the State Exam, enable the use of the appeal procedure in case of oral exams, and ensure that assessments are fully related to the achievement of intended learning outcomes rather than merely stimulating participation in lectures.

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

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

There are some positive aspects already in place. For example, as noted in the SAR (p. 56), there is a support mechanism for academic personnel and for the scientific work development of doctoral students. This includes assistance with publications in recognized databases such as EBSCO and Web of Science. However, BIA lacks a comprehensive internal professional qualification development system. This deficiency highlights the need for a more robust and systematic approach to support the continuous professional growth of its academic staff and students, ensuring that they are well-equipped to contribute to and benefit from the institution's academic and research goals.

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

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

Due to the lack of systematic involvement of employers and graduates in quality processes, BIA lacks comprehensive data on the relevance and effectiveness of its study programmes. The key performance indicators are not related directly to the main goal of the study field.

- 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: Partially compliant

The BIA partly ensures continuous improvement, development, and efficient performance of the study field whilst implementing its quality assurance systems. The fact that there is lack of graduate and employer involvement in the QA processes demonstrates that there is lack of proper continuous improvement because two crucial stakeholders are not involved properly.

1.3. Resources and Provision of the Study Field

Analysis

1.3.1.

According to Section 77 of the Law on Higher Education Institutions of the Republic of Latvia, the founder of a higher education institution shall provide financial resources and the control of the utilization thereof for the continuous operation of the higher education institution, as well as for the fulfilling of the tasks determined by the founder.

According to information received from BIA (SAR – section 2.3.1), financial resources of the private Higher Education Institution are made up of private funds as well as the other revenues acquired owing to the activities of the BIA. As evidenced from the annual reports (Annex No. 6 Baltics International Academy revenues to section 2.3.1 of the SAR) BIA operates with a small profit within the last 3-year period. According to the financial stability indicators and reports provided by BIA (BIA Financial Stability Indicators - Annex to SAR), BIA employees' activities are stimulated by raising funds in the form of research projects and tuition fees, while maintaining the quality of the services offered and the ethics of academic work. The academic staff engaged is paid for its work in accordance with its qualification and quality of work. BIA owns the real estate where the educational facilities in Riga, Daugavpils and Liepaja are located.

Overall, the funding system is sufficient. According to the financial reports provided by BIA mentioned above, the financial position of the study field is stable. However, declining student numbers as evidenced by the statistics on students during the reporting period (SAR – section 1.1, table 1.1.6) and declining tuition revenue in study field (Income from tuition fees of the BIA Study Field “Science of Law” - Annex to SAR) call for a perceptive response from university authorities. Therefore while the study field funding system has been reasonably effective so far, the declining number of students is a serious threat to its effectiveness if the downward trend in student numbers is not stopped.

1.3.2.

BIA carries out its activities in Valērijas Seiles street 4, Riga, Liedaga street 3, Liepaja and Dzelzceļa street 3, Daugavpils. All premises are owned by BIA. Buildings contain auditoriums, administrative offices, library. As noted during on-site visits the premises are in good order. Some auditoriums feature projectors, whiteboards, computers, video conferencing and other equipment. There are rooms with computers available for students and staff, although some computers are relatively outdated (especially in the branches). Wireless network is also available in the whole building (SAR – section 2.3.2 and the annexes: Provision of premises for study and administrative purposes Daugavpils_09052023, Provision of premises for study and administrative purposes Liepaja_09052023, Provision of premises for study and administrative purposes Riga_09052023).

As students may join lectures remotely, the facilities are equipped with basic video conference tools. However, the level of equipment could be enhanced, especially given the increasing importance of hybrid and online study modes at the institution. Upgrading the facilities to better support hybrid teaching, where some students attend online and others are in the classroom, is essential. This would significantly enhance the learning experience for all students, ensuring that remote participants receive the same quality of education and interaction as those physically present.

As evidenced by the financial distribution system procedures submitted by BIA (section 2.3.1 of the SAR and the Annexes: Baltics International Academy revenues; Expenses of the Baltic International Academy in the period 2020 – 2022) and on-site interviews with staff of BIA, a very simplified unified system for provision of materials is in place. As stated in the SAR (section 2.3.3) the head of the library compiles received applications and coordinates the procurement budget with the Board. After the budget is agreed, the necessary books are purchased.

1.3.3.

BIA library is included in the Library Register of the Ministry of Culture and is a member of the Association of Latvian Academic Libraries (LATABA), which gives the opportunity to use the library funds of all 25 LATABA members. According to information received from BIA during interviews and procedures provided by BIA (document BSA bibliotēkas krājuma Tiesību zinātne. Jurisprudence

kopsavilkums-analīze) library employees actively participate in events that contribute to raising professional qualifications: they study in methodical courses, follow changes in the library industry, participate in professional scientific conferences, visit the libraries of other universities both in Latvia and abroad, follow the publication of new books, and both students and teaching staff are informed about them. The system in place is sufficient for the study fields' needs. The website of the BIA library contains information about the library, a link to its electronic catalogue and terms of use, as well as information about library's new acquisitions.

Library provides sufficient number of books in Latvian as well as access to relevant electronic legal journals (Jurista Vards, iTiesības), but it would be advisable to ensure more books and access to electronic legal libraries in English. In certain areas of law books in English are particularly outdated (e.g. European and International law). It should be noted that libraries are also located in the branches and, although somewhat less well stocked (especially in Liepāja), provide reasonable access to literature and basic databases. There is a possibility to send books from Riga library to branches.

1.3.4.

As stated by SAR (section 2.3.4) and evidenced from the visits to facilities and on-site interviews, BIA uses the Moodle e-learning platform in the study process, which enables students to connect to the study processes at any time and from any place. According to BIA, for each study course, the lecturer develops a course description in accordance with the BIA-approved regulations, study course materials, which include theoretical material, student self-examination tasks, independent work tasks, criteria for assessing learning outcomes. The lecturer uploads the course materials to their Moodle classroom, including survey templates that can be used by the teaching staff to provide feedback upon completion of the course, making it easier for teaching staff to create the course in Moodle. There are online and hybrid lectures in place by using Big Blue Button or in some cases Zoom. Students of BIA comment that access to lectures remotely is easy and convenient. If the study courses have video lecture recordings, they are integrated into the Moodle study courses using the Big Blue Button. Overall, the digital resources are sufficient for the study process.

1.3.5.

Based on the information provided in the SAR (section 2.3.5 of the SAR) and the academic staff regulation document provided by BIA, BIA has a flexible recruitment policy as stated in the recruitment policy (see Regulations on Academic Positions of the Baltic International Academy - Annex to the section 1.4 of the SAR) that includes the employment of experienced practitioners without scientific degrees. To improve and diversify the study process, particularly in teaching applied knowledge, BIA supports the use of teaching staff and guest lecturers on short-term contracts. There are both elected teaching staff (academic staff) and guest teaching staff. Notably, the recruitment for individual posts is conducted through open competitions, with elections held for a fixed period of six years, which helps mobilize the elected staff members. In addition, the BIA has a Personnel Policy approved by the BIA Senate - Minute No. 140 of 23 October 2019, with amendments of 23 February 2023; Minute No. 156 (see Annex to the section 1.4 of the SAR).

1.3.6.

The qualifications of the teaching staff involved in the study field generally meet the requirements of the Law on Higher Education Institutions as evidenced by the list of staff annexed to the SAR. According to BIA, lecturers' work is evaluated based on the level of knowledge and skills acquired by students. Student surveys are used to gather opinions on the lecturers' performance and the content and implementation of the study course. The policy for the professional development of employees in general is defined (section 2.3.6 of the SAR), for the implementation of which the

system of stimulating and supporting the scientific activity of academic staff, master's and doctoral students has been adopted (see: <https://bsa.edu.lv/index.php/en/system-of-promotion-of-scientific-activity.html>).

However, during the on-site visit the experts' team learned that there is no follow-up system for the development of professional or didactic competences if deficiencies are identified or if professors feel the need for training. While participation in conferences and publications, for which BIA provides some financial support, constitutes a form of self-training, it only addresses a small portion of the professional and didactic development needs.

Therefore, there is a pressing need to develop comprehensive training programmes for teaching staff. These programmes should address both initial orientation for newcomers and continuous professional development to sustain educational excellence and support academic growth. The implemented language training courses are a positive example of such initiatives and given BIA's appreciation of the value of the internationalization of education, systemic improvement of foreign language skills is encouraged. In the meetings with the staff, it was noted that improving their English language proficiency would further facilitate their work and enhance their ability to engage in international academic activities. However, training should be systematic and address the pressing needs of the academic staff, both common trends that need to be systematically addressed by the Academia (e.g., the use of AI or quality of hybrid teaching) and particular needs of individual professors.

For instance, AI and technology tools are recognized for their potential to enhance teaching, learning, and research. However, it was found during the on-site visit that neither students nor faculty possess the competences to effectively utilize these tools in academic processes. Integrating training for these competences into the curriculum and faculty development programmes is recommended. This comprehensive approach will ensure that faculty members are well-equipped to meet the evolving demands of modern education and technology integration.

1.3.7.

As evidenced during interviews and the study timetables BIA has provided, BIA academic staff possess academic degrees and positions that meet the minimum requirements (section 2.3.7 of the SAR and the Annexes to that section: Teaching staff of the Science of Law field of study.xlsx; CV_ENG.zip). The standard workload is 1000 academic hours per year. If academic staff are simultaneously involved in administrative roles (such as rector, vice-rectors), their workload is limited to 50% or 70% for those holding positions like heads of study fields, study programmes, branch directors, and other administrative personnel. The Study Department and the Vice-Rector of Studies are responsible for monitoring and controlling the teaching load to ensure it is reasonable. They provide timely information to the Rector and the BIA Board for decision-making and reallocation of the teaching load, as a disproportionate teaching load may negatively impact the quality of teaching. The research load of the teaching staff involved in the course of study is reflected in section 2.4.4 of the SAR. During the on-site visit, academic staff did not indicate that they were overloaded with teaching or research. The use of the Moodle platform and the ability to teach online are advantageous for lecturers, facilitating more flexibility in their schedules.

1.3.8.

Students praise the BIA study programmes and staff, specifically noting the individual approach, flexibility in meeting students' needs, and the convenience of using online tools. The teaching staff work individually with students, providing consultations, offering individual tasks, and suggesting additional literature and study materials as needed. The BIA staff consider students' individual

features, characteristics, skills, and abilities in their daily work, supporting diverse development and contributing to personal growth and tolerance.

However, the infrastructure at the branches is not equipped for students with disabilities. Additionally, the institution lacks a formal policy for students with special needs. Although some individual needs have been addressed directly by the director, a more systematic approach is highly recommended. In the long term, it is advisable to adapt learning facilities for accessibility and develop specific policies and procedures for reporting and addressing special needs. This will ensure that all students, regardless of their physical capabilities, have equal access to educational opportunities and support services.

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

The resources and provisions for the field of study are deemed adequate. The financial situation is stable, although it requires constant monitoring in the context of falling student numbers. BIA's strengths include a flexible approach to remote learning that accommodates students' diverse schedules. However, the institution faces challenges such as limited infrastructure for hybrid studies, insufficient English materials in the library, and inadequate accessibility for students with disabilities. Additionally, there is no systematic approach for the professional and didactic development of the teaching staff, highlighting the need for a structured professional development programme.

Strengths:

1) Flexible approach for distance learning and meeting students' needs: BIA's adaptability in offering remote and flexible study options is highly valued by students, accommodating their diverse schedules and responsibilities.

Weaknesses:

1) Limited infrastructure for hybrid studies: the existing facilities are not fully optimized to support a seamless hybrid learning experience.

2) Limited availability of materials in English in the Library: the number of study materials available in the most spoken foreign languages within the EU, such as English, appears to be insufficient.

3) No full accessibility for students with disabilities: the facilities are not equipped to accommodate students with disabilities and other special needs.

4) No system for professional and didactic development of the teaching staff: there is currently no systematic approach for the professional and didactic development of the teaching staff at BIA.

1.4. Scientific Research and Artistic Creation

Analysis

1.4.1.

The directions of scientific research at BIA (Riga, Liepāja, and Daugavpils) are clearly outlined in the SAR (section 2.4.1.). The six areas of research interests include contemporary trends in the modernization of law and civil rights, the development of the criminal process and its differentiation in Latvia, development trends of European Union law and their influence on the Latvian legal framework, the legal culture of a multicultural society, popular voting and legislative initiatives of voters, and medical treatment and patient rights in Latvia. The latter is added as an additional separate area of research in comparison to the previous accreditation. The doctoral study programme focuses predominantly on in-depth studies in criminal law, civil law, and to a certain extent in international law, with a particular emphasis on the prevention of money laundering and

terrorism.

These research areas align with the programme offerings and comply with the general aims, goals, and objectives of the study field as defined by BIA's general strategy. They are also relevant to the socio-economic environment, addressing current legal challenges and contributing to the development of the legal framework in Latvia.

1.4.2.

The relationship between scientific research and the study process is not clearly defined. The SAR offers only general information about the BIA Science Council's objectives without detailing how specific research by academic staff contributes to the development of study programmes. Additionally, the report does not link teaching staff publications to course descriptions.

The attached list of publications from 2021-2023 in the SAR is useful for identifying research relevant to the study programmes. Notably, research in criminal law and criminology is strongly represented at BIA, with numerous publications by teaching staff. While medical law is also well represented in the publications (predominantly in the research of one staff member), it is only minimally incorporated into the study programmes (e. g., "Medical law" subject is offered in Academic master's and Doctoral study programmes).

The SAR (section 2.4.4) indicates that "in total, 30 out of 46 teaching staff (65,2%) have scientific publications. The percentage of engagement is slightly smaller among the teaching staff in the field of law - out of 22 academic staff members 13 teaching staff members published (59 %) (calculation made based on additional information provided by BIA after the on-site visit). However, a significant number of these publications - over 110 out of 179 - do not concern the field of law. The data is too generalized to determine the number of academic staff involved at the Riga site versus the Liepāja and Daugavpils branches. In the meeting with the academic staff at the Riga site only one elected professor with a PhD in law teaching legal subjects participated. Therefore, it was difficult to assess how students at these branches benefit from the research outcomes.

Experts acknowledge that involving teaching staff from fields beyond law and their research achievements enhances the quality of education. However, since the primary goal of evaluation is legal education, the focus of evaluation remains on legal research and its alignment with the legal subjects being taught.

1.4.3.

During the reporting period (2022-2023), BIA teaching staff published 179 publications, among which publications in various international journals and collections, including those indexed in internationally recognized databases, as well as 3 monographs (Table 4.1 of Section 2.4.4 of SAR). The publications appear in journals in a number of countries, such as Latvia, Great Britain, United States, Slovenia, Ukraine, Lithuania, Kazakhstan, Turkey, Russia, and Belorussia, which demonstrates the increasing potential of BIA researchers. This is demonstrated by the language of publications - over 50% of them are written in English, over 30 % - in Latvian, others in other languages.

It should be noted that although the number of publications and expanding geography in general is sufficient to demonstrate the research potential, a significant number of the publications in the field of law (except for one young scholar) are still nationally focused. Around 30 % of the publications are conference proceedings, which although in English, often are mostly based on conferences taking place in Latvia.

During the site visit, the managerial staff in Riga highlighted the development of a research policy that encourages publication in the journals indexed in Scopus and the Web of Science (WoS) databases. The financial promotion system supports this policy, which has already begun to yield positive results, as evidenced by an increase in publications in these indexed journals in general, which is a positive development.

Following the on-site visit, BIA provided additional information regarding academic staff publications in law journals indexed in Scopus and WoS (BIA study field "Law" information for experts). This data helped assess the policy's impact on the law field. Based on the data provided, during the reporting period 2021-2023 six publications (out of 24 in total in WoS and Scopus reported in section 2.4.4 of the SAR) in the field of law were published in the journals / books indexed in Scopus and WoS, since one publication indicated in the list ("MAN Trolleybuses in Ukraine (1939-1951): <...>") does pertain to law. Of these six, five were primarily authored by one early-career researcher. Three of them were published in "International Comparative Jurisprudence" and one in "Právněhistorické Studie" (both indexed in Scopus since 2019, Q4). The other two publications were part of conference proceedings or collections of articles.

These data show that publication in Scopus and WoS-indexed journals in the field of law or other journals contributing to the development of legal research on an international scale, which is fundamental for quality studies today, is still in its infancy, and internationalization in research remains very limited.

During the on-site visit, experts also learned that doctoral students are required to publish in a WoS, ERIH or Scopus-indexed journal to complete their studies. This requirement is commendable as it promotes the internationalization of research among early-career researchers. However, so far, only one doctoral student has fulfilled this requirement. Based on the information provided by BIA after the on-site visit, nine doctoral students have produced publications, with one doctoral student being the main author of more than half (26 out of 49) of the publications over the reporting period. Six out of nine academic staff members have published only in conference proceedings (18 out of 23 publications in this group).

During the reporting period, the teaching staff were involved in three projects (2.4.4. section in the SAR). However, only one of these projects can be classified as research-focused: "Public Health and Medical Law of European Countries at the End of the 19th - Beginning of the 20th Century." The other two projects were more oriented towards capacity building through professional training ("Increasing the Efficiency of the Resocialization System") and the development of study courses ("Reducing the Fragmentation of Study Programmes and Promoting the Internationalization of Studies at Riga Stradina University"). This indicates a very limited engagement in externally funded research activities, in particular in the field of law.

The SAR indicates that the academic staff participated in 88 conferences during the reporting period (see table 4.1 in section 2.4.4 in the SAR). Notably, 20 out of 46 teaching staff members (43.4%) participated in international scientific conferences, with staff attending 59 European and international congresses, conferences, and symposia (section 2.4.4 in the SAR). Some specific examples are provided in the SAR, such as participation in the international scientific conference "Science and Education in Globalization (SCEDU' 2022)" organized by Panevezys University of Applied Sciences in Lithuania. While the report does not provide a complete list of international conferences, participation in such conferences is noted in the CVs of the teaching staff. Additionally, the general list of teaching staff publications includes references to their work in scientific journals and conference proceedings. The level and impact of these conferences can only be partially

assessed through the list of publications where conference proceedings are mentioned. Firstly, many of the conferences are interdisciplinary with a broad scope, which limits their specific impact on the development of research in the field of law (for instance, "Science and Education in Globalization (SCEDU' 2022)" organized by Panevezys University of Applied Sciences in Lithuania). Secondly, most of these conferences, with a few exceptions, are organized in Latvia, which diminishes their contribution to the internationalization of research.

1.4.4.

The SAR (section 2.4.4) indicates that "in total, 30 out of 46 teaching staff (65,2%) have scientific publications". The percentage of engagement is slightly smaller among the teaching staff in the field of law – out of 22 academic staff members 13 teaching staff members published (59 %) (calculation made based on additional information provided by BIA after the on-site visit).

There is a system of bonuses in place for academic staff who publish extensively presented in the SAR (section 2.4.4.) and also on the website of BIA (<https://bsa.edu.lv/index.php/en/system-of-promotion-of-scientific-activity.html>). For instance, in accordance with the "Regulations on the Organisation of Work Remuneration and Types of Pedagogical Workload for Academic Staff and Visiting Lecturers at the BIA" the stimulation of scientific activity includes the organization and management of international conferences, publication of scientific papers in Web of Science, SCOPUS, and ERIH+ databases, coverage of costs for participation in international scientific conferences.

During the on-site visit, the researchers were aware of this system; however, those present at the meeting were already actively engaged in publishing. The researchers noted during the meeting that they can request financial assistance for conference participation and publication expenses.

While individual financial support is beneficial, it clearly does not foster collective research initiatives therefore it is not efficient to full extent. Providing research groups with grants for seed projects could stimulate international research. Moreover, the system lacks other crucial support mechanisms essential for ensuring high-quality research in foreign languages, such as editing services and assistance in contracting international publishing houses. This support is especially important for researchers who have limited proficiency in conducting research in English or other foreign languages.

1.4.5.

BIA presents in the SAR (section 2.4.5.) that master's and PhD students are actively involved in research not only through their final theses but also by preparing academic papers. At BIA, there is an annual student conference open to all students.

The SAR (Section 2.4.5) includes links to international conferences attended by students, however the number of students identified is quite low compared to the total number of students in the programmes. For instance, at the XIII International Scientific Conference "Time of Challenges and Opportunities: Problems, Solutions, and Prospects" held on the 12th–13th of May 2023, four students participated. Eleven students attended the XI International Research-to-Practice Conference "Society Transformations in Social and Human Sciences" on the 9th–10th of December 2022. Twelve students were involved in the XII International Scientific Conference "Time of Challenges and Opportunities: Problems, Solutions, and Prospects" on the 13th–14th of May 2022. Five students took part in the X International Research-to-Practice Conference "Society Transformations in Social and Human Sciences" on the 10th–11th of December 2021, and seven students attended the XI International Scientific Conference "Time of Challenges and Opportunities: Problems, Solutions, and Prospects" on

the 13th–15th of May 2021. There is no comprehensive record of students' scientific publications or their active participation in conferences.

PhD students must publish their research as a prerequisite for completing their studies. Typically, supervisors consult them in finding appropriate journals for publication. Additionally, PhD students receive financial support to participate in conferences. Based on the information provided after the on-site visit, nine doctoral students have produced publications, with one doctoral student being the main author of more than half (26 out of 49) of the publications over the reporting period. Six out of nine academic staff members have published only in conference proceedings (18 out of 23 publications in this group). The experts do agree that conference proceedings have certain value in the research process, however, in the field of law, journal publications are considered more impactful and ensuring more visibility than conference proceedings.

1.4.6.

The self-assessment report highlights the opportunity to utilize the BIA study field "Psychology" Laboratory of Neurocognitive Implicit Processes in the field of law. This initiative allows students and academic staff to engage in scientifically and practically significant research within Criminal Law. The research focuses on cognitive mechanisms related to victimology and the implicit attitudes of criminals regarding the reasons for committing crimes. This represents a valuable opportunity for interdisciplinary research for both students and academic staff. However, it must be noted that, as in the previous evaluation, there is still limited information available about this activity. The Academy is encouraged to establish a clear vision and strategy to effectively implement and advance this innovative interdisciplinary approach.

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

Overall, the research activities at BIA in the field of law align well with the study programmes offered. Both academic staff and students are generally involved in the research process and receive varying degrees of support from BIA. However, international cooperation is limited across all research areas (co-publications, projects, conferences) and is primarily focused on neighboring countries.

Strengths:

- 1) Strong research position in criminal law, criminology, and medical Law.
- 2) Involvement of students in research: students are systematically encouraged and participate in research activities.
- 3) Established support mechanisms for some research activities: BIA provides support mechanisms for research, such as funding, access to resources, and administrative assistance, which help facilitate and promote research activities among faculty and students.
- 4) A functioning doctoral school: the establishment and operation of a doctoral school provide a structured framework for supporting the development of future scholars and enhancing the institution's research capacity.

Weaknesses:

- 1) Weak internationalization of research activities: BIA's research activities lack strong international collaboration, which affects co-publications, joint projects, and participation in international conferences.
- 2) Limited participation in externally funded research projects: there is little involvement in research projects funded by external sources, both national and international, in particular in the field of law.

3) Few publications in high-impact journals: the number of publications in Scopus or Web of Science indexed journals in the field of law is small. This shortfall affects the visibility and recognition of BIA's research on a global scale and diminishes its academic impact.

4) Ineffective promotion of scientific activity: the current system for promoting scientific activity at BIA is not sufficiently effective to produce a significant impact in the field of law. Improvements are needed to encourage more prolific and high-quality research outputs from faculty members.

Assessment of the requirement [2]

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

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

Weak internationalization of research activities, non-active involvement in research projects (2.4.4. section in the SAR), few publications in high-impact journals in the field of law.

1.5. Cooperation and Internationalisation

Analysis

1.5.1.

The BIA declares in the SAR (section 2.5) that regular cooperation with various types of Latvian institutions, especially employers, is of particular importance. From the list of cooperation agreements (see List of cooperation agreements – Annex to the Description of Study Field SAR – 2.5.1 Cooperation and Internationalisation) and meetings with employers, it appears that BIA mainly collaborates with public sector employers (e.g. prisons, police, local government entities), with limited cooperation with private sector entities. BIA also claims in the SAR (section 2.5) to cooperate with employers' organizations such as the Confederation of Latvian Employers and entities like the Association of Lawyers and the Association of Latvian Borrowers, but there is little evidence of this cooperation in practice. Neither the SAR nor any annex shows any formalised cooperation. No information on this was presented at any meeting, neither with BIA authorities nor with employer representatives. Employers at the Daugavpils meeting only mentioned generally informal meetings.

BIA has agreements in place to provide internships as part of its short cycle and professional master's study programmes, allowing students to intern at various entities, including the State Police, Municipal Police, State Probation Service, Prosecutor's Office, and city councils.

BIA's cooperation with institutions of higher education, colleges, and scientific institutes includes the publication of the scientific journal "Administrative and Criminal Justice" in collaboration with Rezekne University of Technology, and the co-organization of the annual international scientific and practical conference "Transformation of Society in the Social Sciences and Humanities."

During the on-site visits in Riga and the BIA branches in Liepaja and Daugavpils, employers positively evaluated their cooperation with BIA, noting that BIA graduates possess all the necessary skills to perform their professional duties. In Liepaja and Daugavpils, the existence of BIA branches was highlighted as crucial for regional development and access to higher education in the region. In Daugavpils, it was noted that BIA's presence fosters competition with Daugavpils University.

In Liepaja, employers did not identify any formalized cooperation in the preparation or evaluation of study programmes, although they expressed readiness and interest in such collaboration. In Daugavpils, employers mentioned a recent roundtable discussion on cooperation. Although the SAR

mentions employer surveys (and the forms of it was additionally shared with the expert team after the on-site visit), during the on-site visit, none of the employer representatives in Riga and the branches could confirm participation in such surveys. Some noted that surveys were conducted about interns rather than graduates' success and their preparation for labour market during the studies. In summary, the influence of employers on the study process at BIA appears to be quite limited.

To sum up, BIA emphasizes cooperation with various Latvian institutions, primarily within the public sector, but lacks substantial engagement with private sector entities and evidence of enhanced cooperation with some relevant employers' organizations. While agreements for student internships and collaborations in academic publications and conferences are in place, formalized cooperation in study programme development and evaluation remains limited. Employer feedback during on-site visits indicates a positive view of BIA graduates' skills and traces ad hoc meetings with administration, but also highlights the need for more structured and extensive engagement in the academic process.

1.5.2.

BIA claims in the SAR (section 2.5) that international cooperation is a key element of its institutional strategy. The main goals include increasing the BIA's international competitiveness by promoting the mobility of students and lecturers, strengthening international cooperation, ensuring its sustainability, attracting foreign lecturers, and supporting the integration of foreign students.

Cooperation with foreign entities manifests itself primarily in terms of signed cooperation agreements, particularly in terms of the Erasmus+ programme. According to data provided in the SAR (section 2.5.2 and List of cooperation agreements – Annex to the Description of Study Field – 2.5 Cooperation and Internationalisation), BIA has signed almost 120 cooperation agreements with EU universities since 2006. BIA has 73 cooperation agreements with foreign universities in the field of "Science of Law," with 40 agreements concluded since 2021/2022. Although some of these agreements are no longer valid, the number of agreements is sufficient to develop internationalization activities.

Despite recognizing and understanding the importance of international mobility, the number of incoming and outgoing students in the field of law remains very low. Over the past two years, only two students came to BIA to study, and only three BIA students benefited from the Erasmus+ programme's outgoing mobility (see section 2.5.3 of the SAR and the annexes: Statistics data on foreign teaching staff and students 2021-2023, Data on student mobility_2023). Low incoming mobility is influenced by the fact that BIA currently does not offer courses in law in English, as confirmed by BIA management during the on-site visit.

During the on-site visit the expert team learned that recognizing the issue of limited outgoing mobility, BIA is putting efforts to strengthen internationalization at home. The SAR indicates that BIA is visited by delegations from foreign universities and other institutions, with an increase in visiting lecturers. During the reporting period there were 12 visiting academic staff members from staff of partner institutions under the Erasmus+ programme from countries such as Lithuania, Poland, Romania, and Portugal (see section 2.5.3 of the SAR and the annexes: Statistics data on foreign teaching staff and students 2021-2023, BIA Statistical data on the incoming and outgoing mobility of teaching staff).

BIA is an active member of the European Law Faculties Association (ELFA). As stated in the SAR (section 2.5.2), the BIA's study direction "Law", in cooperation with the University of Bialystok,

organized an International Summer School “Modern Features of Human Rights Protection in the Countries of the Three Seas” with support from ELFA. It involved scholars from five countries (Bulgaria, Georgia, Latvia, Ukraine, Poland) and 214 participants from 20 countries (e.g. Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, Poland, Germany, France, Hungary, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Ireland, Turkey, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, USA, UK, India, Israel) (see section 2.5.3 of the SAR). The summer school is a good example of how to utilize international partners to create value for both staff and students. BIA's efforts to systematically implement these initiatives in the future, as observed by the experts during their on-site visit, are commendable and highly appreciated as part of internationalization at home activities.

BIA organized 21 outgoing academic staff visits under the Erasmus+ programme (see section 2.5.3 of the SAR and the annex “BIA Statistical Data on the Incoming and Outgoing Mobility of Teaching Staff”). The visits were arranged to 9 institutions in 5 countries: Lithuania, Poland, Armenia, France, and Cyprus. Given BIA's numerous Erasmus+ agreements, efforts should be made to utilize these connections more effectively and strategically. It is noteworthy that more than half of the visits were to institutions that, under law, do not have the right to deliver master's or doctoral programmes, either in the field of law or other fields (e.g., institutions in Lithuania). Considering the limited Erasmus+ funding, it is recommended to select institutions more strategically and diversify them to serve a broader range of programmes (currently, over 20 percent of the visits are concentrated in just one institution - Panevezys College, which in the field of law delivers only professional bachelor's degree). Additionally, there is a need to diversify the destinations for mobility, as current exchanges for outgoing mobility are limited to five countries. The SAR mentions (section 2.5.2), that BIA also participated in the Latvian language lessons for Ukrainian civilians' project in 2023. The programme “Latvian language lessons for Ukrainian civilians” 2023.LV/LVUKR financed from the Latvian state budget was implemented by the BIA from March 2023 to December 2023. From the point of view of studies in the field of law, the significance of the project was limited to the participation of two employees one of whom was the project coordinator and the other acted as legal support for the project.

According to data provided in the SAR (section 2.5.2), cooperation with Ukrainian universities was strengthened during the reporting period. In the spring-summer of 2023, BIA was visited by representatives of several Ukrainian universities, with ongoing efforts to coordinate a plan for academic and scientific activities. However, according to BIA, this cooperation is unfortunately still only at the planning stage.

At the end of 2023, BIA reached agreements with several Polish universities (Siedlce University of Natural Sciences and Humanities, Józef Goluchowski University and the University of Bialystok) to organize joint seminars and practical jurisprudence classes, though this cooperation has yet to be manifested.

To sum up, BIA has a strategic focus on international cooperation, with numerous agreements in place. However, the impact of these agreements is limited, with low student and staff mobility. BIA intends to more actively engage in international initiatives, focusing on internationalization at home, however, the practical outcomes and manifestations of these efforts are still developing.

1.5.3.

The data in the SAR (section 2.5.3 and the Annexes: Statistics data on foreign teaching staff and students 2021-2023, Data on student mobility_2023) clearly show that despite the cooperation agreements concluded, the opportunities arising from the Erasmus+ programme are used to a very limited extent.

Over the past two years, only three BIA students benefited from the Erasmus+ programme's outgoing mobility, one of them being BIA doctoral student who benefited from the Erasmus + programme for pedagogical practise (Annex "Data on BIA student mobility" in the SAR). Compared with the overall number of the students in the field of law (298), this equals to less than 1 per cent mobility. During the visit, BIA students from Riga, but also from the Liepaja and Daugavpils branches, confirmed that they had been informed of opportunities for international mobility under the Erasmus+ programme, but had not taken advantage of it, primarily for work and family reasons. Similar reasons are identified by BIA in the SAR (Annex "Data on BIA student mobility"). Over the past two years, only two students came to BIA to study.

In the view of BIA, poor incoming and outgoing mobility was primarily due to the "Law" faculty not being granted the right to implement study programmes in foreign languages during the reporting period. During the on-site visit, the experts learned that BIA initially expected to offer more English-taught courses for incoming mobility students by running English study programmes. Additionally, there was an expectation that future foreign degree students studying in English study programmes would be more willing to take advantage of outgoing mobility opportunities.

The experts' team agrees that generally degree students studying in English taught programmes (which do not exist now except for doctoral studies) are more eager to benefit from mobility opportunities since they usually do not work and still do not have family obligations. However, the experts observe that internationalization efforts should primarily focus on students who have not yet developed relevant competencies through internationalization activities. For potential degree students coming to study to BIA for English taught programmes it would already be an international study experience. Thus, BIA would still be expected to demonstrate how the students in Latvian taught programmes develop their internationalization competencies. Therefore, it is suggested to focus on developing a comprehensive strategy and incentives system, which currently does not exist, motivating all students, in particular those studying in Latvian taught programmes, to participate in outgoing mobility, instead of relying on a non-existent possibility to solve the issue of lack of outgoing students' mobility through English taught programmes.

BIA has set goals to be achieved by 2025, including the introduction of more courses taught in English, joint lectures and exercise sessions by Latvian and foreign lecturers, and increasing academic mobility by inviting guest lecturers. Additionally, BIA aims to develop and organize international summer schools, with a target of one summer school per year, along with short-term professional development and retraining programmes. The SAR (section 2.5.3) indicates that BIA plans to continue transforming and developing inter-university programmes with partner universities that pursue similar specialized fields of study. However, in the view of BIA, the previous two-year accreditation and potential changes in study programmes have hampered these efforts.

The experts commend BIA for its efforts to strengthen internationalization at home. To build on these efforts, BIA is expected to develop a comprehensive approach as part of its internationalization strategy. This approach should include a detailed plan outlining specific activity, timeline, and the necessary resources to achieve these goals. Key elements should involve the engagement of competent academic staff who are crucial for the successful implementation of these activities. Additionally, it is recommended that BIA pays special attention to internationalization efforts across its branches, ensuring that all locations benefit from these initiatives.

Guest lectures are considered an important part of internationalization by BIA as part of internationalization at home strategy. In the academic years 2021/2022 and 2022/2023, 12 guest lectures were given by teaching staff, and in June 2023 8 online lectures were conducted by

lecturers from foreign universities (section 2.5.3 in the SAR). Minimal international exposure on campus is evident in the regional branches, where, over the past year, students had the opportunity to attend online lectures by foreign professors only twice - recent sessions featuring lecturers from Portugal and Poland last summer and October (according to information obtained from meetings with students and management staff in the branches). This limited exposure highlights the need for increased efforts to facilitate international academic engagement at the regional level.

BIA organized 21 outgoing academic staff visits under the Erasmus+ programme. (see section 2.5.3 of the SAR and the annex "BIA Statistical data on the incoming and outgoing mobility of teaching staff"). It must be noted, however, that only nine individual academic staff members benefited from the mobility programme, as some staff members participated multiple times. For instance, one staff member visited partners in Lithuania, Cyprus, and Poland, while another had six visits to Poland, Lithuania, and Cyprus. Notably, one academic staff member who participated in mobility to Lithuania, Poland, and Cyprus, mentioned in the annex on mobility, is not listed in the teaching staff members' list in the field (SAR Annex "Teaching Staff of the Science of Law Field of Study"). To ensure a more equitable distribution of academic staff mobility opportunities and to maximize the benefits of the Erasmus+ programme for a broader range of academic staff, BIA should review the selection procedure for the Erasmus+ program's outgoing mobility to ensure a broader distribution of opportunities, allowing more academic staff members to gain international experience (only 8 out of 46 staff members have benefited over the past two years).

Strengthening students' and academic staff linguistic skills is essential to overcome barriers to participation in internationalization activities and improve global engagement. In the view of the experts' team, limited English proficiency among students' population and academic staff might also be an obstacle for participation in internationalization activities, in particular, in outgoing mobility. During the visit, a list of who have received further training in English in the past two years was provided where there was indicated that only 7 people are certified in English, including 2 indicated to be guest lecturers, i.e. people who are not permanently employed at the BIA. In addition, it was indicated that 2 people have graduated in English (and 3 others with guest lecturer status) (additional information provided by BIA after the on-site visit).

Employers have acknowledged the need of international competencies of graduates, particularly the importance of linguistic skills, potentially in two foreign languages (employers' opinions presented at meetings in Riga and at branch offices during the on-site visit). During the on-site visit, the students, in particular those in the branches, noted that although they are eager to participate in internationalization activities, they feel hindered by inadequate language skills. To better facilitate the internationalization of BIA and enhance students' global engagement opportunities, it is recommended to strengthen the development of students' linguistic skills throughout their studies.

To sum-up, BIA has faced significant limitations in international mobility due to restrictions on offering foreign language study programmes. The institution has set ambitious goals for 2025 to enhance internationalization, including increasing English-taught courses, inviting guest lecturers, and organizing international summer schools. While guest lectures have been a step towards internationalization, they are mostly conducted online in the branches, leading to minimal on-campus international exposure. No substantial efforts have been made to support mobility activities.

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

BIA primarily collaborates with public sector employers but does not engage them systematically in the development of study programmes. BIA has numerous agreements with international partners in

place, however, the impact of these agreements is limited, with low student and staff mobility. Staff proficiency in foreign languages is still limited, raising concerns about the feasibility of expanding English-language teaching offerings for incoming students and opening English taught degree programmes in the future. Minimum cooperation with private sector is observed.

Strengths:

- 1) Established formal cooperation within the Erasmus+ Programme: BIA has developed a solid foundation in terms of agreements for cooperation within the Erasmus+ programme.
- 2) Positive employer feedback: employers of public sector have positively evaluated BIA's presence in the region and are very likely to engage in its activities.
- 3) More than adequate number of internship agreements: there is enough agreements with entities that enable student internships.

Weaknesses:

- 1) Low Erasmus+ student mobility: there is a very low number of incoming and outgoing students under the Erasmus+ programme.
- 2) The system to support international exchanges is not sufficient: BIA lacks an efficient system to support and encourage students to participate in international exchanges.
- 3) Limited academic staff participation and destination diversity: the current mobility programme has a limited number of participants, with only nine academic staff members benefiting due to repeated selections and lacks diversity in mobility destinations (mobility to 9 HEIs in 5 countries).
- 4) Lack of English-taught courses in the field of law: there is a limited offer of the courses in English for incoming students in the field of law.
- 5) Minimal private sector cooperation: there is very limited cooperation with private sector employers.

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: Partially compliant

The BIA works mainly with public sector employers, that are not systematically involved in the development of the study programmes. The cooperation with employers is mainly limited to the provision of internship positions for students and ad hoc meetings. The impact of the agreements with foreign partners is limited, with low student and staff mobility. The offer of study courses in English for incoming students is still poor.

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

Analysis

There has been only modest progress in implementing the short-term and long-term recommendations from the previous study field assessment procedure two years ago. The main short-term recommendations were: 1. to introduce procedures for consideration of anonymous suggestions and complaints; 2. to purchase more recent books in foreign languages (especially in English) for the library; 3. to improve English skills of the students and academic staff and to evaluate obstacles for the more efficient internationalization and to consider other tools for the improvement of internationalization.

The BIA Senate approved regulations on the procedure for submission and examination of student appeals, proposals, and complaints (decision No. 143 of 09 July 2020). These regulations outline the process for submitting appeals, requests, and complaints to the BIA administration. BIA assures that students, academic staff, and administrative staff are aware of all procedures related to submitting appeals, demands, proposals, and complaints to the academy's administration.

The scientific literature has been updated, including some books in English. However, during the on-site visit it was observed that some main areas of law have only outdated books in the library (e.g., international law, EU law). Additionally, apart from the electronic database of the BIA library, the library's collection still predominantly features literature in Russian (e.g., books on international comparative law are still only available in Russian). Therefore, the experts conclude that there has been no comprehensive assessment of specific needs of the study programmes in the field of law, in particular considering the fact that BIA runs the doctoral study programme in English and aims to offer other study programmes in English as well.

BIA reports that all teaching staff participating in the implementation of the master's and doctoral study programmes in English possess a B2 level of language proficiency. However, it is crucial for the teaching staff of the bachelor's level study programmes to also have a strong command of English, as student exchanges under Erasmus+ and other international programmes predominantly occur at the bachelor's level. While efforts have been made to provide specific training in English, additional information reveals that only 12 academic staff members can provide documented proof of their English proficiency (additionally submitted information by BIA on English proficiency of academic staff). This underscores the need for broader language training and certification among the faculty to support internationalization efforts effectively.

It should be noted that due to students' work and family obligations (noted in the Annex "Data on BIA student mobility") BIA faces challenges to implement international activities under Erasmus + and other international programmes. It was confirmed by the staff of BIA both in Riga and in the branches. The incoming mobility of students within the framework of Erasmus + programme remains very low. As observed in section 1.5.2 of the SAR report, BIA has begun developing activities for internationalization at home. However, a more strategic approach is needed to ensure that the branches also benefit from these efforts, and they are systematic. There is no evidence that BIA has made systematic efforts to improve the English skills of students or to enhance internationalization through outgoing mobility.

Another recommendation was "to evaluate obstacles for the more efficient internationalization and to consider other tools for the improvement of internationalization (for instance, internationalization at home)." BIA has revised Erasmus + agreements, but still, according to the statistics at the SAR, the number of incoming and outgoing students are very low.

Experts also recommended "to improve SWOT analysis, avoiding contradictions (for instance, regarding international mobility) and focusing on specific aspects in the field of law, not only general ones". There are some improvements, but still SWOT analysis contains deficiencies. For example, analyses of State Exam results are not included in the SWOT. The recommendation concerning expanding the cooperation with employers from the private sector is formally implemented. There was a recommendation "to improve constant critical self-evaluation and feedback mechanisms, in particular, conduct of surveys (amount of surveys should be adequate and representative), which should be a useful tool for the development of the study programmes". BIA has improved student survey questionnaire, but during the meeting with study programme director it was established that participation level of students is not high. Another recommendation was "to clarify and make

publicly available BIA system of promotion of scientific activities of academic staff (including, system of bonuses, possible funding of publication and conference fees, etc.)". There are improvement, and it was confirmed by the academic staff.

The main long-term recommendations were: 1. to update the website with more comprehensive information about the content of the study programmes and academic staff involved; 2. to improve procedure regarding prevention of plagiarism and sanctions in cases of plagiarism; 3. to involve more staff in the management of the study field and study programmes etc.

Amendments were made to the BIA Regulation on plagiarism control on 13 December 2023 to strengthen measures against plagiarism, building upon the initial version adopted on 9 July 2020. However, as noted in section 1.1.6. of the SAR, the current policy does not specifically address the use of AI, which is increasingly relevant in today's academic landscape. Given the fact that the final regulation was adopted quite recently, it could have elaborated on this aspect which become in particular relevant to academia in the end of 2022 (e.g., ChatGPT, developed by OpenAI, was first introduced to the public in November 2022).

BIA has considered involving more administrative staff. However, due to a decrease in the number of students, there is currently no need to hire additional employees.

There was a recommendation "to increase participation of academic staff in international mobility, including participation in scientific research, projects, lecturing, etc." There are some improvements, but as we see from experts' report (1.5.2.), there is a lot of space for enhancement of these activities.

Another recommendation was to increase number of incoming and outgoing students as well as academic staff under Erasmus+ programme. As we see from previous chapter 1.5.3 of the experts' report, there is a little success in this direction.

The previous experts' group made a recommendation "to introduce study courses in English in the study field of Law science". There is still a study course on professional English, but no specific study courses focusing on law in English.

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

BIA has analyzed the suggestions from the previous assessment and has attempted to implement them. However, there are practical challenges in doing so. Only 12 members of the academic staff can provide documentation of their English proficiency. Additionally, internationalization efforts are insufficient, and the amount of legal literature in English in the library remains limited compared to the number of items in Russian.

Strengths:

- 1) Improved Webpage: the webpage of the BIA has been improved.
- 2) Strategic attention to English proficiency of academic staff: BIA has started specifically focused training to improve the English proficiency of academic staff

Weaknesses:

- 1) No comprehensive assessment of specific needs of the study programmes in the field of law in terms of library funds: some main areas of law have only outdated books in the library (e.g.

international law, EU law).

2) Lack of strategic approach to enhance internationalization through outgoing mobility: no evidence that BIA has made systematic efforts to improve the English skills of students or to enhance internationalization through outgoing mobility.

Assessment of the requirement [4]

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

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

Some main areas of law have only outdated books in the library (e.g., international and EU law); not enough level of English proficiency of academic staff for bachelor level studies (additionally submitted information by BIA on English proficiency of academic staff); no evidence that BIA has made systematic efforts to improve the English skills of students or to enhance internationalization through outgoing mobility.

1.7. Recommendations for the Study Field

Short-term recommendations

- | |
|---|
| 1) Implement a system of regular surveys of graduates and employers as part of the QA process. |
| 2) Establish a systematized process for giving feedback to stakeholders, e.g. in the form of summaries. Make sure that these summaries are available to students either on Moodle platform or on the website of the BIA. In the case of employers and graduates – send the results through emails or provide links to website documents for those interested. |
| 3) Ensure that the oral exams are recorded so that students in case of appeal of their grade can base their appeal and complaint on valid grounds and proof. It is going to be easier then accordingly for the commission to make objective and well-grounded decision on the grade. |
| 4) Facilitate that students' representation bodies acting in the regions, in particular Liepaja, work in close cooperation within students' representation bodies in Riga and have funding for their activities at equal foot like students' representative in Riga. |
| 5) Include development of foreign language skills to the curriculum at bachelor level to facilitate internationalization of BIA. |
| 6) Include the minimum threshold of English language skills as a minimum requirement to enter doctoral studies. |
| 7) Enhance the evaluation methodology for lectures' attendance to ensure that assessments are focused on evaluating students' competences and knowledge acquisition, rather than simply awarding points for attendance. |
| 8) Develop strategy for training of teaching staff with regular (e.g. (bi-)annual training plan), that would above all include training on educational technologies, use of artificial intelligence tools in teaching and research, development of English skills. |
| 9) Purchase at least a minimum number of recent books in EU official languages (preferably in English) covering all major legal subjects for the library. |

10) Revise selection procedures and implement a rotation system to prioritize staff members who have not yet benefited, ensuring broader participation, and leverage existing Erasmus+ agreements with a wider range of partner institutions to diversify mobility destinations.

11) Ensure that the activities of internationalization are systematically organized in all the locations where the studies take place, in particular in the branches.

12) Develop the risk management plan that will include the measures on how to approach the risks identified for achieving strategic goals, e.g. preventing the increase in drop-out of students.

Long-term recommendations

1) Establish specific quality standards for those study modules or courses in study programmes, particularly part-time, that are delivered fully online. The standards should encompass pedagogical methods, standards and criteria for the quality of distance education content, evaluation instruments, the validation process, and innovative practices to ensure a high-quality online learning experience.

2) Develop the policy and specific procedures to report about the special needs of the students.

3) Establish alumni association or similar organization to stimulate the systematic involvement of graduates in the life of BIA.

4) Develop a comprehensive internationalization strategy and toolkit designed to enhance internationalization. This should include clearly articulated strategies and benefits for participants, both academic staff and students. The document should cover the measures to encourage student participation in international exchanges, systematic approach toward internationalization at home activities, expanding the availability of English-taught courses in the field of law (e.g., using Blended Intensive Programmes (BIPs) and the expertise of visiting foreign professors to enrich the curriculum and provide diverse learning opportunities for incoming students).

5) Review the procedures and practices to ensure that strategic self-assessment and other strategic documents are developed by involving different internal and external stakeholders.

6) Equip fully the facilities for disabled students.

II - "Science of Law" ASSESSMENT

II - "Science of Law" ASSESSMENT

2.1. Indicators Describing the Study Programme

Analysis

2.1.1.

Assessing the compliance of the study programme with the study field involves evaluating whether the study programme meets established standards, criteria, and requirements specific to legal education. The professional first cycle study programme "Science of Law" complies with indicators, conditions and criteria of the study field of "Law". The short-cycle professional study programme "Science of Law" in general complies with the specific requirements established in Regulations of the Ministry Cabinet (No. 305) and the profession standard of the Legal assistant (approved at the meeting of the Tripartite Cooperation Sub-Councils for Vocational Education and Employment on April 15, 2009, protocol No 4, profession code - 3411 02).

The length of the implementation of the study programme, which is 2 years and 3 months for full-time studies and 2 years and 5 months for part-time studies, is evaluated as sufficient for acquiring the necessary skills and way of thinking to enter the labor market.

2.1.2.

The title, code, degree to be obtained of the study programme, aims, objectives, learning outcomes and admission requirements are interrelated as demonstrated below.

According to the SAR (p. 158), the title of the study programme is "Science of Law" in the study field of "Law" with education classification code 41380 with the last 3 numbers (380) standing for law studies and programmes according to the classification of Latvian education which can be accessed here: <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/291524-noteikumi-par-latvijas-izglitiba-klasifikaciju>. There is no degree awarded at the end of the studies. As stated in the SAR (p. 159), after successful completion of their studies, students are not awarded a degree but a qualification - legal assistant.

According to the SAR (p. 158) the aim of the study programme is to prepare qualified professionals for practical work in the profession of legal assistant, in accordance with Latvian education level 5 of the classification framework, providing the opportunity for continuing legal education. The study provides a foundation for continued legal education. This aim is pursued through 40 study courses, each designed to help achieving the study programme's learning outcomes. For example, one of the key outcomes in all study courses is that students will "demonstrate basic and specialized knowledge specific to the relevant branch of legal science and a critical understanding of this knowledge" (see: SAR Annex 3 "Mapping of study courses of the short-cycle higher professional education study programme "Science of Law").

According to the information provided in the SAR (p. 159), the admission requirement is a secondary education. The implementation language of this study programme is Latvian. According to the SAR (p. 159), the study programme requires students to gather 140 CPs during the length of study. The CPs count is the same way for both full-time and part-time studies. The duration and scope of the study programme implementation as well as the implementation language, are reasonable and justified.

2.1.3.

SAR indicates (p. 160-161) that there have been various changes and corrections made within the study programme's parameters.

One of the changes implemented is the adjustment in the CPs system based on the "Amendments to the Law on Higher Education Institutions." These amendments redefined the term "credit" in Article 1 of the Law on Higher Education Institutions, specifying that 60 credits shall correspond to the study credits acquired in full-time studies over one academic year, in accordance with the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS). In compliance with the legal requirements, BIA made the relevant amendments to the regulations on studies, establishing CPs according to the ECTS. Consequently, the curriculum was also revised, changing the course credits to the ECTS. The recalculation of the ECTS was done in the following way - the number of credits was multiplied by 1.5 to express credits in whole numbers.

The second change followed the previous accreditation in 2021 - the aim, objectives and learning outcomes were updated in line with the established guidelines. The changes were made in accordance with the "Studiju rezultātu formulēšana un izmantošana. Praktiskā rokasgrāmata" provided in the SAR (p. 160.).

As indicated in the SAR (p. 161), additionally, the study programme was supplemented with new study courses. The study programme has been supplemented based on the current and relevant needs and developments in the professional activities of the legal sector trends, by providing basic knowledge and competences in all areas of law in both compulsory courses and elective courses of interest (see table 1.2.1. in the SAR). The development of professional competences in entrepreneurship is fully ensured in the following study courses, according to Paragraph 11 of the Cabinet Regulation No 305 of 13 June 2023 - Labour Law, Labour Protection Legal Ethics and Culture of Communication, Legal Legal Conflictology, Financial Law, Commercial Law. The corrections made to the study programme's parameters within the assessment of the study field are justified and the experts' group supports them.

2.1.4.

The SAR provides adequate economic and social justification for the study programme (p. 161-165). According to the 2022 medium and long-term labor market projections of the Ministry of Economy's Information Report 2022, the number of highly skilled jobs is expected to grow by over 75 000 up to 2040. The Information Report indicates that the largest supply of tertiary-educated workers is in the social sciences, business and legal education subject groups. In justifying the need for the study programme, BIA also relies on the Concept for the Development of the National Police and professional training of law enforcement officers. Based on the information that has been gathered during on-site visit, BIA focus and strength is criminal law and preparation of National Police future employees.

According to the results of the graduate monitoring provided in the SAR (p. 165), around 82% of all 2020 graduates for whom information is available were employed in 2021, while the average unemployment rate among economically active graduates was - 4.8%, which is lower than the national average among the tertiary-educated population. About 78% of all employed graduates were employed in higher skilled occupations. Analyzing the number of graduates from the short-cycle professional study programme "Science of Law" in the last year of employment, 87% of graduates of this study programme had successfully entered the labor market.

Based on the information gathered during the on-site visit and provided in SAR (p. 166), in Riga, students study full-time and part-time. In the branch of Daugavpils, the studies are implemented only in part-time study format. The studies take place on Fridays and Saturdays in the branch. There is no state funding for the studies in the programme, and full-time and part-time students in both groups must self-fund their studies.

Based on the data provided in the SAR (p. 165), the number of students matriculated in the study programme in the period from 2021/2022 to 2023/2024 was 66 students. The highest number of matriculated students from autumn of academic year 2021/2022 to autumn of academic year 2023/2024 was in the Riga branch - 39 students. Daugavpils branch from 2021/2022 to 2023/2024 academic year had 27 newcomers. In Riga, the number of students in the 1st year, compared to previous periods, decreased by 50%. The number of students enrolled in the 1st year at the Daugavpils branch decreased by 40% respectively. BIA attributes the reduction in the number of students to a higher interest in obtaining professional qualifications or choosing the academic bachelor programme (section 3.1.4. of the SAR). With this accreditation, BIA is now positioned to open a short-cycle study programme in Liepaja, reflecting a commitment to expanding educational opportunities in the region. However, these intentions do not correspond to the reasons identified for the reduction of the students in the study programme. Therefore, there is an urgent need to reassess and adapt recruitment strategies to attract more students to the study programme by enhancing programme's visibility and highlighting the unique benefits of the study programme.

Between 2021/2022 and the beginning of the 2022/2023 academic year, 69 graduates completed their studies. The highest number of graduates was in the Riga branch (49 or 71%), followed by Daugavpils branch (20 or 29%). The comparably low number of graduates is related to a significant dropout of the students, which is a crucial issue in the management of the programme.

In the academic year 2021/2022 the study programme had 95 students and 49 dropouts. In comparison, it enrolled less students (34) than it lost due to dropouts (49). In the academic year 2022/2023, 22 students withdrew (were exmatriculated) and only 11 were enrolled in the programme with total number of 50 students. In the academic year 2023/2024, there were 15 dropouts and 21 students enrolled in the programme with 43 students in total (Annex "Short cycle Higher Professional Education Study Programme statistics on students during the reporting period.docx" in section 3.1.4 of the SAR). Although the number of dropouts is decreasing in comparison to the total number of students, the study programme loses at least 1/3 of its students annually. This high student dropout rate highlights the need for immediate intervention to address the underlying causes of student dropout and to develop strategies to improve student retention and success within the programme.

Out of 86 dropouts, the most common reasons were voluntary withdrawal (25 students), non-fulfillment of study contract obligations due to academic debts (25 students), and other academic performance-related issues (23 students). Additionally, 11 students did not return from a study break (based on data provided in section 3.1.4. of the SAR).

During the on-site visit, BIA management reassured them that they had done everything possible to prevent dropouts and believed there was little else that could be done. In the experts' view, BIA management needs to address the issue of dropouts urgently and strategically by implementing targeted strategies to further reduce dropout rates and support student retention. First, BIA must investigate the reasons for voluntary withdrawal. These could range from poor preparation for studies, personal reasons (e.g., time management between studies and family), to dissatisfaction with the study process. Second, since a significant number of students dropout due to academic debts and poor academic performance, enhanced academic support is necessary. Third, an early warning system should be developed to identify students at-risk based on academic performance and engagement metrics.

2.1.5. N/A

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

The study programme complies with the study field indicators, conditions and criteria. The title, code, qualification to be obtained of the study programme, aims, objectives, learning outcomes and admission requirements are interrelated. The duration and scope of the study programme implementation as well as the implementation language, are reasonable and justified. Graduates of the study programme are well accepted in the job market. The study programme is implemented in Latvian. However, the number of dropouts and significant reduction of students in the programmes needs to be addressed urgently by taking strategic approach.

Strengths:

1) Demand for graduates in the job market: graduates are well-received in the job market and finding employment opportunities readily.

Weaknesses:

- 1) High student drop-out rates: the programme experiences noticeable student drop-out rates, which indicate potential issues with students' preparation, academic support, or external pressures affecting students' ability to complete the study programme.
- 2) Lack of strategic approach to drop-out rates: there is no strategic approach currently in place to address the high drop-out rates. Without a targeted strategy, it is challenging to implement effective measures to retain students and support them through to graduation.
- 3) Decreasing enrollment numbers: there has been a general decline in the number of new enrollments in the study programme.

2.2. The Content of Studies and Implementation Thereof

Analysis

2.2.1.

The study programme gives the opportunity to obtain the profession of legal assistant and the content of the study programme is topical. It includes introduction to the different fields of law and legal documentation, which is very relevant for legal assistant, The study plan covers 2.3 study years in full-time studies and 2.5 years in part-time studies. Study programme has been developed in accordance with the requirements of the Regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers on the Standard of State Professional Higher Education as well as the classification of professions, including study courses that are necessary for the acquisition, development and improvement of professional qualifications (including skills of argumentation, preparation of documents, search of legal acts, etc.) (see Annex 6 and 7 to the programme in the SAR). As we see from Annex 7, the study programme complies with the professional standard: professional activities, necessary skills, knowledge are included in the descriptions of the study courses. For instance, study courses include "State and Law theory", "Legal record keeping", "Civil law" etc., which are obligatory for law assistant. According to the SAR (section 3.1.2.) the purpose, tasks and achievable study results of the study programme reflect the set of knowledge, skills and competences to be acquired within the framework of all study courses of the study programme. The study programme and study courses address industry and labor market needs, this was confirmed in meetings with employers in Riga, Daugavpils and Liepaja. Employers stressed the need for the profession of legal assistants having basic knowledge and skills in the field of law. Simultaneously experts' group agree that the content of the study programme corresponds to the needs of the profession of legal assistant.

2.2.2. N/A

2.2.3.

During implementation of the study programme, the following study methods are used: informative lectures with elements of active teaching methods (audio-visual, demonstration, presentation); practical activities - seminars, tests, workshops, reports, projects, discussions, group work etc. Study materials and tools are developed in electronic form and placed in a way accessible to students in the BIA e-learning environment in the Moodle environment.

During the meetings with the director of the study programme, directors of the branches and students, student-centered approach in the studies was emphasized. The students mentioned individual approach to the study process, involvement of academic staff and programme director in solving students' problems, opportunities to study according to the individual plan, possibility to shift from on-site to online training.

As discussed in the section for implementation of professional master study programme, there is

insufficient interconnectivity in terms of assessment strategy between all study programmes in law, which may hinder students' preparation for the State Exam. The lack of harmonized standards for assessing students in the study courses that are part of the State Exam results in inconsistencies in student preparedness. If students continue studies in bachelor and the master studies, there will be a gap of knowledge, skills and competences that may hinder their success in the State Exam. Students may want to study in the bachelor level programme after completing this study programme, so harmonization of the content of the study programmes and assessment methods is much needed. A workshop and discussions of academic staff to ensure a comprehensive approach is necessary for establishing harmonized standards.

Given that the vast majority of students are part-time (90 out of 95 in 2021/2022, 48 out of 50 in 2022/2023, and 41 out of 43 in 2023/2024), most students in the study programme study partially online and partially on-site. During the on-site meetings with teaching staff and students, the experts' group learned that BIA effectively addresses the needs of working students and those with family obligations. BIA offers flexibility in allowing online participation for students who cannot attend in person due to specific reasons (e.g., child illness or work commitments). In such cases, individual study plans are offered, which is highly commendable. However, there is a need to establish a uniform standard for this flexibility, as part-time study programmes still require 50 percent onsite studies.

The experts' group learned that the teaching staff is flexible in offering online examinations when requested by students or for other reasons. The same flexibility applies to lectures and seminars, including those held on weekends. During online exams, a teaching staff member is not always present to ensure fairness. Some participants suggested that the exams with a large number of questions and very limited time help to eliminate potential risks.

The experts' group believes that for the achievement of the learning outcomes and ensuring a high-quality study process clear procedures are needed to determine when student participation in online activities, including exams, is necessary to address individual needs. While the current process is flexible, it is somewhat chaotic, as it is difficult to establish the extent to which an individual student has studied online versus onsite. Establishing clear guidelines would help to maintain a balance between flexibility and the integrity of the study programme.

2.2.4.

Students have an internship in the amount of 24 CPs, which is comprised of: Practice I – 6 CPs (the purpose of the internship is to help students navigate the education system in Latvia, the organization of the study process and internships in the study programme chosen by BSA, as well as the skills to use legal scientific literature and legal acts); Practice II – 6 CPs (the goal of practice is to allow students to consolidate their previously acquired knowledge in domains of legal science, and gain practical skills in administrative, criminal and civil law); Practice III (pre-diploma) – 12 CPs (in accordance with the course description and methodological guidelines with the Practice III (pre-diploma) course). The practice is based on the BIA Practice Agreement (point 4.7. Regulation on practice organization approved on 14 September 2023 Council's meeting).

The goal of practice is to make practical use of the theoretical knowledge learnt in the legal assistant profession, to collect and analyze the materials required for the development of a qualification thesis. There are no special differences between the availability of internships and the organization of internships in Riga and Daugavpils.

Internship is organized following Regulations of the practice organization of the short cycle study

programme “Science of Law” (approved on 14 September 2023 Council's meeting (see Annex of the study programme). Each student must present a report on their internship. The employers confirmed that they had received the requests to provide the feedback on the internship. The experts' group did not observe any disparities in the organization of the internship compared to generally accepted practices. Evaluation is for each part of the Internship.

2.2.5. N/A

2.2.6.

Students mostly choose the qualification paper for writing in the field of Civil law and Criminal law. The topics of student works are closely related to students' further professional interests and correspond to the study programme, e.g., distribution of property in divorce, legal characterization and qualification of fraud, etc. The development and defense of the qualification thesis takes place in accordance with a strictly regulated procedure (Regulation on the development and defense of final theses BIA).

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

The content of the study programme is topical. The content of the study courses is interconnected and corresponds to the needs to obtain necessary skills for the legal assistant profession. This study programme is only the first step that allows graduates to enter the legal labour market. BIA takes student centered approach in offering flexible studies for students. Representatives of the industry approved the necessity of this short-cycle programme.

Strengths:

- 1) Market relevance: employers confirmed the necessity of this study programme for the labor market, indicating its strong alignment with industry needs.
- 2) Flexible approach for distance learning: The study programme effectively addresses the needs of working students through a flexible remote learning approach.

Weaknesses:

- 1) Assessment strategy interconnection: There is insufficient interconnection in terms of the assessment strategy with bachelor studies and the professional master study programme.
- 2) Lack of clear procedures for online participation and examinations: the current flexible approach to online participation and examinations, while beneficial for addressing individual student needs, lacks clear procedures.

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.

As stated in section 1.3 of the report, the study provision, scientific provisions, informational

provision (including library), material and technical provision, and financial provision generally comply with the specific features and conditions for the implementation of the study programme. On-site visits and meetings confirmed that the facilities and relevant resources are available for the study programme. The study process for students of the analyzed study programme takes place in two buildings in Riga: Valērijas Seiles Street 4 and Valērijas Seiles Street 1/4, as well as in the building belonging to the Academy in Daugavpils (the short-cycle study programme has not been implemented in the Liepāja branch to date). According to the SAR (section 2.3.2) and confirmed during on-site visits, these buildings are adequately equipped for the learning process, including stationary multimedia projectors, screens, and computers with Internet connections. Free wireless internet (WiFi) is available in all buildings. Detailed information on the evaluation of the material and technical base in Riga and the Daugavpils branch is available in section 2.3.2 of the SAR. In particular, the on-site visit confirmed the high usefulness of the Moodle platform in the Daugavpils branch (see also section 2.3.4 of the SAR). Resources for providing each study programme are not allocated separately, so the buildings and systems are also used by students from other study programmes.

2.3.2. N/A

2.3.3.

As stated in section 1.3 of the report the funding is available to all study programmes to the level described in section 1.3. According to the SAR (section 3.3.3 in the part dedicated to the Study Programme "Science of Law" (41380)), the expenses of the short-cycle professional study programme "Science of Law" amount to 1003 Euros per student per year. In the 2021/2022 academic year, tuition fees for the short-cycle study programme were as follows: full-time - 1700 Euros per year; part-time in Riga - 1500 Euros per year; and in branches - 1000 Euros per year. Considering the number of students in the study programme (177 part time and 11 full time students as of 1 October 2023), the financial support for the short-cycle professional study programme "Science of Law" appears to be sufficient. However, the decreasing number of students in this study programme (see in section 3.1.4 of the experts' report) poses a potential threat to the profitability of the programme. This decline could lead to insufficient funding for the further development and sustainability of the study programme.

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

The resources and provisions for the study programme are generally adequate. However, the programme's financial situation requires constant monitoring due to declining student numbers. Some of the costs associated with maintaining the study programme, such as building maintenance, are shared with other study programmes, which is an important factor in evaluating the programme's viability. The library's equipment and available digital resources in both Riga and Daugavpils meet the minimum requirements for this study programme. While students highly praise the remote and flexible study process and BIA addresses very well their needs, there is no established quality standard to ensure the quality delivery of blended learning.

Strengths:

- 1) Systematic use of Moodle platform to enhance learning experience

Weaknesses:

- 1) Facility upgrades needed: The facilities could be upgraded, and more infrastructure for hybrid lectures should be introduced.

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

Despite identified weaknesses in resources, the study area are considered adequate to implement the study programme.

2.4. Teaching Staff

Analysis

2.4.1.

Academic staff (totally 21 persons – see SAR Annex “Teaching staff of the Science of Law field of study.xlsx”) involved in the implementation of the study programme has at least a Master or Doctor degree (8 persons with Master degree, 13 with doctoral degree) for teaching a relevant study course. Academic staff also involves practitioners in the respective field of law (attorneys of law, prosecutors, other practitioners of law). Within academic staff 11 persons are elected in the BIA, 10 persons invited from outside BIA. The academic staff, indicated in the Annex “Teaching staff of the Science of Law field of study.xlsx” of the SAR, enables the achievement of the aims and learning outcomes of the study programme. Almost half of the teaching staff members are practitioners of law, which is useful for professional study programme. For example, former prosecutor provides study course “Law enforcement institutions”, former employee of the Bureau on prevention and combatting crime gives lectures in the study course “Combating Corruption and Preventing Conflicts of Interest”, etc.

BIA has established a system to attract skilled professional teaching staff. The election of academic staff follows unified, specialized criteria outlined in the Regulations on BIA Academic Positions. This process is based on an open competition that considers the applicant’s academic qualifications and professional competence. It helps to attract also professionals outside of BIA.

2.4.2.

From the autumn of the 2021/2022 academic year to the autumn of the 2023/2024 academic year, three new teaching staff members (one practitioner and two researchers) were involved in the implementation of the study programme. This indicates a stable academic staff within the study programme (section 3.4.2 of the SAR).

During the on-site visit, the experts' group learned that the study programme director, who is responsible for the composition of the teaching staff, has sufficient discretion to make changes in academic staff due to incompetence or other reasons. It was explained in the SAR (section 3.4.2) that two new staff members with PhD degrees joined to enhance the scientific background of the study programme, and one additional staff member is a practitioner (prosecutor), which enriches the practical aspect of the curriculum.

Evidently, the changes involving three academic staff members over the reporting period did not negatively affect the study process. On the contrary, the reasons for these changes reflect purposeful efforts to enhance the quality of the study programme's implementation.

2.4.3. N/A

2.4.4.

According to the additional information provided by BIA to evaluation experts group, not all of the academic staff have published in peer-reviewed editions within the last two years since last accreditation visit. Only 2 people from academic staff have publications in Web of science or Scopus. Academic staff must be more involved in the research process in their respective fields. Nevertheless, such a low number of the publications in this study programme is compensated by the practical experience (more than five years) of the members of the academic staff, which is even more important for the short cycle study programme.

2.4.5.

According to the SAR (section 3.4.5. of the SAR), the Council of the study field "Law" ensures the interconnection of study courses by regularly evaluating and improving study programmes, including this study programme, evaluating teaching staff on the results of research and academic performance.

Unfortunately, the SAR does not provide any information on a formal structure or format where the teaching staff would meet to discuss and ensure a harmonized assessment strategy, avoid duplications, or address other critical coordination issues. Such meetings are essential for maintaining consistency in grading, aligning course content with learning outcomes, and sharing best practices among faculty. Without regular and structured meetings, there is a risk of inconsistencies in student assessment and potential overlaps in course content. Establishing a formal framework for regular faculty meetings dedicated to these topics would greatly enhance the quality and coherence of the programme.

It would be worth having one meeting/workshop per semester, where academic staff can discuss the methods used in the study process and other academical topical issues. It was confirmed in discussion with the academic staff. According to the information provided in the SAR, as well as the management, a form of mutual cooperation between teaching staff for quality improvement in the delivery of the study programme used within HEI consists of the participation of associate professors in lectures/classes, practical sessions/examinations in order to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the academic staff's work.

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

Academic staff are lawyers with a professional background in their respective field of law. There is a need for creating a formal framework for regular faculty meetings of academic staff dedicated to ensure a harmonized assessment strategy, avoid duplications in content, or address other critical coordination issues, which would greatly enhance the quality and coherence of the study programme.

Strengths:

- 1) Professional lawyers among the teaching staff: having professional lawyers as part of the teaching staff is essential for delivering a high-quality professional study programme.
- 2) Stable composition of the teaching staff: the teaching staff has a stable composition, contributing to the consistency and quality of the programme.

Weaknesses:

- 1) Lack of common meetings for academic staff: there are no common meetings for academic staff annually or once per semester within the study programme, which could hinder collaboration and ensuring a common approach in provision of the study programme.

Assessment of the requirement [7]

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Not all of the academic staff have published in peer-reviewed editions within the last two years since last accreditation visit. Nevertheless this is a professional study programme, therefore professional experience plays more important role than academic activities.

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

Study programme complies with Regulations No.305 of the Cabinet of Ministers "Regulations on the state standard of professional higher education". See Annex 6 of the SAR.

- 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

Study programme complies with Profession standard of the Legal assistant (approved at the meeting of the Tripartite Cooperation Sub-Councils for Vocational Education and Employment on April 15, 2009, protocol No 4, profession code - 3411 02). See Annex 7 of the SAR.

- 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

The description of courses and study materials are prepared in Latvian. All elements comply with regulations (literature, student independent work ect.). See point 1.1.5. of this Report.

- 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

Enclosed sample diploma formally complied with the requirements at the time of the submission of the documents.

- 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

Enclosed document signed by the acting rector confirming it. SAR Annex: Study direction Science of Law Knowledge of the state language of the academic staff.edoc

- 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

Enclosed agreement with Alberta college (10 December 2019) SAR Annex: Agreement AK-EN.doc) ensures students from BIA will be offered to continue studies in the Alberta college in the first level professional higher education (short cycle) study programme "Legal framework of the commercial transactions" or the first level professional higher education (short cycle) study programme "Entrepreneurship".

- 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

Enclosed agreement with Alberta college (10 December 2019) SAR Annex: Agreement AK-EN.doc

Students from BIA will be offered to continue studies in the Alberta college.

- 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

Performance obligation signed by Members of the Board from 30.08.2023 No. VT_23/1844 (SAR Annex: 2.1.4. BIA obligations.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: Not relevant

Assessment of the requirement [8]

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

All regulatory formalities are taken into account, at the time of the submission of the documents.

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

The graduates of the study programme are well-received in the job market and readily find employment opportunities. The study programme effectively addresses the needs of working students through a flexible remote learning approach. However, the current flexible approach to online participation and examinations, while beneficial for addressing individual student needs, lacks clear procedures. Additionally, the study programme experiences noticeable student drop-out rates, indicating potential issues with students' preparation, academic support, or external pressures affecting their ability to complete the study programme. There is no strategic approach currently in place to address the high drop-out rates or the declining number of new enrollments. The study programme includes a significant number of professional lawyers among the teaching staff. Although not all academic staff have published in peer-reviewed journals within the last two years, they possess relevant working experience. However, there are no common meetings for academic staff annually or once per semester within the study programme, which limits opportunities for collaboration and consistency in teaching and assessment. The Moodle platform is used systematically to enhance the learning experience. Furthermore, there is insufficient interconnection in terms of the assessment strategy between the bachelor's studies and the professional master's programme, leading to potential inconsistencies in the evaluation of students' competencies across different levels of the programme

Evaluation of the study programme "Science of Law"

Evaluation of the study programme:

Good

2.6. Recommendations for the Study Programme "Science of Law"

Short-term recommendations

- 1) Review the assessment strategy in the study programme to make sure it has necessary interconnection with the studies at bachelor and professional master' study programme.
- 2) Develop the strategy and preventive measures to tackle the drop-outs in the study programme.
- 3) Establish clear guidelines and standards for online evaluation to prevent abuse and ensure that assessments accurately measure student knowledge and skills. Incorporate periodic reviews and updates to maintain integrity and effectiveness.
- 4) Develop a standardized online assessment procedure to ensure consistency and fairness in online examinations.
- 5) Establish regular, structured meetings for teaching staff to discuss and ensure a harmonized approach toward the content and delivery of the programme.
- 6) Eliminate deficiencies with sample diploma to make sure it complies with the latest regulations, e. g. to refer to the "short-cycle" education level instead of "first level professional higher education", and ensure that the up-to date image of the Latvian education system is added to the diploma supplement.

Long-term recommendations

- 1) Review BIA strategy to encourage academic staff to participate in international research and projects' activities in the field of law.
- 2) Secure funding in upgrading the facility infrastructure to ensure it is fully equipped for high-quality hybrid lectures.

II - "Science of Law" ASSESSMENT

II - "Science of Law" ASSESSMENT

2.1. Indicators Describing the Study Programme

Analysis

2.1.1.

The academic bachelor programme "Science of Law" complies with indicators, conditions and criteria of the study field of "Law". The length of the implementation of the study programme is 3 years for full-time studies and 3 years and 5 months for part-time, which is considered sufficient for acquiring the necessary skills and mindset to enter the labor market.

2.1.2.

According to the SAR (p. 182), the title of the study programme is "Science of Law" in the study field of "Law" with education classification code 43380 with the last 3 numbers (380) standing for law studies and programmes according to the classification of Latvian education: <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/291524-noteikumi-par-latvijas-izglitiba-klasifikaciju>. There is no qualification given after graduating as it is an academic bachelor study programme.

According to the SAR (p. 182), the aim of the study programme is to prepare quality legal professionals with the appropriate theoretical knowledge, skills and competences in law in accordance with the Latvian classification of education level 6. According to the information provided in the SAR (p. 183), the admission requirement is secondary education. It has been stated

in the SAR (p. 183), that after successful completion of their studies, students are awarded Bachelor of Social Sciences in law. Based on the SAR (p. 183), the study programme requires students to accumulate 180 CPs during the length of study. The CPs count is the same for both full-time and part-time studies. The title, code, degree to be obtained of the study programme, aims, objectives, learning outcomes and admission requirements are interrelated. According to the SAR (p. 184), the study programme is implemented in Riga as well as Daugavpils and Liepaja branches. The implementation language of this study programme is Latvian, national language. The duration and scope of the study programme implementation as well as the implementation language, are reasonable and justified.

2.1.3.

The first change made within the study programme parameters involved adjustments to the credit point system, as in other programmes already discussed. To comply with legal requirements, BIA amended its regulations on studies, establishing study credits according to the ECTS. Consequently, the curriculum was revised, converting the course credits to the ECTS format. The recalculation involved multiplying the number of credits by 1.5 to express the credits in whole numbers.

The SAR (p. 185, table 1.1.1.) shows that the academic bachelor study programme study courses have been adjusted and developed to improve study course content and consider student-centered education principles through implementation of seminar tasks, more practical activities, and moot courts. The study outcomes and their assessment procedures are defined. Students are actively involved in the study process through various teaching methods. For each course of study, detailed course descriptions have been developed, which describe course content, a specific course outline, course learning requirements, outcomes, and the required and supplementary literature.

2.1.4.

Based on the SAR (p.188-189), the number of highly skilled jobs is expected to grow by over 75 000 up to 2040. The Information Report indicates that the largest supply of tertiary-educated workers is in the social sciences, business and legal education subject groups. In justifying the need for the study programme, BIA also relies on the Concept for the Development of the National Police and professional training of law enforcement officers. Based on the information that has been gathered during on-site visit, BIA focus and strength is criminal law and preparation of National Police future employees, especially in the regions where the branches in Liepaja and Daugavpils are located.

According to the results of the graduate monitoring provided in the SAR (p. 165), around 82% of all 2020 graduates for whom information is available were employed in 2021, while the average unemployment rate among economically active graduates was - 4.8%, which is lower than the national average among the tertiary-educated population. About 78% of all employed graduates on the study programme were employed in higher skilled occupations. The SAR does not provide any precise examples of the positions taken by the graduates. To assess better the success of the graduates and the study programme itself, it is recommended to BIA to work closer with the alumni of the study programme and collect information about the professions or positions occupied by graduates of this study programme.

Based on the provided numbers in the SAR (p. 190) on dynamics of the number of students and employment indicators of the graduates of the study programme, during the reporting period from 2021/2022 to the beginning of the academic year 2023/2024 (as of 1 October) number of students in the academic bachelor study programme "Law" has decreased. The dynamics of the number of students in the branches has remained stable and at the same level, which is in line with the overall student dynamics in the BIA.

The number of students who matriculated in the academic bachelor's degree study programme for the period from autumn of the academic year 2021/2022 to autumn of the academic year 2023/2024 is 279 students. The highest number of matriculated students from the autumn of the academic year 2021/2022 to 2023/2024 was in the Riga branch - 157. The lowest number of students was in the Liepaja branch - 56 students.

It is important to note that the number of enrolled students in the study programme was decreasing over the past three years by more than 30%, from 105 in 2021/2022 to 103 in 2022/2023, and down to 71 in 2023/2024 (Annex "Academic Bachelor Study Programme statistics on students during the reporting period"). During 2023/2024 admission period 21 students were enrolled in the 1st year. In Riga, the number of students in the 1st year, compared to previous periods, decreased by 30%. In Liepaja and Daugavpils branches, the number of students enrolled in the 1st year decreased by 49% and 47%, respectively (section 3.1.4. of the SAR). In this regard, it is essential to identify and address the factors contributing to this decline to ensure the study programme's sustainability and attractiveness.

In the period 2021/2022 to the beginning of the academic year 2022/2023, 66 graduates successfully completed their studies. The comparably low number of graduates is related to a significant dropout of students, which is a crucial issue in the management of the study programme.

In the academic year 2022/2023, 14 students withdrew (were exmatriculated) and 103 were enrolled in the study programme with a total number of 222 students. In the academic year 2023/2024, there were 45 dropouts and 71 students enrolled in the study programme with 188 students in total (Annex "Academic Bachelor Study Programme statistics on students during the reporting period.docx" in section 3.1.4 of the SAR). The number of dropouts tripled. This high dropout rate highlights the need for immediate intervention to address the underlying causes of student dropouts and to develop strategies to improve student retention and success within the study programme.

Out of 68 dropouts, the most common reasons were voluntary withdrawal (20 students), non-fulfillment of study contract obligations due to academic debts (21 students). Additionally, 10 students were excluded due to financial debts and 3 did not return from a study break (based on data provided in section 3.1.4. of the SAR).

During the on-site visit, BIA management asserted that they had done everything possible to prevent dropouts and believed there was little else that could be done. However, the experts believe that BIA management needs to urgently and strategically address the dropout issue by implementing targeted strategies to further reduce dropout rates and support student retention. First, BIA needs to investigate the reasons for "voluntary withdrawal" more thoroughly. These reasons could include poor preparation for studies, personal issues (e.g., balancing time between studies and family), and dissatisfaction with the study process. Second, the significant number of students dropping out due to academic debts indicates the necessity for enhanced academic support. Third, an early warning system should be developed to identify at-risk students based on academic performance and engagement metrics. This system will help to show in advance which students are at risk of dropping out, allowing for timely intervention and support.

2.1.5. N/A

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

All indicators of the study programme comply with the existing preconditions for its implementation. The study programme meets the study field indicators, conditions, and criteria. In the opinion of the experts' group, the title, code, degree to be obtained, aims, objectives, learning outcomes, and admission requirements of the study programme are well-aligned and interrelated. The duration and scope of the study programme implementation, as well as the implementation language (Latvian), are reasonable and justified. The goals, objectives, and learning outcomes are consistent and in compliance. However, the high number of dropouts and the noticeable reduction in student numbers need to be addressed urgently through a strategic approach.

Strengths:

1) Demand for graduates in the job market: graduates are well-received in the job market and finding employment opportunities readily.

Weaknesses:

1) High student drop-out rates: the programme experiences noticeable student drop-out rates, which indicates potential issues with students' preparation, academic support, or external pressures affecting students' ability to complete the programme.

2) Lack of strategic approach to drop-out rates: there is no strategic approach currently in place to address the high drop-out rates. Without a targeted strategy, it is challenging to implement effective measures to retain students and support them through to graduation.

3) Decreasing enrollment numbers: there has been a general decline in the number of new enrollments in the programme.

2.2. The Content of Studies and Implementation Thereof

Analysis

2.2.1.

As provided in the SAR (section 3.2.1.), the study programme is focused on in-depth learning of national law, which is provided by the study course planning, content, and scope. National law is closely intertwined with EU and international law, the study of which, in the view of BIA, is inseparable part of this study programme. The programme consists of: compulsory study courses (Part A), which include study courses in the amount of 100 CPs, which also include 2 study papers; basic courses of industry studies (part B), which includes study courses of 48 CPs; optional study courses (part C), which include 16 different study courses, from which students can choose study courses of 17 CPs; bachelor's thesis (15 credits), which students develop during the last year of study, performing theory analysis, research, research data processing, analysis and interpretation.

Overall, the structure of the study programme is logical; the study courses / modules are interconnected and complementary, corresponds to the objectives of the study programme and ensures the achievement of learning outcomes. In accordance with the Cabinet regulations No. 240 for academic study programmes, part B is called "Limited elective courses", not "basic courses of industry studies", so the use of terminology by BIA in this context should be corrected.

The study programme promotes independent research activity and the purposeful development of practical skills. Two practice periods are envisaged, however, since one practice period is in part C of the study programme (optional part), only one practice is guaranteed.

After reviewing the documents and information received during the on-site visit, the experts' group concluded that the descriptions of the study courses are of required quality and comply with the provisions set forth in the regulatory enactments. The study programme is implemented in Latvian in Riga and in the branches of Liepaja and Daugavpils. Following the visit to the Liepaja branch and the visit to the Daugavpils branch, the experts' group agreed that the organization of the study programme is similar across all locations.

With the exception of theoretical foundations in the field of law, the study courses include fields of law, relevant for the labour market: civil law, criminal law, international and European law, etc., as well as current fields of law (e.g. Environmental law, Protection of children's rights, Insolvency law, Combating corruption and conflicts of interest prevention, etc.) (section 3.2.1. of the SAR). The SAR asserts that the study programmes are updated and improved based on feedback from surveys of students, graduates, and employers, typically conducted once or twice a year. However, during the on-site visit, the information from these groups about their survey participation was inconsistent. The students knew about the course-based feedback procedure in Moodle, while no representatives from the graduates or employers could confirm that surveys were conducted for the purpose of improvement of study experience. The employers mentioned regular meetings for discussions about the need of graduates. In absence of employers' inclusion in the development of the study programme, it can hardly be said that the study programme addresses employers needs to full extent.

2.2.2. N/A

2.2.3.

The programme is implemented by using different study methods, including lectures with elements of active teaching methods (audio-visual, demonstration, presentation), practical activities - seminars, tests, workshops, reports, projects, preparation of presentations using computer programmes and other technical means; moot court proceedings, debates, discussions, dispute settlement, group work, research (section 3.2.3 of the SAR).

There is insufficient interconnectivity in terms of assessment strategy between all study programmes in law, which may hinder students' preparation for the State Exam. In the response from the Ministry of Justice of 14 June 2024, to the Academic Information center, the Ministry observes, that "none of the students of SIA "Baltic International Academy" has obtained a passing grade in the theoretical part in all the areas mentioned in point 24 of the Examination Regulations, therefore no student has passed the theoretical part of the examination. Taking into account that according to the Examination Rules the examination is passed if the student has obtained a passing grade in the theoretical and practical part of each area mentioned in point 24 of the Examination Rules, no student of the SIA "Baltic International Academy" has passed the examination so far".

So, if students continue studies in the master studies, there may be a gap of knowledge, skills and competences that may hinder their success in the State Exam. Since the State Exam presents the assessment of systematic legal knowledge, skills and competences gained during the overall study period in the study field of law, the gaps in previous or present studies, may influence the preparation for gaining the qualification. For instance, academic bachelor study programme teaches the courses of Public International law and European Union law, the knowledge of which may be checked during the State Exam. These courses are not repeated in the professional master studies. Therefore, the teaching staff must ensure that the students in the academic bachelor's degree are assessed in a synchronized way and there is harmonization of the study content of the study programmes at different levels (the master study programmes are built on the knowledge of

academic bachelor study programme and the knowledge relevant to the State Exam is assessed in a systematic way). A workshop and systematic discussions of academic staff are needed to ensure a comprehensive approach for establishing harmonized standards.

Given that the vast majority of students are part-time (137 out of 148 in 2021/2022, 202 out of 222 in 2022/2023, and 177 out of 188 in 2023/2024 (see the SAR Annex: Academic Bachelor Study Programme statistics on students during the reporting period.docx), most students in the study programme study partially online and partially on-site. During the on-site meetings with teaching staff and students, the experts' team learned that BIA effectively addresses the needs of working students and those with family obligations. BIA offers flexibility in allowing online participation for students who cannot attend in person due to specific reasons (e.g., child illness or work commitments). In such cases, individual study plans are offered, which is highly commendable. However, there is a need to establish a uniform standard for this flexibility, as part-time study programmes still require 50 percent on-site studies.

The experts' group learned that the teaching staff is flexible in offering online examinations when requested by students or for other reasons. The same flexibility applies to lectures and seminars, including those held on weekends. During online exams, a teaching staff member is not always present to ensure fairness. Some participants suggested that the exams with many questions and very limited time help to eliminate potential risks.

The experts believe that for the achievement of the learning outcomes and ensuring a high-quality study process clear procedures are needed to determine when student participation in online activities, including exams, is necessary to address individual needs. While the current process is flexible, it is somewhat chaotic, as it is difficult to establish the extent to which an individual student has studied online versus onsite. Establishing clear guidelines will help to maintain a balance between flexibility and the integrity of the study programme.

The implementation of the study programme should consider the mobility of students, which is currently lacking. Based on the SAR, within the reporting period zero incoming or outgoing students' mobilities were organized within the study programme (see SAR Annex: Data on BIA student mobility). Internationalization at home activities can be a valuable solution for building international competences among students (which is now on the agenda of BIA). These activities can significantly enhance students' global awareness and skills. However, they may not fully substitute the benefits of mobility to another country, which offers immersive cultural experiences, firsthand exposure to different educational systems, and unique professional opportunities.

BIA explains that the lack of mobility is because students work (mostly in law enforcement agencies). Knowing the reasons BIA should facilitate finding the solution. While internationalization at home is beneficial, it should be complemented by efforts to facilitate student mobility through building mobility windows into the study programme, providing extra incentives, creating short-term mobility opportunities. This combination can provide a more holistic approach to developing students' international competences.

2.2.4.

The bachelor's study programme includes two internships (one is optional) designed to help students to acquire practical skills. The purpose of the first internship is to familiarize students with the education system in Latvia, the organization of the study process, and the internships associated with their chosen study programme at BIA. It also aims to develop their ability to use legal scientific literature and legal acts effectively. The second internship is intended to enable students to

consolidate their previously acquired knowledge in various domains of legal science and to gain practical experience in administrative, criminal, and civil law. During the Practice II, the students independently attend 3 court sessions in a civil case, a criminal case and an administrative case, freely choosing open court sessions according to the court calendar: https://tis.ta.gov.lv/court.jm.gov.lv/stat/html/index_202403.html (LV Only); make a synopsis of the content of court judgments with research (one each in an administrative case, a civil case and a criminal case), selecting them on the e-services website of the Latvian court portal: <https://manas.tiesas.lv/eTiesasMvc/nolemumi> (LV Only); participate in a mock trial organized by the BIA in a simulated trial led by the relevant lecturer.

Since BIA demonstrated a wide cooperation with Latvian partners in general, the opportunities to implement the internship are sufficient. Since it is a bachelor study programme and rather wide, the organization of the internship meets minimum standards.

2.2.5. N/A

2.2.6.

The thesis topics are relevant and encompass all areas of law (Annex "Bakalaura darba"). There is a noticeable trend that students predominantly select topics in Civil Law and Criminal Procedure for their bachelor's theses. For instance, "Legal, theoretical and practical aspects of resocialization of those sentenced to imprisonment", "Legal characterization and qualification of fraud", "The legal and practical aspects of resocialization of convicts", "Aggravated murder qualification", "Legal regulation and practice of prevention of the circulation of prohibited articles and substances in prison", "Requirements of the authorized person to stop the vehicle legal aspects of criminalization", etc.

This choice aligns closely with their professional interests, which they often pursue further in the academic and professional master's study programmes in "Science of Law."

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

The academic bachelor's study programme in "Law Science" is well-structured and student-centered, ensuring that students gain practical skills. The teaching and evaluation methods used effectively support the achievement of the study courses' objectives and the overall study programme's learning outcomes.

Strengths:

- 1) Relevant course content: the study course content is pertinent and complementary.
- 2) Flexible approach for distance learning: the study programme effectively addresses the needs of working students through a flexible remote learning approach.

Weaknesses:

- 1) Insufficient interconnectivity in terms of assessment strategy between all study programmes in law hinders students' preparation for the State Exam.
- 2) Lack of clear procedures for online participation and examinations: the current flexible approach to online participation and examinations, while beneficial for addressing individual student needs, lacks clear procedures.
- 3) No mobilities for studies or practice organized: there are no mobilities for studies or practice organized, limiting students' opportunities for international exposure and development of

international competences.

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.

For students of the study programme, the study process takes place in two buildings in Riga: Valērijas Seiles Street 4 and Valērijas Seiles Street 1/4, as well as in buildings belonging to the Academy in Daugavpils and Liepāja. The study process in the branches is facilitated by teaching staff from Riga, as well as local faculty from Daugavpils and Liepāja. Practically all teaching staff involved in the implementation of the study programme additionally use the electronic learning environment (section 3.3.1 of the SAR).

The buildings contain auditoriums, administrative offices, and libraries. The premises are in good condition. Some auditoriums are equipped with projectors, whiteboards, computers, video conferencing tools, and other equipment. There are rooms with computers available for students and staff, although some computers, especially in the branches, are relatively outdated. Wireless network access is available throughout all buildings. As students may join lectures remotely, the facilities are equipped with necessary video conference tools, though the level of equipment could be improved considering the fact that the vast majority of students are part-time student (137 out of 148 in 2021/2022, 202 out of 222 in 2022/2023, and 177 out of 188 in 2023/2024 (see the SAR Annex: Academic Bachelor Study Programme statistics on students during the reporting period.docx).

As stated in section 1.3 of this report, the study provision, scientific provisions, informative provision (including library), material and technical provision, and financial provision comply with the specific features and conditions for the implementation of the study programme. On-site visits and interviews confirmed that the facilities and relevant resources are available for all study programmes. Resources for providing each study programme are not allocated separately.

2.3.2. N/A

2.3.3.

As stated in section 1.3 the funding is available to all study programmes to the level described in section 1.3. The main source of financing of the study process of the study programme is tuition fees set and approved by the BIA Senate. According to the SAR (section 3.3.3 of the part dedicated to Study Programme "Science of Law" (43380)), the expenses of the academic bachelor study programme "Science of Law" per student is 1 050 Euros per year. In the 2021/2022 study year, tuition fees in the academic bachelor's study programme: full-time - 1700 Euros per year; part-time Riga - 1500 Euros per year, in branches - 1000 Euros. Considering the number of students in the study programme (as of 1 October 2022 - 222 bachelor students), the financial support of the academic bachelor study programme "Science of Law" is sufficient and taking in the account costs

of conducting the studies per student (see SAR Annex "The Costs of the study direction "Science of Law" per student in 2021/2022 study year (Euro)") it ensures the feasible profitability of the study programme under analysis in this part of the report.

In Riga, students study full-time and part-time. In the branches part-time studies takes place on Fridays and Saturdays. There are no budget places, and full-time and part-time full-time students study for a fee only.

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

The resources and provisions for the study field are deemed adequate. The financial situation is stable, although it requires constant monitoring in the context of falling student numbers. The library's equipment and available digital resources are considered sufficient to the minimum requirement, however, the library fund in the most frequently used EU languages (in particular English) should be improved. The remote and flexible study process is one of the main items praised by the students.

Strengths:

- 1) Stable financial situation: BIA maintains a stable financial situation, ensuring the continuity and quality of its programmes.
- 2) Regional study center: BIA is highly regarded as a study center in Liepaja and Daugavpils, offering opportunities for legal studies in these cities.

Weaknesses:

- 1) Facilities and infrastructure: while the facilities are equipped with necessary video conference tools, they only meet the minimum level required.
- 2) Limited library resources: there is insufficient availability of books and other materials in mostly used EU official languages, particularly English, in the library.

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

Despite the weaknesses indicated, the prerequisites for study are adequate.

2.4. Teaching Staff

Analysis

2.4.1.

Based on the SAR (section 3.4.1.), 31 lecturers currently involved in the realization of the academic bachelor study programme "Science of Law" (43380) 61.29% primary are working in the BIA. 61.29% of the academic staff or 19 lecturers are with the doctor degree, 35.48% or 11 lecturers have master's degree (4 elected BIA, 7 not elected). According to academic positions – study quality is ensured by 3 professors (9.68%), 1 guest professor (3.23%), 4 associate professors (12.9%), 5 docents (16.13%), 3 guest docents (9.68%), 3 lecturers (9.68%), 8 guest lecturers (25.81%) and 4 leading researchers (12.9%).

BIA has established a system to attract skilled teaching staff for its study programmes. The election of academic staff follows unified, specialized criteria outlined in the Regulations on BIA Academic Positions. This process is based on an open competition that considers the applicant's academic qualifications and professional competence. Uniform criteria for the election include significant achievements in scientific and pedagogical activities, as well as alignment with BIA's mission for the respective study field. The process was known by elected academic staff members.

The academic staff possesses both the knowledge and professional experience pertinent to the subjects they teach in the field of Law Science. The study programme maintains a balance between professional and academic staff, creating a team that includes both practitioners in the field of law and academic professionals. This balanced approach helps achieve the study programme's planned goals, ensuring that students receive both academic and practical knowledge.

2.4.2.

During the on-site visit, the experts' group learned that the study programme director, who is responsible for the composition of the teaching staff, has sufficient discretion to make changes in academic staff due to incompetence or other reasons. An analysis of the teaching staff dynamics for the study programme from the 2021/2022 academic year to the 2022/2023 academic year indicates a slight decrease in the number of teaching staff, from 46 to 45 individuals (see the teaching staff involved in the implementation of the study field, section 3.4.2). Given the minimal change, it is suggested that the study programme has effective resource management.

2.4.3. N/A

2.4.4.

First, it must be mentioned that BIA provides no analysis on this aspect. According to the information about the publications and practical experience provided in the SAR (Annexes to the SAR - "II - Description of the Study Field - 2.4. Scientific Research and Artistic Creation: The list of publications of the teaching staff of the study field Science of Law 2021-2023" and "CV_ENG" of the teaching staff) the experts' group assessed the compliance of the experience of the academic staff assigned to teach different subjects in the study programme (based on the Annex "Teaching staff of the "Science of Law" field of study").

Professional Terminology and Latin Language are taught by 2 lecturers with no practical experience other than teaching and no publications. Legal Record Keeping is taught by a lecturer who has not published since 2021 and lacks relevant practical experience. Human Rights, Labour Law, European Union Law, Labor Protection Law, Public International Law is taught by a researcher who is not a practitioner and has not published in peer-reviewed journals since 2021. Although this researcher actively participates in conferences and publishes in conference proceedings and collections of articles based on their presentations, there is no evidence that these collections undergo peer-review.

Some lecturers do not have any publications; however, they are experienced practitioners. For instance, a practitioner in the administration of insolvency processes and a former deputy in Parliament with extensive practical experience teaches courses in Insolvency Law, Municipal Law, Theory of State and Law, among others. Law Enforcement Institutions is taught by a prosecutor practicing since 1995. Civil Law: General Part, Private International Law, and Intellectual Property Rights are taught by a lawyer practicing since 2009. Roman Law is taught by a state police inspector in position since 2017. The lecturer of Insurance Law worked in the insurance sector from 2001 to 2009. Liability Law and Property Law courses are taught by an attorney-at-law practicing since 2009.

In general, the academic staff engages in individual scientific research primarily related to the study programme's content, mainly at the national level. However, there is a noticeable lack of international research activities, projects, and publications. Although over 50% publications are in English, they are published to a considerable big extent in the journals and conference proceedings published nationally and regionally

2.4.5.

The teaching staff use the following forms of cooperation, as the SAR says (3.4.5) in order to improve the quality of academic and scientific activities in the implementation of the study programme: attendance of lectures/classes, practical sessions/examinations of another professors; participation in scientific research and scientific conferences; etc.

Unfortunately, the SAR does not provide any information on a formal structure or format where the teaching staff would meet to discuss and ensure a harmonized assessment strategy, avoid duplications, or address other critical coordination issues. Such meetings are essential for maintaining consistency in grading, aligning course content with learning outcomes, and sharing best practices among faculty. Without regular and structured meetings, there is a risk of inconsistencies in student assessment and potential overlaps in course content. Establishing a formal framework for regular faculty meetings dedicated to these topics would greatly enhance the quality and coherence of the programme.

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

The academic staff at the institution is generally knowledgeable and experienced, supported by effective human resources management that ensures stability. However, the staff lacks participation in international projects and mobility, which limits their global engagement. Additionally, the absence of regular and structured meetings hinders consistency in student assessment and leads to potential overlaps in course content.

Strengths:

- 1) Experienced practitioners: a great number of the academic staff possesses professional experience pertinent to the subjects they teach in the field of law.
- 2) Effective human resources management: effective human resources management ensures stability in the teaching staff.

Weaknesses:

- 1) Lack of international engagement: the academic staff does not participate in international projects and mobility, limiting global exposure and collaboration opportunities.
- 2) There are no regular and structured meetings to ensure consistency in student assessment and to prevent potential overlaps in course content.

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: Partially compliant

The academic staff at the institution is generally knowledgeable and experienced. However, four academic staff members neither has published in peer-reviewed journals or other works, nor has

relevant practical experience (Annexes to the SAR - "II - Description of the Study Field - 2.4. Scientific Research and Artistic Creation: The list of publications of the teaching staff of the study field Science of Law 2021-2023" and "CV_ENG" of the teaching staff).

2.5. Assessment of the Compliance

Requirements

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Study programme compliant with Regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers No. 240 " Provisions on the state academic of education standard ". See Annex No. 6 of the SAR of the study programme.

- 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 - 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

The description of the study courses and the study materials are in Latvian. Course descriptions are up to date and complies with legal requirements (literature, student independent work, etc. are included in the description). See: Annex of the SAR "The study course description _bachelor program.docx".

- 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

Enclosed sample of the diploma formally complied with the requirements at the time of the submission of the documents.

- 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

Academic staff complies with requirement of the Law - written confirmation by acting rector of BIA (see: Annex of the SAR "CONFIRMATION_Bac.edoc").

- 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

Written confirmation by the acting rector of BIA. See: Annex of the SAR "Study direction Science of Law Knowledge of the state language of the academic staff.edoc"

- 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

Enclosed sample agreement complies with mandatory provisions of the Cabinet regulations No.70. See: Annex of the SAR "Agreement_TZAb_pl.docx"

- 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

Cooperation agreement with EKA University of Applied Sciences Bachelor level students have opportunity to study in similar programme at EKA University of Applied Sciences (enclosed cooperation agreement and also see: SAR' Annex "BIA Study field Science of Law opportunities to continue education in another study program or high school.pdf").

- 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

In the enclosed document from 30 August 2023 (No. VT_23/1844) the obligations signed by Members of the Board guarantee that students will get compensation in case the study programme is closed.

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

Assessment of the requirement [8]

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Study programme complies with regulatory requirements at the time of the submission of the documents.

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

BIA is highly regarded as a study center in Liepaja and Daugavpils, offering opportunities for legal studies in these cities, and its graduates are well-received in the job market, readily finding employment opportunities in Latvia. The institution maintains a stable financial situation, ensuring the continuity and quality of its study programmes. However, the academic bachelor study programme experiences high student dropout rates, indicating potential issues with students' preparation, academic support, or external pressures, and there is no strategic approach to address this issue. Additionally, enrollment numbers are declining. Despite having pertinent and complementary course content and a flexible approach to distance learning that caters to working students, there is insufficient interconnectivity in the assessment strategy between all law study programmes, hindering students' preparation for the State Exam if they decide to continue with professional master studies. There is no students' mobility within the study programme and no clear strategy on how to enhance it. The flexible approach to online participation and examinations lacks clear procedures. Facilities are equipped with necessary video conference tools but only at a minimal level, and the library lacks sufficient materials in commonly used EU official languages, particularly English. While effective human resources management ensures stability among the teaching staff, the academic staff's lack of participation in international projects and mobility limits global exposure and collaboration opportunities. Furthermore, there are no regular and structured meetings to ensure consistency in student assessment and to prevent overlaps in course content.

Evaluation of the study programme "Science of Law"

Evaluation of the study programme:

Average

2.6. Recommendations for the Study Programme "Science of Law"

Short-term recommendations

- 1) Review the assessment strategy in the study programme to make sure it has necessary interconnection with the studies at professional master's programme.
- 2) Develop the strategy and preventive measures to tackle the dropouts in the study programme.
- 3) Establish clear guidelines and standards for online evaluation to prevent fraud and ensure that assessments accurately measure student knowledge and skills. Incorporate periodic reviews and updates to maintain integrity and effectiveness.
- 4) Develop a standardized online assessment procedure to ensure consistency and fairness in online examinations.
- 5) Establish regular, structured meetings for teaching staff to discuss and ensure a harmonized approach toward the content and delivery of the study programme.
- 6) Ensure that the awarded diploma complies with the amendments to the Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No. 202.
- 7) Ensure that academic staff members' competencies comply with minimum national requirements to make sure they have or recent practical experience or recent research outputs relevant to the study programme.
- 8) Revise and synchronize the content between the bachelor's and master's programmes to ensure that students who continue their studies in the professional master's programme are adequately prepared to pass the state exam for lawyer qualification.

Long-term recommendations

- 1) Develop and implement mobility windows of varying durations within the study programme to enhance the acquisition of international competencies.
- 2) To ensure that the library collection includes books in the most frequently used EU languages, particularly English, at least for the study courses based on transnational or international law.

II - "Science of Law" ASSESSMENT

II - "Science of Law" ASSESSMENT

2.1. Indicators Describing the Study Programme

Analysis

2.1.1.

Assessing the compliance of a study programme with the study field of law involves a comprehensive evaluation to ensure that the study programme meets established standards, criteria, and specific requirements of legal education. This evaluation includes an examination of the study programme's alignment with national educational standards and the specific standards of the legal field.

As detailed in SAR Annex 6 ("Academic Master's Study Program 'Science of Law' Compliance with the National Education Standard"), the academic master's study programme demonstrates full compliance with the requirements for the master level study programme. The study programme offers specialized in-depth training in three key areas: "Civil Law" "Criminal Law" and "Law in

Business and Management". These specializations provide students with targeted expertise, preparing them for various legal careers. The study programme also incorporates research components, which are essential for developing critical thinking and advanced legal research skills. The above-mentioned demonstrates the general compliance of the study programme with the study field of law.

2.1.2.

According to the SAR (p. 207), the title of the study programme is "Science of Law" in the study field "Law" with education classification code 45380 with the last 3 numbers (380) standing for law studies and programmes according to the classification of Latvian education: <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/291524-noteikumi-par-latvijas-izglitiba-klasifikaciju>. There is no qualification given after graduating as it is an academic master study programme.

According to SAR (p. 207), the aim of the programme is to prepare professionals with in-depth theoretical knowledge and research competences in the relevant field of law, by facilitating their further education at doctoral level. According to the information provided in the SAR (p. 208), the admission requirement for 2-year study programme in Latvian language studies is bachelor's degree in law or second level professional higher education (or equivalent higher education) a law degree with a minimum of 3 years' prior study. In accordance with SAR (p. 209), the admission requirements for 2-year study programme in English language studies are - Bachelor's degree in law or second level professional higher education (or equivalent higher education) in law with a minimum of 3 years prior study and English at least at B2 level. For 1 year and 5 months study programme implemented in Latvian, the admission requirements are bachelor's degree or higher professional second-level education (or equivalent) in law with a minimum of 4 years' prior study. Alternatively, bachelor's degree or higher professional second-level education (or equivalent higher education) with a minimum prior study period of 4 years or bachelor's degree with a minimum prior study period of 3 years and master's degree. For 1 year and 5 months study programme implemented in English, the admission requirements are English at least at B2 level and: 1. bachelor's degree or equivalent professional higher education qualification (or equivalent) a second or equivalent higher education qualification) in law with a minimum period of prior studies of at least 4 years. 2. in the sub-programme "Law in Business and Management" - a bachelor's degree or a second level professional higher education (or equivalent higher education) with a minimum prior study period of 4 years; - a bachelor's degree with a minimum prior study period of 3 years and a master's degree. It has been stated in the SAR (p. 210), that after successful completion of their studies, students are awarded with Master of Social Sciences in Law.

According to the SAR (p. 209), the study programme requires students to gather 120 CPs during the 2-year study programme and 90 CPs for the 1 year and 5 months study programme. The title, code, degree to be obtained, aims, objectives, learning outcomes, and admission requirements are interrelated. According to the SAR (p. 210), the study programme is implemented in Riga. Students in the branches expressed a shared opinion that it would be valuable to pursue master's level studies at the branch locations too. The duration and scope of the study programme are reasonable and justified.

2.1.3.

Based on the information specified in the SAR (p. 211), the first change that BIA made within the study programme parameters was the adjustment made in the credit point system based on "Amendments to the Law on Higher Education Institutions". Consequently, the curriculum was also revised, changing the course credits to the ECTS. The number of credits is multiplied by 1.5 to express credits in whole numbers.

In accordance with the information provided in the SAR (p. 211) and information gathered during on-site visit, following the previous accreditation in 2021, the aim, objectives and results of the study programme were updated and clarified, following the guidelines of the Practical Guide for the Formulation and Use of Learning Outcomes.

On 13 December 2023, the BIA Senate approved three sub-programmes replacing the previously implemented ones (names not mentioned in the SAR) with: "Civil Law", "Criminal Law" and "Law in Business and Management".

The academic master's study programme "Science of Law" sub-programmes have been improved in terms of content, with the inclusion of a new sub-programme "Law in Business and Management", as well as the addition of new study courses as "Fundamentals of Law", "Constitutional Court Procedure", "Pedagogy", "Combating Money Laundering", as well as "Medical Law". For foreign students, it is planned to additionally provide a study course "Professional Latvian Language" in Part B Compulsary elective courses.

2.1.4.

Based on the SAR (pp. 213-215), the number of highly skilled jobs is expected to grow by over 75 000 up to 2040. The Information Report indicates that the largest supply of tertiary-educated workers is in the social sciences, business and legal education subject groups. According to the results of the graduate monitoring provided in the SAR (p. 165), around 82% of all 2020 graduates for whom information is available were employed in 2021, while the average unemployment rate among economically active graduates was - 4.8%, which is lower than the national average among the tertiary-educated population. About 78% of all employed graduates on the study programme were employed in higher skilled occupations.

Based on the information gathered during the on-site meeting, the students of the academic master's study programme mentioned that their prospective interests for the future is to study further on PhD level. One of the students mentioned that she is currently working as a legal assistant in a law firm and after graduation from the study programme, she will get a promotion to the position even if she does not hold the qualification. It was also stated that, even if it is not an professional master's degree, it is still seen as valuable as it is master not bachelor degree, but of course the employment opportunities are more limited as for those that have the legal qualification. Another aspect that was stated by the current students was that some of the students that cannot pass the professional master's study programme, they transfer to academic master to complete the degree. Overall, the representatives of the management stated that this study programme is planned to be as an attractive opportunity for foreign students that wish to acquire a master's degree in Latvia.

With this accreditation procedure, BIA wishes to open a new sub-programme, "Law in Business and Management," for the study programme of 1 year and 5 months. Based on information gathered during the on-site visit, the reason for opening this new sub-programme is to attract foreign students from the EU and Central Asia, as it is an academic study programme. However, given the competitive nature of the international student market and the availability of similar study programmes, particularly those specializing in business law, it is unclear how this study programme would stand out to attract students for paid studies. Additionally, it has not been demonstrated how BIA will ensure the necessary human resources to deliver the study programme in English.

In accordance with SAR (p. 215), during the reporting period from the beginning of the academic year 2021/2022 to the beginning of the academic year 2023/2024 (as of 01 October), the number of

students in the academic master's degree programme "Science of Law" increased every year. In accordance with the SAR (p. 215), the number of students enrolled in the academic master degree study programme "Law" from 2021/2022 to 2023/2024 was 24. In 2021/2022, 3 students were admitted to the academic master's study programme, in 2022/2023 - 9, in 2023/2024 - 12. The experts' group views this as a positive trend; however, the yearly admission number of students is still comparatively low. Additionally, BIA does not provide any reasons for the increase in admission. In the experts' opinion, this trend may be associated with students' inability to pass the State Exam in the professional master's degree programme.

In the period 2021/2022 to the beginning of the academic year 2022/2023, the studies were successfully completed by 9 graduates. The comparably low number of graduates is related to the drop-out of students, which is considered to be a crucial issue in the management of the programme.

In the academic year 2021/2022, 3 students withdrew and 3 were admitted, in 2022/2023, 1 student was exmatriculated and 9 were enrolled in the programme, in the academic year 2023/2024, there were 5 dropouts and 12 students enrolled in the programme (Annex "Academic Master Study Programme " Law Science" statistics on students during the reporting period" in section 3.1.4 of the SAR). The total number of dropouts over 3 years was 9 students which makes over 35 per cent of the students admitted during the same period. This high dropout rate highlights the need for immediate intervention to address the underlying causes of student dropout and to develop strategies to improve student retention and success within the study programme.

Out of 9 dropouts, the most common reasons were voluntary withdrawal (3 students), non-fulfillment of study contract obligations (4 students). Additionally, 2 did not return from a study break (based on data provided in section 3.1.4. of the SAR).

During the on-site visit, BIA management asserted that they had done everything possible to prevent dropouts and believed there was little else that could be done. However, the experts believe that BIA management needs to urgently and strategically address the dropout issue by implementing targeted strategies to further reduce dropout rates and support student retention. First, BIA needs to investigate the reasons for "voluntary withdrawal" more thoroughly. These reasons could include poor preparation for studies, personal issues (e.g., balancing time between studies and family), and dissatisfaction with the study process. Second, the significant number of students dropping out due to academic debts indicates the necessity for enhanced academic support. Third, an early warning system should be developed to identify at-risk students based on academic performance and engagement metrics. This system will help to show in advance which students are at risk of dropping out, allowing for timely intervention and support.

2.1.5. N/A

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

All of the indicators of the study programme are in compliance with the existing preconditions of the implementation of the study programme. The study programme complies with the study field indicators, conditions and criteria. In the opinion of the experts' group, the title, code, degree to be obtained of the study programme, aims, objectives, learning outcomes and admission requirements are interrelated. The duration and scope of the study programme implementation as well as the implementation language, are reasonable and justified. The goals, objectives, learning outcomes are coherent. The high number of dropouts needs to be addressed urgently through a strategic

approach. Additionally, the demand for the study programme in English must be substantiated with concrete evidence.

Strengths:

- 1) Job market demand for graduates: there is a strong demand for graduates of the study programme in Latvian within the job market.
- 2) Increased enrollment: the number of students has increased in recent study years, indicating growing interest in the programme.

Weaknesses:

- 1) Unproven demand for the English programme: the demand for the programme in English is not substantiated, only presumed, which raises concerns about its viability and attractiveness to prospective students.
- 2) High student dropout rates: the programme experiences noticeable student dropout rates, which indicates potential issues with students' preparation, academic support, or external pressures affecting students' ability to complete the programme.
- 3) Lack of strategic approach to dropout rates: there is no strategic approach currently in place to address the high dropout rates. Without a targeted strategy, it is challenging to implement effective measures to retain students and support them through to graduation.

2.2. The Content of Studies and Implementation Thereof

Analysis

2.2.1.

Based on the SAR (section 3.2.1) BIA focuses this study programme on the acquisition of in-depth theoretical knowledge in the field of law, creating three specialized sub-programmes: "Civil Law", "Criminal Law" and "Law in Business and Management", which is oriented towards serving the business environment. Within the framework of this study programme, courses are implemented that give students the opportunity to acquire in-depth knowledge in the branches of legal science according to their specialization. Full-time studies in English last 2 years, while full-time studies in Latvian last 1 year and 5 months.

The Civil law sub-programme includes study courses in the field of civil rights, e.g.: Protection of civil rights in Europe, International civil procedure, Legal problems of family and inheritance, Problems of law of obligations and commercial transactions, etc. The Criminal law sub-programme includes study courses in the field of criminal law, e.g.: Current problems of Criminal law, Current problems of Criminal procedure law, Criminal punishment policy, International Criminal law, Criminology and operative theory, etc. The Law in Business and Management sub-programme includes study courses dedicated to the legal aspects of commercial activity and management, e.g.: International (European) labor law, Innovation management, Business project management, Organizational management, etc. The study programme includes current study courses that correspond to today's scientific trends, e.g.: Mediation and negotiations, Medical law, Prevention of money laundering, Innovation management, Business project management, etc. (section 3.2.1). Thus, in general, the content of the study programme is topical (it represents the content which is typical to similar study programmes in different jurisdictions), the content of the study courses is interconnected and complementary, corresponds to the objectives of the study programme and ensures the achievement of learning outcomes.

Several courses in the study programme are designed to develop research-related skills, enabling students to conduct analytical research in various domains of legal science using appropriate

methods. These courses teach students how to analyze data using relevant processing software, interpret results, and compile reports in the form of scientific publications.

The study programme consists of: 1) compulsory study courses (Part A) in the relevant sub-programme "Civil Law", "Criminal Law" and "Law in Business and Management", which include study courses of the relevant branch in the amount of 36 CPs each; 2) limited elective study courses (part B), which includes 17 study courses, of which study courses amounting to 24 CPs can be studied; 3) master's thesis (15 CPs), which students develop at the end of their studies, performing theory and practice analysis, research, data processing and interpretation (section 3.2.1).

In general, the study programme complies with the state education standard for such study programmes.

2.2.2.

The study programme generally ensures a robust structure that aligns with the criterion of awarding a degree based on the achievements and findings within the relevant field of science.

Based on the SAR (sections 3.2.2. and 3.2.1., as well as Annex "III - Description of the Study Programme - 3.2. The Content of Studies and Implementation Thereof") the awarding of the Master's degree is contingent upon the successful completion of all coursework and the defense of a thesis developed in the area of specialization. The study programme includes various other assessments that align with the latest advancements in the relevant scientific or artistic field. This ensures that students are not only consuming knowledge but also actively contributing to the development of their discipline. The thesis process is a critical component of the study programme, requiring students to engage deeply with their chosen area of specialization. This process involves significant research, analysis, and synthesis of findings, demonstrating the student's ability to contribute to the field.

However, it must be noted that ensuring comprehensive coverage of the scientific field and its achievements in the content of the study programme can be challenging in the specialization "Law in Business and Management," which is to be conducted in English. As highlighted in section 2.4.4. of the experts' report, the teaching staff currently demonstrates limited engagement with international research. This limitation is especially concerning given the predominantly transnational nature of the specialization, where exposure to and understanding of international legal standards, practices, and emerging trends are crucial. For the study programme to provide students with a well-rounded and relevant education, it is essential that the faculty not only enhance their language proficiency but also increase their participation in international research networks, conferences, and publications. This will help ensure that students are equipped with up-to-date, globally-informed perspectives necessary for success in a transnational legal environment.

Overall, in general the study programme's structure and its emphasis on rigorous research and thesis defense effectively ensure that the awarding of a master degree is grounded in the significant achievements and findings of the relevant field of science. However, in the specialization "Law in Business and Management" challenges may arise due to the teaching staff's limited engagement with international research, as this area requires a deep understanding of transnational legal practice and emerging global trends.

2.2.3.

The academic staff employs a variety of teaching methods (SAR, section 3.2.3), including lectures that incorporate active learning, workshop classes with discussions on current issues in legal

science, and unsupervised studies involving tasks such as writing reference papers, essays, developing projects, analyzing scientific publications, and delivering presentations. Practical classes are designed to enhance not only students' practical and analytical skills but also their personal, social, interpersonal, and intercultural competencies. Knowledge acquired through lectures and seminars is assessed using various methods, including review work, tests, practical exams, independent studies, reports, and reference papers. These assessments provide a comprehensive evaluation of the students' understanding and application of the material learned during the study process.

However, not all evaluation methods align with actual competencies' assessment. Notably, lecture participation is frequently used as a basis for assessment without a clear explanation of how this participation translates into the evaluation of specific skills and knowledge (for example, in study courses "Current problems of administrative law", "Protection of civil rights in Europe", etc.). This approach does not align with ECTS requirements, which emphasize the assessment of learning outcomes over mere physical presence.

During the on-site meetings with teaching staff and students, the experts' group learned that BIA effectively addresses the needs of working students and those with family obligations. BIA offers flexibility in allowing online participation for students who cannot attend in person due to specific reasons (e.g., child illness or work commitments). In such cases, individual study plans are offered, which is highly commendable. However, there is a need to establish a uniform standard for this flexibility, as part-time study programmes still require 50 percent onsite studies.

The on-site visit revealed that online knowledge testing is used widely even for exams, often depending on individual arrangements between students and instructors, and implemented in absence of a professor. This overreliance on online assessments may not provide a comprehensive evaluation of students' understanding and skills. Additionally, the high flexibility allowed in these arrangements can lead to inconsistencies in the rigor and fairness of the assessments. It is essential to ensure that the assessment methods employed are not only diverse but also equitable and reflective of the study programme's academic standards.

The experts believe that for the achievement of the learning outcomes and ensuring a high-quality study process clear procedures are needed to determine when student participation in online activities, including exams, is necessary to address individual needs. While the current process is flexible, it is somewhat chaotic, as it is difficult to establish the extent to which an individual student has studied online versus onsite. Establishing clear guidelines will help to maintain a balance between flexibility and the integrity of the study programme.

The implementation of the study programme should consider the mobility of students, which is currently lacking. Based on the SAR, within the reporting period zero incoming or outgoing students' mobilities were organized within the study programme (see Annex: Data on BIA student mobility). Internationalization at home activities can be a valuable solution for building international competencies among students (which is now on the agenda of BIA). These activities can significantly enhance students' global awareness and skills. However, they may not fully substitute the benefits of mobility to another country, which offers immersive cultural experiences, firsthand exposure to different educational systems, and unique professional opportunities.

BIA explains that the lack of mobility is because students work (mostly in law enforcement agencies). Knowing the reasons BIA should facilitate finding the solution. While internationalization at home is beneficial, it should be complemented by efforts to facilitate student mobility through

building mobility windows into the study programme, providing extra incentives, creating short-term mobility opportunities. This combination can provide a more holistic approach to developing students' international competencies.

2.2.4. N/A

2.2.5. N/A

2.2.6.

During the reporting period, the students of the programme developed and defended theses on pressing topics such as: "The Problems of Application and Enforcement of Administrative Penalties in Latvia," "Legal Regulation Issues Regarding State Police Employees and Personal Data Protection," "Challenges in Economic Court Rulings in Civil Proceedings," "Legal Regulation, Problems, and Solutions of Special Investigative Actions in Latvian Criminal Proceedings," "Criminal Legal Aspects of Tax Evasion in Latvia." The final theses are relevant to the field and correspond to the study programme.

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

The content of the study programme is topical, it meets scientific and Latvian labor market trends. Various study implementation methods are used. The remote and flexible study process is one of the main items praised by the students, however, there are no procedures for ensuring a systematic approach towards individual requests to study online. Over-reliance on online assessments may not provide a comprehensive evaluation of students' understanding and skills, indicating a need for a more responsible approach towards online assessment. This suggests a need for a more balanced and responsible approach to assessment methods to ensure a comprehensive evaluation of student capabilities.

Strengths:

- 1) Different study implementation methods are used.
- 2) Individualized approach: BIA demonstrates a strong commitment to addressing the individual needs of students.

Weaknesses:

- 1) Inconsistencies in the rigor and fairness of the assessments due to flexible online examination.
- 2) The study programme lacks procedures for ensuring a systematic approach towards individual requests to study online.
- 3) No mobilities for studies or practice organized: there are no mobilities for studies or practice organized, limiting students' opportunities for international exposure and development of international competences.

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

Master degree is awarded after successful completion of the study programme and successful defense of a thesis developed in the area of specialization and is grounded in the significant achievements and findings of the field of law science. Challenges may arise due to the teaching

staff's limited engagement with international research (SAR, Annex 6_Appendix_Academic master's study program Science of Law compliance with the national education standard.docx).

2.3. Resources and Provision of the Study Programme

Analysis

2.3.1.

According to the SAR (section 3.3.1 of the part dedicated to the Academic Master Study Programme "Science of Law" (45380)), the study process for the students enrolled in the programme takes place in two buildings in Riga: Valērijas Seiles Street 4 and Valērijas Seiles Street 1/4. Resources for providing each study programme are not allocated separately, so as stated in section 1.3., the study provision, scientific provisions, informative provision (including library), material and technical provision and financial provision comply with specific features and the conditions for the implementation of the study programme. As evidenced by the on-site visits and interviews, the facilities and relevant resources are available for all study programmes.

Individual approach allowing online participation for individual students results in more extensive hybrid studies. For hybrid studies, a combination of physical and digital infrastructure is essential to facilitate seamless integration of in-person and online learning experiences. The facility infrastructure of BIA should be enhanced to ensure quality hybrid lectures. This includes classroom technology like whiteboards and projectors (that BIA possesses), but also high-quality audio systems for the students to hear the audience fully (which are not present in the classes). Moodle is used systematically in the study programme at BIA to organize course materials, assignments.

2.3.2. N/A

2.3.3.

As stated in section 1.3 the funding is available to all study programmes to the level described in section 1.3.

According to the SAR (section 3.3.3 dedicated to the Study Programme "Science of Law" (45380)) the main source of financing of the study process of the study programme is the tuition fees. Amount of the tuition fee and payment procedure for each study year are set and approved by the BIA Senate. There are the following payment options for tuition fees at the BIA: for the study programme as a whole; for the whole study year; for one semester; monthly payments in accordance with the contractual payment schedule. The expenses of the master study programme "Science of Law" per student is 1 270 Euros per year (see: SAR, Annex "The Costs of the study direction "Science of Law" per student in 2021/2022. study year (Euro)"). In the 2021/2022 study year, tuition fee in the master's study programme (full-time studies) was 1800 Euros per year. Considering the number of students in the study programme (as of 01 October 2022 - 31 master students), the financial support of the master study programme "Science of Law" was sufficient, although the decreasing number of students can make the profitability of the study programme under the risk. Therefore, it requires constant monitoring in this area.

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

The resources and provisions for the study field are deemed adequate. The financial situation is stable, although it requires constant monitoring in the context of falling student numbers. However, BIA faces some challenges regarding library resources in English. The library's equipment and available digital resources are considered sufficient to the minimum requirement, however, the

current facility infrastructure is adequate to a minimum extent for conducting hybrid lectures.

Strengths:

1) Systematic use of Moodle: the systematic and structured use of the Moodle environment enhances the learning experience.

Weaknesses:

1) Inadequate facility infrastructure for quality hybrid lectures: the current facility infrastructure is adequate to a minimum extent for conducting hybrid lectures.

Assessment of the requirement [6]

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The study provision, informative provision (including library), material and technical provision and financial provision are adequate to implement of the study programme.

2.4. Teaching Staff

Analysis

2.4.1.

The SAR indicates (section 3.4.1.) that 23 lecturers are currently involved in the realization of the study programme "Science of Law" primary are working in the BIA. 56.52% of the academic staff or 13 lecturers are with a doctor degree, 43.48% or 10 lecturers have master's degree (4 elected BSA, 6 not elected).

According to academic positions - study quality is ensured by 3 professors (13.04%), 1 guest professor (4.35%), 2 associate professors (8.7%), 4 docents (17.39%) 2 guest docents (8.7%) , 2 lecturers (8.7%), 7 guest lecturers (30.43%) and 2 leading researchers (8.7%).

4 teaching staff members involved in the academic Master study programme "Science of Law" are experts at the Latvian Council of Science.

BIA has established a system to attract skilled teaching staff for its study programmes (section 3.4.1.). The election of academic staff follows unified, specialized criteria outlined in the Regulations on BIA Academic Positions. This process is based on an open competition that considers the applicant's academic qualifications and professional competence. Uniform criteria for the election include significant achievements in scientific and pedagogical activities, as well as alignment with BIA's mission for the respective study direction. The process was known by elected academic staff members.

The study programme maintains a balance between professional and academic staff, creating a team that includes both practitioners in the field of law and academic professionals. This balanced approach helps achieve the study programme's planned goals, ensuring that students receive both academic and practical knowledge.

The qualification of the teaching staff members involved in the implementation of the study

programme generally complies with the requirements for the implementation of the study programme and the requirements set forth in the regulatory enactments and in principle enables achieving the aims and learning outcomes of the study programme and the relevant study courses.

The specialization of the academic master's programme "Law in Business and Management," which is conducted in English, has a predominantly transnational focus, requiring exposure to and understanding of international legal standards, practices, and emerging trends. As highlighted in section 2.4.4. of the experts' report, the teaching staff currently exhibits limited engagement with international research. Although B2 is the minimum standard for teaching in English-taught study programmes in Latvia, achieving a C1 level of English proficiency is necessary for the faculty to engage effectively with global academic communities. This includes participating in reputable international conferences in the field, as well as publishing in journals recognized in the field of law, thereby contributing meaningfully to the discipline. C1 proficiency allows users to handle more abstract and complex topics, including the understanding and use of idiomatic language and nuanced expressions, which B2 users may find challenging. At the C1 level, individuals can communicate more fluently and flexibly, using language appropriately across various contexts. In contrast, B2 users might struggle with less familiar or more complex situations. Additionally, C1 users demonstrate greater accuracy and control over grammatical structures, vocabulary, and cohesive devices, enabling them to produce more precise and well-organized speech and writing. Given that over ten professors currently possess only a B2 level of English proficiency (as detailed in the SAR Annex: Teaching Staff of the Science of Law Field of Study), it is recommended that BIA continue investing in targeted efforts to enhance the language skills of their teaching staff to implement the English-language study programme effectively (further recommendations can be found in section 1.3.6 of the experts' report).

2.4.2.

An analysis of the teaching staff dynamics for the study programme from the 2021/2022 academic year to the 2023/2024 academic year indicates a more visible change in staff. This change is substantiated results from BIA's strategic policy to integrate young scientists and foreign professors into the academic framework. 9 new staff members were brought in (guest lecturer, mg. iur., prosecutor, guest lecturer, dr. iur., mg. iur., assistant attorney, guest lecturer, Dr. phil., guest lecturer, dr. iur., guest lecturer, AML certified specialist, guest lecturer, PhD. in Law, Docent, Mg. oec., guest lecturer, Mg. philol). As there are no signs that the changes disrupted the study process, joining people are either practitioners or PhD. It can be inferred that their involvement will enrich the learning experience, resulting in better student outcomes and overall academic excellence.

2.4.3. N/A

2.4.4.

According to the information about the publications and practical experience provided in the SAR (Annexes to the SAR - "II - Description of the Study Field - 2.4. Scientific Research and Artistic Creation: The list of publications of the teaching staff of the study field Science of Law 2021-2023" and "CV_ENG" of the teaching staff) the experts' group assessed the compliance of the experience of the academic staff assigned to teach different subjects in the study programme (based on the Annex "Teaching staff of the "Science of Law" field of study").

Pedagogy and Current Problems of Criminal Law are taught by 2 professors who have neither published since 2021 nor have relevant practical experience. The European Human Rights and International (European) Labor Law courses are taught by a researcher who has not published in peer-reviewed journals since 2021. Although the researcher actively participates in conferences and

publishes in conference proceedings and collections of articles based on conference presentations, there is no evidence that these collections undergo peer-review.

However, the teaching staff of the study programme brings a range of expertise and practical experience to the various courses offered. For instance, Public Procurement, Protection of Personal Data, and International (European) Labor Law are taught by a legal adviser/lawyer who has been practicing since 2004. Prevention Against Money Laundering is taught by an AML investigator specializing in transaction monitoring since 2022. Current Problems of Criminal Law (one of two lecturers) is taught by a prosecutor practicing since 1995. International Criminal Law is taught by an attorney's assistant who has been in practice since 2014.

2.4.5.

The SAR provides (section 3.4.5) that to improve the quality of academic and scientific activities in the implementation of the study programme, various forms of cooperation between teaching staff are applied. These include peer attendance of lectures, practical sessions, and examinations by associate professors to assess strengths and weaknesses, and the preparation of annual reports by associate professors on their academic and scientific activities, including publications and conference participation.

Unfortunately, the SAR does not provide any information on a formal structure or format where the teaching staff would meet to discuss and ensure a harmonized assessment strategy, avoid duplications, or address other critical coordination issues. Such meetings are essential for maintaining consistency in grading, aligning course content with learning outcomes, and sharing best practices among faculty. Without regular and structured meetings, there is a risk of inconsistencies in student assessment and potential overlaps in course content. Establishing a formal framework for regular faculty meetings dedicated to these topics would greatly enhance the quality and coherence of the study programme.

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

The qualifications of the teaching staff delivering the study programme in Latvian mostly meet the required standards. However, their research competencies, particularly in the international arena, are not well developed. There is a notable absence of a formal structure or format where the teaching staff can meet to discuss and ensure a harmonized approach toward the content and delivery of the study programme.

Strengths:

- 1) The academic staff includes specialists who actively practice in specific areas of law.

Weaknesses:

- 1) Limited internationalization of academic staff research portfolio.
- 2) No formal structure or format where the teaching staff can meet to discuss and ensure a harmonized approach toward the content and delivery of the study programme.
- 3) The teaching staff's current English proficiency at the B2 level is not sufficient to deliver and participate in top-tier international research.

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: Partially compliant

The qualifications of the teaching staff delivering the study programme in Latvian mostly meet the required standards. Three academic staff members neither have published in peer-reviewed journals or other works, nor have relevant practical experience (Annexes to the SAR - "II - Description of the Study Field - 2.4. Scientific Research and Artistic Creation: The list of publications of the teaching staff of the study field Science of Law 2021-2023" and "CV_ENG" of the teaching staff).

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

The study programme complies with Regulations No. 240 of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Latvia "Regulations on the standard of national academic education". See: the SAR Annex 6 of the study programme.

- 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

The descriptions of the study courses and the study materials (done in Latvian and English) correspond to the law requirements. See: the SAR Annex - Academic master's study program Science of Law DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDY COURSE.docx

- 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

Enclosed sample diploma formally complied with the requirements at the time of the submission of the documents.

- 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

Confirmation by the acting rector of BIA. See: the SAR Annex CONFIRMATION_MAG.edoc

- 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

Confirmation signed by the acting rector of BIA. See: the SAR Annex "Study direction Science of Law Knowledge of the state language of the academic staff.edoc"

- 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

There are some doubts about English knowledge of academic staff as BIA would like to provide this programme in English. Only 12 members of academic staff can provide document about their English proficiency.

- 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

There is one sample of agreement, probably for all study programmes. Enclosed sample comply with legal requirements – particularly with Cabinet regulations No.70. See: the SAR Annex "Agreement_TZAb_pl.docx"

- 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

Under the agreement with Riga Stradiņš university of 7 February 2018 students have possibility to study at academic masters programme of Riga Stradiņš university. See: SAR, Annex "BIA Study field Science of Law opportunities to continue education in another study program or high school.pdf"

- 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

Document on the performance of the obligations signed by Members of the Board provides the

guarantee to compensate losses for the students if the programme is revoked and students do not want to continue studies in the offered programmes. See: the SAR Annex 2.1.4. "BIA obligations.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: Not relevant

Assessment of the requirement [8]

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

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

Study programme complies with most regulatory demands. However, three academic staff members neither have published in peer-reviewed journals or other works, nor have relevant practical experience (Annexes to the SAR - "II - Description of the Study Field - 2.4. Scientific Research and Artistic Creation: The list of publications of the teaching staff of the study field Science of Law 2021-2023" and "CV_ENG" of the teaching staff).

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

There is a strong demand for graduates of the study programme in Latvian within the job market, indicating its relevance and value. The study programme employs various study implementation methods, catering to different learning preferences and enhancing the educational experience. BIA demonstrates a strong commitment to addressing the individual needs of students, ensuring personalized support and attention. The systematic and structured use of the Moodle environment further enhances the learning experience, providing a robust platform for course management and student engagement. Additionally, the academic staff includes specialists who actively practice in specific areas of law, bringing practical, real-world insights to the curriculum and enriching the academic environment.

The study programme faces several significant challenges that undermine its effectiveness and sustainability. Firstly, the study programme experiences high student dropout rates, indicating potential issues with student preparation, academic support, or external pressures, compounded by the absence of a strategic approach to address these dropouts. The flexibility in online examinations leads to inconsistencies in the rigor and fairness of assessments, there are no procedures to systematically handle individual requests for online study. The facility infrastructure is adequate for conducting hybrid lectures, however, needs improvement. There is no formal structure for teaching staff to meet and ensure a harmonized approach to the programme's content and delivery. The academic staff's research portfolio lacks internationalization, the students' mobility within the programme is absent. The demand for the English version of the study programme is not substantiated, raising concerns about its viability.

Evaluation of the study programme "Science of Law"

Evaluation of the study programme:

Average

2.6. Recommendations for the Study Programme "Science of Law"

Short-term recommendations

- 1) Establish clear guidelines and standards for online evaluation to prevent abuse and ensure that assessments accurately measure student knowledge and skills. Incorporate periodic reviews and updates to maintain integrity and effectiveness.
- 2) Develop a standardized online assessment procedure to ensure consistency and fairness in online examinations.
- 3) Establish clear procedures for handling individual requests to study online, ensuring a systematic approach.
- 4) Develop and implement a strategic retention plan to systematically address and reduce high dropout rates.
- 5) Establish regular, structured meetings for teaching staff to discuss and ensure a harmonized approach toward the content and delivery of the programme.
- 6) Ensure that the awarded diploma complies with the amendments to the Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No. 202.
- 7) Ensure that the assessment of learning outcomes prioritizes students' mastery of course content and skills rather than merely their physical presence in lectures in line with ECTS standards.

Long-term recommendations

- 1) Provide additional resources such as funding, training, and administrative support to facilitate international research activities, including targeted language training programmes to ensure that the teaching staff achieves at least a C1 level of English proficiency.
- 2) Conduct thorough market research to assess the demand for the study programme in English, targeting potential students from the EU, Central Asia, and other regions.
- 3) Secure funding and upgrade the facility infrastructure to ensure it is fully equipped for high-quality hybrid lectures.
- 4) Develop and implement mobility windows for long-term or short term students' mobility.

II - "Science of Law" ASSESSMENT

II - "Science of Law" ASSESSMENT

2.1. Indicators Describing the Study Programme

Analysis

2.1.1.

The professional master's study programme "Science of Law" complies with the indicators, conditions, and criteria of the "Law" study field. According to the SAR (p. 134), the title of the study

programme is "Science of Law" in the study field of "Law" with education classification code 47380 with the last 3 numbers (380) standing for law studies and study programmes according to the classification of Latvian education: <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/291524-noteikumi-par-latvijas-izglitiba-klasifikaciju>. Lawyer's qualification is given after graduating as it is a professional master study programme.

2.1.2.

According to the SAR (p.134), the aim of the study programme is to prepare qualified specialists for practical work in the legal profession, in accordance with Latvian education Level 7 of the Qualification Framework. According to the information provided in the SAR (p. 135-136), the admission requirement for 2-year study programme in Latvian is professional bachelor's degree or academic bachelor's degree in law. The admission requirement for 1 year and 5 months study programme in Latvian are Bachelor's degree or higher professional second-level education (or equivalent) in law with a minimum period of 4 years prior study.

It has been stated in the SAR (p. 135), that after successful completion of their studies and passing the state unified lawyers' exam, students are awarded a professional master's degree in law. According to the SAR (p. 135-136), the study programme requires students to gather 120 CPs during the length of study of a 2-year study programme and 90 CPs for 1 year and 5 months study programme. The title, code, degree and qualification to be obtained of the study programme, aims, objectives, learning outcomes and admission requirements are interrelated. According to the SAR (p. 136), the study programme is implemented in Riga. The duration and scope of the study programme implementation as well as the implementation language, are reasonable and justified.

It must be noted that students in the branches expressed their shared opinion that it would be of great value if it was possible for them to have an opportunity to study at master's level also in the branches. Another major point that has been raised during the on-site visit was the hardship of students to pass the lawyer State Exam, which raises a relevant discussion on study content and how well students are prepared for the exam as it is the main difference between academic and professional master study programmes.

2.1.3.

Based on the information specified in the SAR (p. 137), the first change that has been made within the study programme parameters is adjustments made in the credit point system based on "Amendments to the Law on Higher Education Institutions". In compliance with the legal requirements, BIA made the relevant amendments to the regulations on studies, establishing study credits according to the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS). Consequently, the curriculum was also revised, changing the course credits to the ECTS. The number of credits was multiplied by 1.5 to express credits in whole numbers.

In accordance with the SAR (p. 137), since 2022, the BIA has implemented a 3+2 year model for graduates who have completed an academic bachelor's degree programme in law, as well as a 4+1,5 year model for graduates who have completed a professional bachelor's degree study programme in law with a relevant internship. Following the previous accreditation in 2021, the aim, objectives and deliverables of the study programme were updated and clarified, following the guidelines of the Practical Guide for the Formulation and Use of Learning Outcomes. To the expert group, it has remained unclear why students with previous professional studies in Law in amount of 4 years are required to study 1,5 years, if for example, they have acquired and passed specific study courses, including internships. Usually, the model is 4+1 and 3+2.

2.1.4.

In accordance with the SAR (p. 138-140), the number of highly skilled jobs is expected to grow by over 75 000 up to 2040. The Information Report indicates that the largest supply of tertiary-educated workers is in the social sciences, business and legal education subject groups. According to the results of the graduate monitoring provided in the SAR (p. 165), around 82% of all 2020 graduates for whom information is available were employed in 2021, while the average unemployment rate among economically active graduates was - 4.8%, which is lower than the national average among the tertiary-educated population. About 78% of all employed graduates were employed in higher skilled occupations. There is no data provided about the engagement of the graduates of the study programme in the traditional legal professions, which is essential data for evaluating the need for the study programme.

It is important to note that the number of students in the study programme has decreased significantly over the past three years, by more than 45%, from 38 in 2021/2022 to 18 in 2022/2023, and remained at 18 in 2023/2024 (Annex "Professional Master Study Programme statistics on students during the reporting period"). The intake of students decreased from 24 in 2021/2022 to 3 in 2022/2023, and slightly increased to 4 in 2023/2024.

The issue of raising the sustainability of the study programme is also a significant number of the dropout of the students, which is a crucial issue in the management of the study programme. In the academic year 2021/2022, 9 students withdrew (were exmatriculated) and 24 were enrolled in the study programme with total number of 38 students, 2022/2023, 18 students withdrew and only 3 were enrolled in the study programme with total number of 18 students. In the academic year 2023/2024, there were 7 dropouts and 4 students enrolled in the study programme with 18 students in total (Annex "Professional Master Study Programme statistics on students during the reporting period" in section 3.1.4 of the SAR).

In total, over the three years, there were 34 dropouts, while only 36 students were enrolled, showing a nearly equal number of dropouts and enrollments. This high dropout rate indicates systematic issues in the study programme's provision and underscores the urgent need for immediate intervention to address the underlying causes of student attrition. Developing strategies to improve student retention and success within the study programme is critical.

The analysis of the drop-out reasons shows that the primary reason for student dropouts is voluntary withdrawal (9 students), followed by non-fulfillment of study contract obligations due to academic debts (4 students). However, many dropouts in the 2021/2022 academic year have unspecified reasons (20 students - 59%), indicating a need for better data collection and analysis regarding student attrition. In experts' view this is due to the fact that the students of BIA professional master's study programme have problems passing the State Exam (read section 3.2.2. of the report), since in the period 2021/2022 to the beginning of the academic year 2022/2023, zero graduates successfully completed their studies.

During the on-site visit, BIA management asserted that they had done everything possible to prevent dropouts and believed there was little else that could be done. There was a criticism expressed for the content of the State Exam. However, the experts believe that BIA management needs to urgently and strategically address the dropout and admission issue by implementing targeted strategies to enhance the success in the State Exam (read section 3.2.3 of the report).

2.1.5. N/A

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

The duration and scope of the study programme is not completely clear for the second implementation duration of 1 year and 5 months as the usual approach for studies is 4+1, not 4+1,5 years. The implementation language is reasonable and justified, since the study programme is implemented in Latvian. The goals, objectives, learning outcomes are in line and in compliance. There has been a very high dropout rate and very low admission to the study programme, which needs to be addressed urgently with a targeted strategy. It is not clear how the study programme meets all the necessary requirements and standards for the purpose of successful preparation of students for the State Exam, since the students face significant hardship to pass the exam successfully. The economic and / or social justification of the study programme is presumed and not substantiated.

Strengths: No strengths identified, only regular practice

Weaknesses:

- 1) No economic and social justification: the study programme lacks a clear economic and social justification.
- 2) Zero graduation rates: the study programme has not produced any graduates, highlighting severe issues in retention and completion.
- 3) High student dropout rates: noticeable student dropout rates indicate potential issues with provision of the study programme.
- 4) Lack of strategic approach to dropout rates: there is no strategic approach to address high dropout rates, making it difficult to retain students.
- 5) Decreasing enrollment numbers: there has been a decline in new enrollments, threatening the study programme's long-term viability.
- 6) Unclear of the 4+1.5 year model: the 4+1.5 year model for obtaining a lawyer's qualification is unclear.

2.2. The Content of Studies and Implementation Thereof

Analysis

2.2.1.

The descriptions of the study courses in this study programme are proper and in accordance with the requirements of the law. The analysis of particular course descriptions shows that, as a rule, they should allow students to acquire adequate theoretical knowledge as well as the ability to use it independently in both research and professional activities. The content of some of the courses is dedicated to the improvement of the logical and legal thinking of master's student such as "Current problems of legal theory and legal philosophy", and some focus on issues more oriented towards the acquisition of theoretical knowledge and its application in practice (see, for example, the curriculum for the subjects "Current problems of Criminal law" or "Constitutional courts proceedings"). Course descriptions such as "Study works" with publication in scientific journal and Logics and methodology of scientific research testify to the inclusion in the curriculum of the acquisition of skills in research work, and course descriptions such as "Current problems of civil process in Latvia and international civil process" and "Civil defense and environmental protection" testify to the inclusion in the curriculum of aspects shaping skills in professional activities.

In accordance with the SAR (p. 137), the Ministry of Justice, in 2023, in a comparison of all similar master's degree study programmes of Latvian universities, concluded that the study courses of the BIA professional master's degree programme "Law" are most in line with the Cabinet of Ministers

Regulation No. 46 of 15 January 2019 "Procedures of the State Unified Professional Qualification Examination for Lawyers". However, it is not clear from descriptions of particular courses how specifically students will be prepared and trained for the State Exam, which is so extensive and complex that it requires very good specialized preparation. Despite the general declaration in the SAR that the curriculum for several courses takes into account preparation for the State Exam, the issue of preparation for the State Exam does not appear even once in the description of the study courses with regard to educational methods, or with regard to assessment methods. In the opinion of the experts' group, there is a huge space in this regard for modifications to the study programme to better prepare students to pass the State Exam. For instance, academic bachelor study programme teaches the courses of Public International law and European Union law, the knowledge of which may be checked during the State Exam. These courses cannot be repeated in the professional master's studies, however, teaching staff must ensure that the students in the master's study programme are assessed in a synchronized way and there is harmonization of the study content of the study programmes at different levels (the master study programmes are built on the knowledge of academic bachelor study programme and the knowledge relevant to the State Exam is assessed in a systematic way).

In the report on the previous accreditation, the evaluation team pointed out that the study plans (all variants) listed a master's thesis (16 CPs) and a state exam (4 CPs) as the state exam, but Cabinet Regulation No. 512 "Regulations on the State Standard for Higher Secondary Vocational Education" (in force at the time of previous evaluation) stipulated that the development and defense of a master's thesis or dissertation (thesis project) must be at least 20 CPs. Currently, the number of CPs for a master's thesis was adjusted to these requirements - it is 20 CPs.

In the SAR, BIA (section 2.2.2) says that changes and improvements to all study programmes are carried out taking into account the results of surveys of students, graduates and employers, which are organized once or twice a year, depending on the survey participants. During the on-site visit, representatives from all of these groups were asked about the surveys and their participation, but the information provided was ambiguous: some students remembered receiving emails with general questions about studying, while some said they participated in surveys on specific subjects. The participating employers did not confirm participation in such surveys, however, indicated that surveys were addressed to them regarding internships. Therefore, the experts conclude that the procedure in place does not ensure full compliance of the study programme with labor market needs.

2.2.2.

Master's degree is awarded upon the defense of a master's thesis on topical issues and problems in the relevant branch (sub-branch) of law and by completing the State Exam, in accordance with Cabinet Regulations of 15 January 2019 on the "Procedure of the National Unified Examination for Professional Qualification of a Lawyer."

According to the SAR (section 3.2.2), the relevance of the social sciences master's degree in law to the achievements and knowledge in the field of law is substantiated by the research conducted by students as part of their scientific activity. This includes preparing a scientific article for publication in a scientific journal, which is a compulsory component of the studies. A specific course, "Study Works with Publication in a Scientific Journal," is dedicated to this, within which students analyze a specific problem and prepare a scientific work. However, the most important and critical part of evaluating students' skills in this area is the preparation and defense of the Master's thesis, which confirms the students' ability to independently conduct scientific research at the appropriate level. Generally, students fulfill this condition without issue.

Passing State Exam confirms that the student has a sufficient level of knowledge in accordance with the standard requirements of the lawyer's profession. In the response from the Ministry of Justice, sent to the experts' group by the Agency, the Ministry observes that since the introduction of the examination, 6 examinations were conducted, of which 4 were taken by students of BIA (students of BIA did not take the examination in the summer of the academic year 2020/2021 and the summer of the academic year 2021/2022). In total, 8 students registered for the exam and all students took the exam. None of the students of BIA passed the examination. Several students retook the exam. The fact that, to date, none of the students in this course passed this exam suggests that this condition is prohibitive, making it impossible for students to obtain a degree. This requires a swift and decisive response from BIA, taking into account the recommendations made.

2.2.3.

Implementation of the study programme by academic staff is carried out using traditional methods. These are mainly: lectures - understood as theoretical classes with elements of active educational methods; workshop classes taking into account current issues in legal sciences; classes without the direct participation of an academic teacher such as papers, essays, project development, analysis of scientific publications, presentations. From the descriptions of individual courses, it is clear that practical classes take into account the development of personal, social and interpersonal skills.

Methods of evaluation of acquired knowledge are various types of written examinations, control works and tests, less often oral examinations, also the results of classes without the direct participation of an academic teacher, such as papers, essays or presentations, are used.

The on-site visit revealed that online knowledge testing is used widely even for exams, often depending on individual arrangements between students and instructors, and implemented in absence of a professor. The experts' group learned that the teaching staff is flexible in offering online examinations when requested by students or for other reasons. Some participants suggested that the exams with a large number of questions and very limited time help to eliminate potential risks. This over-reliance on online assessments may not provide a comprehensive evaluation of students' understanding and skills. Additionally, the high flexibility allowed in these arrangements can lead to inconsistencies in the rigor and fairness of the assessments. Such practices might not adequately prepare students for the State Exam, which requires a more structured and standardized evaluation approach. It is essential to ensure that the assessment methods employed are not only diverse but also equitable and reflective of the program's academic standards.

According to the SAR (section 3.2.3) formative and summative assessment is used in the studies. Formative assessment is in the daily study process - by asking students control questions during lectures, as well as discussing students' independent work. Summative assessment takes place at the end of each course in the form of a test or examination. Summative assessment tests are organised in the form of written (paper-based, electronic, including Moodle system) or oral discussions. However, a comparison of individual course descriptions in terms of student assessment shows major disparities and the lack of harmonized standards for assessing students in the study courses that are part of the State Exam. This in the end leads to inconsistencies in student preparedness. For example, differences can be identified between the subjects "Current problems of Administrative law" and "Current problems of Criminal law". In the case of the first course, the assessment element is two independent papers (presentation and test papers - each 10% of the final grade) while in the case of the course "Current problems of Criminal law course", the assessment element is the analysis of 20 judgements and tests. This disparity in assessment methods can result in varying levels of knowledge and skills among students, ultimately affecting their performance in the State Exam. To address this issue, it is crucial to review and standardize

the assessment strategy across all relevant courses.

In the response from the Ministry of Justice, sent to the experts' group by the Agency, the Ministry observed that none of the students of BIA obtained a passing grade in the State exam in the theoretical part in all the areas mentioned in point 24 of the Examination Regulations, therefore no student passed the theoretical part of the examination. According to the examination rules the examination is passed if the student obtains a passing grade in the theoretical and practical part of each area mentioned in point 24 of the Examination Rules; therefore, given the results no students of BIA have passed the examination so far.

The aforementioned issues in student assessment may significantly hinder the achievement of the aims and learning outcomes of the study courses and the overall study programme. These assessment challenges could be an obstacle for students to fully demonstrate their knowledge and skills, thereby obstructing their academic progress and the intended educational goals of the programme. Addressing these assessment issues is crucial to ensure that the study programme effectively meets its objectives and provides students with the necessary competencies to succeed in their professional fields.

During the on-site meetings with teaching staff and students, the experts' group learned that BIA effectively addresses the needs of working students and those with family obligations. BIA offers flexibility in allowing online participation for students who cannot attend in person due to specific reasons (e.g., child illness or work commitments). In such cases, individual study plans are offered, which is highly commendable. However, there is a need to establish a uniform standard for this flexibility, as all programmes still require 50 percent onsite studies. While the current process is flexible, it is somewhat chaotic, as it is difficult to establish the extent to which an individual student has studied online versus onsite. Establishing clear guidelines will help to maintain a balance between flexibility and the integrity of the study programme.

Individual approach allowing online participation for individual students results in more extensive hybrid studies. For hybrid studies, a combination of physical and digital infrastructure is essential to facilitate seamless integration of in-person and online learning experiences. The facility infrastructure of BIA should be enhanced to ensure quality hybrid lectures. This includes classroom technology like whiteboards and projectors (that BIA possesses), but also high-quality audio systems for the students to hear the audience fully (which are not present in the classes). Moodle is used systematically in the study programme at BIA to organize course materials, assignments.

2.2.4.

The study programme provides three student internships. According to the SAR (section: Annex to section 3.2.4), both aims and tasks of the internships are related to the learning outcomes, for example: the aim of Practice I is to promote students' understanding of the nature, theories and principles of scientific research creativity; to establish and develop professional knowledge in law; to provide students with scientific theoretical and practical preparation for the development of the Master's thesis; to promote students' understanding of the nature and manifestations of scientific research creativity in law; to develop scientific and research skills and competences in the selection of master's thesis topics and the basic requirements of its theoretical and practical structure. The task of the Practice I is to prepare students for scientific research and for the proper elaboration of the master's thesis.

The number of cooperation agreements, especially with entities in the public sector, testifies to the fact that BIA provides students with opportunities for these internships (SAR, Annex to section 2.5.1

- list of cooperation agreements). However, there is no demonstrated procedure for organizing these internships and directing students to the relevant institutions. While the SAR and the description of the study programme (Annex to section 3.2.4) assure that internship assignments are linked to achievable learning outcomes and comply with the requirements of legal acts, there is no evidence of systemic arrangements for verifying this. Establishing a clear and systematic process for managing internships and ensuring alignment with learning outcomes is essential to guarantee the quality and effectiveness of these practical experiences.

2.2.5. N/A

2.2.6.

The list of thesis topics requested during the on-site visit shows that these topics are clearly related to the study programme. Examples of theses reflecting the connection to the field of study are: "Special features of confiscation of property"; "Legal regulation of seafarers social insurance in the Baltic States"; "The issues of legal regulation of the State Police employee as a natural person in the field of personal data protection".

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

While the study programme is well-structured in terms of its courses, the teaching and evaluation methods, although diverse, do not adequately prepare students for the State Exam. The current procedure does not ensure the programme's full compliance with labor market needs due to the low influence of employers on the education programme. There is a lack of harmonized standards for assessing students in courses that are part of the State Exam, and insufficient control over the use of online evaluations. Additionally, there is no clear and systematic process for managing internships and ensuring they align with learning outcomes. The remote and flexible study process is highly praised by students; however, establishing clear guidelines for the online study component is necessary while addressing individual needs and maintaining a balance between flexibility and the integrity of the study programme.

Strengths:

- 1) Diverse evaluation methods: the programme uses a variety of methods to evaluate the knowledge acquired by students.
- 2) Individualized approach: BIA demonstrates a strong commitment to addressing the individual needs of students.

Weaknesses:

- 1) Lack of harmonized assessment standards: there are no harmonized standards for assessing students in the study courses that are part of the State Exam, and there is insufficient control over the use of online evaluations.
- 2) Inadequate management of internships: there is a lack of a clear and systematic process for managing internships and ensuring they align with learning outcomes.

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

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

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

The study programme for obtaining a master's degree based on the achievements and findings

of the field of science of law is inadequate, in terms of the lack of harmonisation of the modes of training and student assessment with the formula provided by the State Exam. Together with the overuse of the online formula in terms of student education and assessment, this results in a de facto inability to obtain the degree.

2.3. Resources and Provision of the Study Programme

Analysis

2.3.1.

For students of the study programme, the study process takes place in two buildings in Riga: Valērijas Seiles Street 4 and Valērijas Seiles Street 1/4. Resources for providing each study programme are not allocated separately, so as stated in section 1.3 of the report, the study provision, scientific provisions, informative provision (including library), material and technical provision and financial provision comply with specific features and the conditions for the implementation of the study programme. As evidenced by the on-site visits and interviews the facilities and relevant resources are available for all study programmes.

The availability of books in English in the library is insufficient, particularly for courses such as International and European Union Law. While these subjects are integral parts of the curriculum of the study programme, the English-language books currently available and were in the library during the on-site visit were very outdated. This lack of up-to-date resources in English hinders students' ability to access current information and research, which is essential for their studies and academic development. To ensure that students receive a comprehensive and modern education, it is crucial to update the library's collection with recent publications and resources in English, especially for key courses like International and European Union Law, at least with a minimum number of books. This will enhance the quality of education and better prepare students for the demands of the global job market.

2.3.2. N/A

2.3.3.

As stated in section 1.3 the funding is available to all study programmes to the level described in section 1.3.

According to the SAR (section 3.3.3) the main source of financing of the study process of the study programme is the tuition fees. Amount of the tuition fee and payment procedure for each study year are set and approved by the BIA Senate. There are the following payment options for tuition fees at the BIA: for the study programme as a whole; for the whole study year; for one semester; monthly payments in accordance with the contractual payment schedule. Every year the number of budget places financed by the BIA is set upon the BIA rector's order in the basic studies. Competition for the budget places is regulated by the Regulations on the competition for the budget places of the BIA (available at: https://bsa.edu.lv/docs/2020/nolikums_konkurss_2020-LAT.pdf). The expenses of the master study programme "Science of Law" per student is 1 270 Euros per year. In the 2021/2022 study year, tuition fee in the master's study programme (full-time) is 1800 Euros per year. Considering the number of students in the study programme (as of 01 October 2022 there were 31 master students), the financial support of the master study programme "Science of Law" is sufficient, however, due to radically decreasing number of students at a high risk.

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

The resources and provisions for the study field comply with minimum standards. The financial situation is stable, although it requires constant monitoring due to falling student numbers. BIA does not ensure that at least a minimum number of books in English is available in the library. The library's equipment and available digital resources meet the minimum requirements, but the facility infrastructure should be enhanced to ensure quality hybrid lectures.

Strengths:

1) Systematic use of Moodle: the systematic and structured use of the Moodle environment enhances the learning experience.

Weaknesses:

1) Infrastructure for hybrid lectures satisfies only minimum needs: the current facility infrastructure is barely adequate for conducting quality hybrid lectures.

2) Insufficient availability of English books in the library: there is a lack of sufficient, up-to-date English-language books in the library, particularly for key courses like International and European Union Law.

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

Despite the weaknesses identified above, in general the study conditions are adequate for provision of the programme.

2.4. Teaching Staff

Analysis

2.4.1.

As can be seen from the summary in the SAR prepared by BIA 12 lecturers are currently involved in the implementation of the study programme 'Science of Law'. Of these, 66.67% are primarily working in the BIA. Of the total teaching staff in this study programme, 8 members of the academic staff are with a doctoral degree (5 elected, 3 not elected), while 4 lecturers have master's degree (3 elected, 1 not elected).

The qualifications and number of academic staff engaged in the professional master degree study programme 'Science of Law' meet the requirements of the Law on Higher Education Institutions: academic staff involved in the implementation of the study programme: have a doctorate or master's degree for teaching a relevant study course. An analysis of the qualifications of individual staff members shows that they are sufficient to ensure the achievement of the aims and learning outcomes of the study programme and the relevant study courses. For example, one person, who is an associate professor, has a PhD in law science, is an attorney-at-law, and specialises in civil law, teaching courses such as "Current problems of the civil process", "Problems of obligations and Commercial law", "Protection of Civil law in Europe". Another person who has a PhD in law science, is an attorney-at-law, specializes in constitutional law, is an author of legal doctrinal commentaries on constitutional law, teaches courses such as: "Constitutional court proceedings", "Comparative Constitutional law". Two academic staff members have doctorate degrees in other sciences (Philosophy and Economics) but teach courses in this study programme that meet their

qualifications: "Logic and methodology of scientific research"; "Management of the organisation".

BIA has adopted regulations for attracting qualified teaching staff to relevant study programmes. Standardised criteria for a special approach apply to the selection of academic staff, which are reflected in the Regulations for Academic Positions at the BIA (BIA Senate Protocol No. 131 of 23 October 2017). Selection for academic positions is based on an open competition with consideration given to the candidate's academic qualification and professional competence requirements.

Out of 12 lecturers currently involved in the implementation of the study programme 'Science of Law' at BIA, 4 lecturers teaching such courses as "Protection of civil rights in Europe", "Comparative constitutional law", "Current problems of legal theory and legal philosophy", "European human rights" can demonstrate international experience gained through teaching mobility. It is essential for the quality and relevance of the study programme that lecturers have such international exposure, as it brings diverse perspectives and up-to-date knowledge to the curriculum. This international experience can enhance the educational experience for students, better preparing them for a globalized job market and enriching their understanding of international legal systems and practice. Increasing the number of lecturers with international experience should be a priority to further elevate the study programme's standards and attractiveness to prospective students.

2.4.2.

Analysis of the dynamics of the teaching staff of the study programme for the period from 2021/2022 academic year till 2022/2023 academic year (SAR, section: Study Programme 47380, 3.4.1) shows that the teaching staff decreased from 17 to 12 people (however, the list of academic staff presented in the self-assessment report only includes 10 people). According to the SAR (section: 3.4.2) there was a qualitative change in the teaching staff, which is confirmed by the fact that during the reporting period, lecturers with practical and scientific experience in the field of legal science, as well as persons with a doctorate degree, were recruited. All professional lecturers involved in the implementation of the study programme have a PhD or a master's degree; the education acquired by the lecturers of the specialised courses corresponds to the field of the study course (currently all lecturers have a PhD or a Master's degree in legal science - there are two acceptable exceptions). The classes taught by guest lecturers is an advantage. In the period from autumn of the academic year 2021/2022 until the autumn of the 2023/2024 academic year new teaching staff was involved in the implementation of the study programme: of which one person is a guest lecturer, mg.iur., prosecutor, and the other person is a guest lecturer, dr.iur., Head of the Legal Department of the National Forest Service. The involvement of new teaching staff in the operation of the study programme gives an opportunity to increase the scientific potential of the study programme, which helps to increase the study results.

It is also worth noting that foreign guest lecturers participate in the implementation of the study programme, albeit to a limited extent.

It should also be noted that at BIA there are systematic arrangements for the employment of academic staff (see section 2.3.5 of the SAR). For the election of the academic staff, unified, special approach criteria are set out, which are reflected in the Regulations on BIA Academic Positions (BIA Senate Protocol No. 131 of 23.10.2017). The election into academic positions is based on an open competition taking into account the requirements set for the applicant's academic qualifications and professional competence. In the election of the academic staff, uniform criteria are set, the most important of which are the achievements in scientific and pedagogical activity, as well as the coherence of the respective direction with the mission of the BIA study field.

It is also worth noting that foreign guest lecturers participate in the implementation of the study programme, albeit to a limited extent. During the reporting period, 4 lecturers conducted their lectures in English (Annex "BIA Statistical Data on the Incoming and Outgoing Mobility of Teaching Staff"). Given that the study programme includes several courses addressing issues where European regulation and international practice are crucial, and considering the zero mobility of students in the study programme (Annex: "Data on student mobility"), more efforts should be made to ensure that students develop their internationalization-related competences.

2.4.3. N/A

2.4.4.

According to the information about the publications and practical experience provided in the SAR (Annexes to the SAR - "II - Description of the Study Field - 2.4. Scientific Research and Artistic Creation: The list of publications of the teaching staff of the study field Science of Law 2021-2023" and "CV_ENG" of the teaching staff) the experts' group assessed the compliance of the experience of the academic staff assigned to teach different subjects in the study programme (based on the Annex "Teaching staff of the "Science of Law" field of study"). An analysis of the publications of individual academic staff members shows that almost all of them have published scientific papers in recent years, except for one lecturer. Additionally, the lecturer for the "Management of the Organization" course lacks both publications and relevant, up-to-date practical experience. This lecturer held leadership positions in university management from 1995 to 1999, but given that over 20 years have passed, this experience cannot be considered relevant to this study programme.

The "European Human Rights Law" course is taught by a researcher who is not a practitioner and has not published in peer-reviewed journals since 2021. Although the researcher actively participates in conferences and publishes in conference proceedings and collections of articles based on conference presentations, there is no evidence that these collections undergo peer review.

Furthermore, an analysis of the individual's publications shows that most of these publications are in conference proceedings, often in Latvian or Russian. The level of internationalization of these publications is quite limited. Only two of these publications are indexed in the Scopus database.

Most of the courses are taught by the teaching staff bringing a wealth of practical experience across various legal disciplines. Current problems of criminal law are covered by a prosecutor active since 1995, while civil law courses are taught by a sworn lawyer practicing since 2010. "Administrative law issues" are addressed by a legal department manager working since 2005, and "Comparative constitutional law and court proceedings" are taught by an attorney practicing since 2009. "Family and inheritance law" is handled by a practitioner with over 20 years of experience. Overall, this blend of extensive practical experience and expertise ensures a comprehensive development of students' practical skills and is suitable for professional master study programme.

2.4.5.

According to the information provided in the SAR (section: Study Programme 47380, 3.4.5), as well as from the information provided by the management (meeting in Riga, additional information), a form of mutual cooperation between teaching staff for quality improvement in the delivery of the study programme is used within HEI, and it consists of the participation of associate professors in lectures/classes, practical sessions/examinations in order to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the academic staff's work.

During the on-site visit, the experts' group discovered that no specific meetings were organized to

discuss the results of the State Exam. Given that the State Exam is a prerequisite for graduating from the study programme, discussing the results—both positive and negative—should be a well-established routine involving all academic staff in the study programme and beyond. This is particularly important since BIA receives the exam results directly. Establishing regular meetings to analyze and discuss these results will help ensure continuous improvement and alignment with academic standards.

The SAR (section: Study Programme 47380, 3.4.5) also mentions the quality control and analysis of the study and teaching process carried out by the Council of the Study Course 'Science of Law'. BIA declares that the Council of the study field 'Law' ensures the interconnection of study courses by regularly evaluating and improving study programmes, evaluating teaching staff on the results of research and academic performance. However, from the on-site visit (meeting with the QA manager in Riga) it appears that the quality process of education is only being implemented and the steps taken so far consisted of meetings with the management.

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

The qualifications of the teaching staff involved in the study programme generally meet the required standards. However, their internationalization-related competences should be improved, particularly through increased mobility opportunities. While there are some exceptions, the overall quality of scientific publications is average, and two lecturers have no peer-reviewed publications. One lecturer is neither a researcher, nor a practitioner. Additionally, the internationalization of these publications is limited, indicating a need for more globally oriented research efforts. Furthermore, the mechanism for mutual cooperation among the teaching staff in implementing the study programme is not effective, which hinders cohesive curriculum and assessment development.

Strengths:

1) Practitioners involvement: the academic staff includes practitioners actively practicing in the relevant field of law, ensuring that students receive practical and up-to-date insights from professionals with real-world experience.

Weaknesses:

1) Lack of research-based competencies: the publication activity of some lecturers is quite low, and a considerable proportion of publications are conference proceedings rather than peer-reviewed journal articles.

2) Limited mutual cooperation among academic staff members: there are limited forms of mutual cooperation among the teaching staff in the implementation of the study programme, which may hinder cohesive curriculum and assessment development.

3) Lack of internationalization-related competences: there is a lack of academic staff with internationalization-related competences, which is critical for addressing issues of European regulation and international practice within the study programme. More efforts are needed to develop these competences among the staff to enhance the global perspective of the study programme.

Assessment of the requirement [7]

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

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

The qualifications of the teaching staff involved in the study programme generally meet the required standards. However, two lecturers have no peer-reviewed publications, one lecturer is neither a researcher, nor a practitioner (Annexes to the SAR – “II - Description of the Study Field - 2.4. Scientific Research and Artistic Creation: The list of publications of the teaching staff of the study field Science of Law 2021-2023” and CVs of the teaching staff”, “Teaching staff of the “Science of Law” field of study).

2.5. Assessment of the Compliance

Requirements

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The study programme complies with Regulations No. 305 of the Cabinet of Ministers "Regulations on the standard of state professional higher education ". The study programme is more than 60 CPs; obligatory study courses, scientific research study courses, practice are included. Final exam – 30 CPs (pre-defence of the Master paper – 4, defence of the Master paper- 20 , State Exam – 6). See: SAR Annex 6.

- 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: Partially compliant

The SAR includes references to the previous Lawyers professional standard (possibly a mistake). The current professional standard was approved on 08 April 2020. Also the content of the study programme must be revised. For example, part 4.1.6. of the Professional Standard (development of the legal norms) requires including Legal methods. It is not included in the document of BIA. There is not analyses of compliance of the study programme with the content of the State Exam. It is a very important as students face problem to pass State Exam.

Only partly compliance both for the professional standard and content of the State Exam.

- 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

The descriptions of the study courses and study materials are in Latvian. All mandatory elements are included, for example, literature, student independent work etc. See: SAR, Annex "Master's study program Science of Law DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDY COURSE.docx". They comply with requirements of law.

- 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

Enclosed sample diploma formally complied with the requirements at the time of the submission of the documents.

- 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

Written confirmation by the acting rector of BIA. See: SAR, Annex Study direction Science of Law Knowledge of the state language of the academic staff.edoc

- 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

BIA provided one sample of the study agreement, probably used for all study programmes. The enclosed sample complies with Cabinet regulations No.70. See: SAR, Annex "Agreement_TZAb_pl.docx".

- 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

There is agreement with Turiba University that students have opportunity to continue studies at similar professional master's programme at Turiba University. See: SAR, Annex "BIA Study field Science of Law opportunities to continue education in another study program or high

school.pdf".

- 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

Document on performance of obligations signed by Members of the Board of 30 August 2023 No. VT_23/1844. There is guarantee that the losses of students will be compensated. See: SAR, Annex "2.1.4. BIA obligations.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: Not relevant

Assessment of the requirement [8]

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

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

Study programme only partially complies with regulatory demands as improvements in study programme content are needed to ensure that the study programme complies with the professional standard and content of the State Exam.

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

The study programme faces several critical issues that need immediate attention. Firstly, it has not produced any graduates, indicating severe problems with student retention and completion. High student dropout rates further exacerbate this issue, suggesting potential flaws in the study programme's provision and support systems. Additionally, there is no strategic approach to address these dropout rates, making it challenging to implement effective measures to retain students. The decline in new enrollments also threatens the study programme's long-term viability, highlighting the need for enhanced marketing and outreach efforts. If not addressed urgently, the situation poses the risk to the reputation not only to this study programme, but also to the whole field of law at BIA. The main reason underlining the situation is that the study programme suffers from a lack of harmonized assessment standards, particularly for courses that are part of the State Exam, and insufficient control over online evaluations. Given the fact that students have not passed the State Exam for three consecutive years, immediate actions are required. However, it is important to recognize that the results of addressing these deficiencies will not be seen quickly and may take up way more than two years to fully manifest.

The current facility infrastructure is adequate for conducting hybrid lectures, however, it necessitates significant upgrades to ensure quality education. The publication activity of some lecturers is quite low, with many relying on conference materials rather than peer-reviewed journal

articles. This points to a need for enhanced research competences among the faculty. Lastly, the absence of student mobility limits students' exposure to international experiences and learning opportunities, further undermining the study programme's provision. There is a noticeable lack of academic staff with internationalization-related competences, crucial for addressing European regulation and international practice issues within the study programme.

Evaluation of the study programme "Science of Law"

Evaluation of the study programme:

Average

2.6. Recommendations for the Study Programme "Science of Law"

Short-term recommendations

- 1) Organize regular meetings involving all academic staff to discuss the results of the State Exam, identify common areas where students struggle, and adjust the assessment strategies accordingly to make sure that students graduate from the study programme.
- 2) Establish harmonized standards for assessing students in the study courses that are part of the State Exam and improve control over online evaluations.
- 3) Enhance internship management by developing a clear and systematic process for organizing and managing internships, ensuring they align with the learning outcomes.
- 4) Increase teaching staff collaboration and publication efforts, in particular in the field of law, by scheduling regular collaborative meetings, workshops, and research discussions for sharing best publication practices on publishing in high-impact journals rather than conference proceedings.
- 5) Increase the availability of up-to-date English-language books in the library, particularly for key courses like International and European Union Law.
- 6) Develop and implement a strategic approach to reduce high dropout rates and retain students through to graduation based on the thorough analysis of the dropout reasons.
- 7) Provide clear and detailed information online about the 4+1.5 year model for obtaining a lawyer's qualification to prospective students.
- 8) Revise content of the study programme taking into account the new Professional Standard and the content of the State Exam.
- 9) Ensure that the awarded diploma complies with the amendments to the Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No. 202.

Long-term recommendations

- 1) Implement support mechanisms such as mentorship programmes, and additional resources to help students succeed and reduce dropout rates, thereby enhancing the economic sustainability of the study programme.
- 2) Upgrade the facility infrastructure to ensure it is fully adequate for conducting high-quality hybrid lectures.
- 3) Develop and implement a strategy for internationalization of the study programme.

II - "Law" ASSESSMENT

II - "Law" ASSESSMENT

2.1. Indicators Describing the Study Programme

Analysis

2.1.1.

The doctoral study programme "Law" complies with indicators, conditions and criteria of the study field of "Law". According to the SAR (p. 81), the title of the study programme is "Law" in the study field of "Law" with the education classification code 51380, where the last three numbers (380) represent law studies and study programmes according to the classification of Latvian education.

2.1.2.

The length of the implementation of the study programme, which is 3 years for full-time studies, is evaluated as sufficient for acquiring the necessary skills and managing to conduct research on doctoral level. The study programme requires students to gather 180 CPs during their studies. According to the SAR (p. 84), after successfully defending their doctoral thesis students are awarded a Doctor of Science (Ph.D.) in the social sciences. There is no qualification awarded upon graduation as it is a doctoral study programme. According to the SAR (p. 84), the study programme is implemented in Riga.

According to the SAR (p. 84), the admission requirements for the doctoral study programme implemented in Latvian are: master's degree in law or equivalent; scientific, pedagogical and/or professional proof of professional and scientific activity; interviews. For the study programme implemented in English, there is an additional requirement of B2 level of English.

In this regard, it must be observed that students entering the doctoral study programme implemented in Latvian are not required to have English language skills. Professional English is a part of the doctoral studies curriculum, where students learn it as a language for specific purposes. Although the study programme focuses predominantly on civil and criminal law, foreign language skills are particularly important for the internationalization of doctoral studies, including research trips abroad and accessing research completed in foreign countries. Additionally, one Scopus, WoS or ERIH-indexed publication is a requirement to complete doctoral studies, and there is no possibility to publish such a publication in the field of law in the Latvian language. Therefore, it is recommended to consider setting a minimum threshold for English or another foreign language for admission to the doctoral study programme for all candidates. This requirement would align well with the study programme's aim - to train highly qualified legal scholars for the further development of science in both the Latvian and international contexts.

The aim of the study programme, as stated in the SAR (p. 81), is to provide studies at the highest level in law to train highly qualified legal scholars, facilitating the further development of legal science in both the Latvian and international contexts. The study programme offers opportunities to deepen knowledge and research skills in the theoretical aspects of legal science, with a particular focus on enhancing research competencies, preparing candidates for independent scientific research work, and enabling the production of high-quality doctoral theses. The study programme is oriented towards the training of qualified legal researchers for academic work.

The study programme focuses primarily on civil and criminal law. The SAR states that "the program offered by the Academy emphasizes the training of specialists in civil law, criminal law, international law, paying attention to the development of these fields not only in Latvia, but also in other

European Union countries and in the world" (section 3.2.2 of the SAR). However, this specific focus is not reflected in the study programme's stated goal, which is presented in general terms, creating an impression of the broad scope of the programme. Revising the aim of the study programme to accurately reflect its real scope is needed to properly inform potential candidates. Now, the goal of the study programme is quite generalized and does not fully accurately reflect the scope, as it became evident during the onsite visit that the focus areas of the studies at BIA on PhD level are criminal and civil law. In the future, it is advisable that the goal is clearly defined and reflects the reality in terms of information to the potential candidates.

Thus, the title, code, degree to be obtained, objectives, learning outcomes, and general admission requirements, except for foreign language skills and the aims, of the study programme are interrelated. The duration, scope of the study programme implementation, and the implementation language are generally reasonable and justified.

2.1.3.

Based on the information specified in the SAR (p. 85), the only change that has been made within the study programme parameters is adjustments made in the credit point system based on "Amendments to the Law on Higher Education Institutions", which reworded the term "credit" in Article 1 of the Law on Higher Education stating that 60 credits shall correspond to the study credits acquired in full-time studies in one academic year in accordance with the ECTS. In compliance with the law, the curriculum was also revised, changing the course credits to the ECTS. The number of credits was multiplied by 1.5 to express credits in whole numbers.

2.1.4.

The information about the teaching staff provided in the report is not consistent. In Section 3.4.1. the SAR states that "21 lecturers are involved in the implementation of the doctoral study program "Law" in the reporting period". On the other hand, in Section 3.4.2. on the dynamics of the teaching staff composition the SAR says that "During the reporting period, the analysis of the dynamics of the number of lecturers of the doctoral study program "Law" shows that the teaching staff was 22 people, but at the beginning of the 2023 study year, it decreased by 2 persons". The latter statement as well as the list of the academic staff provided in the "Appendix Composition of the academic staff.docx" shows that there are 20 lectures involved.

Based on the SAR (section 3.4.1.), during the reporting period from 1 October 2021 to 1 October 2023, the number of matriculated students in the doctoral study programme "Law" was 10 (also Annex "Doctoral Study Program "Law" statistics on students during the reporting period"). Additional data provided to the experts' group after the visit indicates that there are currently 9 students enrolled in the study programme. The information about dropout students is not consistent in the SAR. According to the SAR (Annex "Doctoral Study Program "Law" statistics on students during the reporting period"), 10 students withdrew from the study programme since the start of 2021/2022 academic year (see the last table in the Annex, column "dropout"). However, the section "Dropout statistics by years" in the same Annex as well as the data in the Appendix "Statistical data on students" demonstrate that there were 7 dropouts during the reporting period. The students dropped out either by choice or due to failure to meet programme requirements (both academic and financial) (confirmed during the interviews with the target groups). This indicates that these students did not successfully complete the study programme. The data on the students admitted to doctoral studies is not consistent either. Figure 3.2. "The number of students admitted to the first course in doctoral study program "Law", total" in the Appendix "Statistical data on students" shows that there were 9 enrollments, whereas the summary table in the Annex "Doctoral Study Program "Law" statistics on students during the reporting period" shows 10 enrolments. Given the fact that

aprox. 10 students were admitted to the study programme over this period (see the last table in the Annex, column "1st year"), 7 to 10 students dropout represents a significant challenge for the study programme. The reasons for the dropout rate vary, with most cases related to the students' inability to complete the study programme effectively, often due to failure to meet deadlines or achieve measurable scientific research results. A smaller number of withdrawals are due to financial difficulties, i.e., the inability to finance further studies (SAR, section 3.1.4).

2.1.5. N/A

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

All the indicators of the study programme are generally in compliance with the existing preconditions of the implementation of the study programme. The study programme complies with the study field indicators, conditions and criteria. In the opinion of the experts' group, the title, code, degree to be obtained of the study programme, aims, objectives, learning outcomes and admission requirements are interrelated, except for the need to ensure linguistic competences. The duration and scope of the study programme implementation as well as the current implementation language (only the students studying in Latvian), are reasonable and justified. The implementation of the study programme in English requires further revision. The goals, objectives, learning outcomes are in general in compliance with the general standard, however, the goal of the study programme needs clarification to reflect the current specialization of the study programme. There has been a low number of students involved in PhD studies, but it can be justified with the existing situation of funding for doctoral studies in the whole country. The dropout rate and suspension of the studies is considerably high.

Strengths: No strengths identified

Weaknesses:

- 1) Lack of clarity of language of implementation: there is a lack of clarity regarding the implementation of the study programme fully in English, including the necessary human resources and the scope of the study programme.
- 2) High suspension rate: a considerable portion of students (30%) are currently in suspension, indicating potential issues with student engagement, satisfaction, or external factors affecting their ability to continue their studies.
- 3) Decreasing enrollment: there is an overall decreasing number of students enrolling in the study programme, which could impact on the study programme's sustainability and growth.
- 4) High dropout rates: there is a significant number of students dropping out, which could also impact the study programme's sustainability and growth.

2.2. The Content of Studies and Implementation Thereof

Analysis

3.2.1.

The content of the doctoral study programme "Law" is divided into several sections (section 3.2.1. of the SAR) and in general complies with national regulations. Each section focuses on developing specific skills necessary for successful careers in legal academia and beyond. This structure allows for systematic progression, starting with theoretical foundations and advancing to specialized, practical skills, ultimately preparing students to contribute to teach future generations.

The mandatory part (Part A) consists of courses in "Legal Theory and Legal Methodology", "Scientific

Activities and Research Methodology", "University Pedagogy and Development of Higher Education Systems", and "Legal Foreign Language" (section 3.2.1. of the SAR). In the experts' view, this section presents a rather typical introduction to the taught PhD study programme in the field of law and ensures students gain foundational knowledge, research development skills, and teaching competence. The pedagogical work section (Part A) of the doctoral study programme includes three courses specifically designed to train doctoral students in teaching methodologies and practices.

The mandatory elective part (Part B) offers number of courses on topics such as "Criminal Law", "Criminal Law Procedure", various aspects of "Prevention of Money Laundering and Terrorism", "Civil Law", "Civil Procedure Law", "Public International Law", and "Private International Law". The elective part (Part C) includes 14 specialized courses.

While these general courses are typically offered at bachelor's and master's levels, at the PhD level, they should be presented with an emphasis not only on advanced academic competences, but also on advanced study content (for instance the course of International public law).

Components of Scientific Research Work, which forms the main part of the study programme, include the preparation of peer-reviewed scientific publications (minimum 3), participation with a report at international scientific conferences, seminars (minimum 2) and preparation of the doctoral thesis. During the on-site visit the experts learned that one of three peer-reviewed scientific publications must be published in the journals indexed in Scopus, WoS or ERIH databasis. In experts' view, requiring at least one Scopus, WoS or ERIH-indexed publication to complete doctoral studies is a significant step forward in the internationalization of research in BIA. This requirement not only benefits the individual students by enhancing their skills and career prospects but also contributes to the international visibility of BIA.

As observed in section 2.1.2. of this report, the study programme focuses on civil and criminal law. Although the SAR indicates one thesis is developed in international law (section 3.1.3. of the SAR), it was clarified during the meeting with the head of the doctoral school that it is in criminal law, focusing on international aspects within the topic. Given the research potential of the academic staff at BIA (see section 2.4. of the report), this focus is well identified and optimal.

It must be noted that the doctoral study programme does not offer the development of such competences as project development, science communication, etc. These skills are increasingly important in the modern academic and professional landscape, where researchers must be adept at managing projects, securing funding, and effectively communicating their findings to both academic and non-academic audiences. Additionally, given the fact that international research projects activities of supervisors and other academic staff members in the study programme are very scarce, incorporating these skills will help early career researchers to develop the necessary competencies to engage in international research networks and collaborations. This enhancement will make the doctoral study programme more topical.

2.2.2.

As demonstrated in 3.2.1. and 3.2.2. of the SAR, doctoral degree in this study programme is granted based on a doctoral candidate's significant contributions to their area of research after the receiving the training in the taught programme. The study programme requires conducting original and rigorous research that adds new knowledge or insights to the field, publicly presenting the core research results through publications and the final research work. The candidates must demonstrate a deep understanding of the subject, utilize appropriate methodologies, and produce results that withstand critical evaluation by experts. The degree is awarded when the candidate's research

findings and scholarly achievements are recognized as advancing the field. Acquisition of the study programme is controlled by the Doctoral Programme Council, in which the director of the doctoral study programme and the scientific supervisor of the doctoral thesis participate (section 3.2.3. of the SAR). In this way, the standard proposed in the doctoral study programme complies with the generally accepted practice for awarding a doctoral degree.

However, it must be noted that due to linguistic barriers of both, academic staff and doctoral students, some achievements of the field of law may not be accessed and utilized in the study process.

2.2.3.

The SAR indicates (section 3.2.3) that the doctoral study programme is designed to be able to achieve the set goals of the study programme, which is accomplished by achieving the results of individual study courses, observing the principles of student-centered education in the study process, ensuring an individual approach. When implementing the study programme, various study methods are used: lectures, seminar classes with discussions on current issues in law, independent work, which includes reports, essays, analysis of scientific articles, preparation of scientific articles, preparation of a presentation for conferences, preparation of a legal opinion, practicum that allows approbation of the acquired knowledge in the practical environment - scientific and pedagogical practice.

The experts' group recommends reviewing the strategy of evaluation within the courses. First, the evaluation methods should be in line with ECTS thus the presence in lectures as evaluation method should be associated with evaluation of knowledge and skills rather than merely attendance. Additionally, the evaluation strategy is somehow unified, however rather poor and may impede the achievement of learning outcomes - the final mark typically consists of: attendance of lectures and participation in seminars, independent report, a number of tasks, final test. In most of the cases, the course descriptions do not clearly indicate the exact type of assessment methods (course descriptions operate with the same general types of assessment - exam test, task, without mentioning which kind of task, and which kind of test. The question is if the proposed evaluation strategy is suitable for all the subjects in doctoral study programme, including pedagogical practice.

Moreover, the SAR indicates (p. 89) that the study programme is currently implemented in Latvian, with up to 20% of the studies conducted in English. On the other hand, the SAR states that the study programme is designed to be implemented in English as well (section 3.1.2. of the SAR). In the end, it is unclear to which extent the study programme is delivered in the foreign language. Based on the SAR (p. 89), foreign professors visit the study programme, however, the SAR does not provide a clear picture to which extent they teach in the study programme. BIA mentions in the SAR (p. 89), in the context of increasing globalization, including ever closer integration of the EU countries, BIA, in developing doctoral programme, is also attracting leading experts in the field from foreign universities thus, providing doctoral students with the opportunity to study issues in legal science not only in Latvia but creates a base for research at the Baltic and European level. However, based on the data on incoming mobility of teaching staff (Annex "BIA Statistical Data on the Incoming and Outgoing Mobility of Teaching Staff"), PhD students benefited from only one incoming academic staff member from Poland. Therefore, it is unclear if the study programme, when conducted in English, adheres fully to the same content and methods of implementation, in particular considering the fact that due to a small number of English-speaking students the studies will be organized based on individual plans (discovered during the on-site visit). It must be noted that BIA cannot currently implement any of the study programmes in English in the field of law including doctoral studies programme, therefore, to enhance the consistency and quality of the study programme's delivery

and ensure transparency, thereby preventing any potential misunderstandings for future candidates, the scope of the study programme delivered in English language must be clarified.

2.2.4.

Doctoral students engage in pedagogical practice during their studies. The pedagogical work section (Part A) of the doctoral study programme includes three courses specifically designed to train doctoral students in teaching methodologies and practices. The internship aims to familiarize them with university-level teaching and scientific research, prepare them for academic roles, and provide experience in developing lecture notes, creating teaching materials, and designing course programmes.

However, the descriptions of these study courses (SAR Annex “Study Course DescriptionsLAW.docx”) do not provide a comprehensive understanding of the extent to which doctoral students are involved in the actual implementation and delivery of bachelor's and master's study programmes. This lack of detailed information makes it difficult to assess the practical teaching experience and responsibilities that doctoral students undertake as part of their training. To fully appreciate the impact and effectiveness of the pedagogical training provided, it is essential to have clearer insights into how doctoral students apply their teaching skills in real classroom settings and contribute to the broader educational objectives of the institution.

To increase access to doctoral studies for students in the regions, it is advisable to review the practical implementation of the study programme by creating the possibility to complete the pedagogical practice in the regional branches. This could enhance the teaching potential in the regions and extend the pool of possible candidates for doctoral studies. During the on-site visit and meetings with alumni in the regional branches, the interest in doctoral studies was expressed, provided that teaching activities are not restricted to Riga.

2.2.5.

Based on the SAR (section 3.2.5), after successfully completing the doctoral study programme and meeting all academic and scientific requirements, a degree candidate submits a doctoral thesis to the higher education institution to initiate the promotion process. The submitted thesis is then forwarded to the promotion council for review.

The promotion process involves several entities: the promotion council established by the higher education institution, three appointed thesis reviewers, and the State Scientific Qualification Committee (SSQC). According to the Cabinet Regulations, the promotion council must include at least five scientists with the right to serve as experts for the Latvian Council of Science in the relevant scientific field, with two members specializing in the subfield of the doctoral thesis. The promotion council's term of authority does not exceed six years. The council operates according to the regulations on promotion procedures and the specific guidelines of the BIA's promotion councils and procedures (section 3.2.5). This shows that the students have clearly defined promotion opportunities.

2.2.6.

The topics of students' final theses are focused in the area of criminal (9) and civil law (5) (see “Appendix Distribution of doctoral topics.docx” of the SAR). They are generally relevant to the field, and correspond to the study programme’s specialized focus. For instance, in criminal law research is developed on peculiarities of investigation of crimes committed using cryptocurrency, problems of the legal status of an investigating judge under the Latvian Criminal Procedure, current problems of the criminal procedural status of the specially protected persons. In civil law, the research focuses

on the problems of application of anti-money laundering requirements for representatives of legal professions belonging to the judicial system in Latvia, the role of institutions of Latvia in the field of protection of the rights of minors living in the European Union and other European countries, etc. (Annex "Promotional research topics" of the SAR).

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

The doctoral study programme primarily focuses on relevant research areas like criminal and civil law, the topics of the final theses are relevant to the field and correspond to the study programme. Although relevant from the perspective of the field of research, the programme does not adequately develop all competences necessary for early career researchers. Yet, it makes the first step towards systematic internationalization by requiring for at least one publication in WoS, ERIH, Scopus-indexed journals. Some course descriptions must be revised to advance the level of content, also clearly addressing to which extent the courses are delivered in English to individual students.

Strengths:

- 1) Focus on high-potential research areas: the study programme concentrates on areas of law (criminal and civil law) where BIA has the highest research potential.
- 2) Increasing publication standards: the requirement for at least one publication in journals included in the Scopus or similar database for the completion of studies raises the academic standards and enhances the international visibility of research conducted by PhD students

Weaknesses:

- 1) Course content level: some course descriptions still do not stress the advanced level of taught content (e.g. in case International public law) and are more suitable for master level studies.
- 2) Assessment methods clarity: most course descriptions do not clearly indicate the exact type of assessment methods (course descriptions operate with the same general types of assessment - exam test, task, without mentioning which kind of task, and which kind of tests).
- 3) Development of interdisciplinary and transversal competences: the doctoral study programme does not adequately develop competences for early career researchers, such as project development, science communication, etc.
- 4) Lack of clarity in implementation language: there is a lack of clarity regarding the methods of implementation of the study programme fully in English.

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

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

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

Due to linguistic barriers of both, academic staff and doctoral students, some achievements of the field of law may not be accessed and utilized in the study process (SAR "Annex Composition of the academic staff; "the list of publications of the teaching staff of the doctoral study program "Law""; "Annex: 2.4.3. Projects.xlsx").

2.3. Resources and Provision of the Study Programme

Analysis

2.3.1.

As stated in section 1.3. the study provision, scientific provisions, informative provision (including

library), material and technical provision and financial provision comply with specific features and the conditions for the implementation of the study programme. As evidenced by the on-site visits and interviews the facilities and relevant resources are available for all study programmes.

The study process for the students of the doctoral study programme “Law” takes place in two BIA buildings in Riga. The mentioned buildings have auditoriums, which are equipped with modern study technical aids - whiteboards, it is possible to use a television set, video recorder, video camera, multimedia projector. Many auditoriums are equipped with a stationary multimedia projector, screen, computer with Internet connection and other technical means that meet modern requirements (as already stated in part 1.3 of this report).

As observed in section 2.1.2. of this report, the study programme focuses on civil and criminal law. It was clarified during the meeting with the head of the doctoral school that in criminal law it also focuses on international aspects. The availability of books in English in the library is insufficient, particularly for the specialization with international aspects. The English-language books currently available in the field of international and European Union law are very outdated, based on the information collected during the on-site visit. Although the doctoral students can use e-databases, of which EBSCO is of particular importance for this programme, the number of books in English in the library still does not meet the necessary standards to support the programme adequately. This lack of updated resources hinders the doctoral students' ability to fully engage with current international legal standards and practices, thereby impacting the overall quality of education and research within the study programme. Immediate action is required to update and expand the library's collection of English-language books to ensure that doctoral students have access to the most recent and relevant literature.

2.3.2.

The study and science provision, including resources provided within the framework of cooperation with other scientific institutions and higher education institutions, meets only minimum conditions for the implementation of the doctoral study programme, creates basic preconditions for achieving learning and research outcomes. Given the fact that BIA has numerous interinstitutional agreements in place, doctoral students have potential for internationalization. Students are provided with opportunities to acquire academic knowledge and experience within the framework of Erasmus+ programme, which is not specifically designed for doctoral studies, however, still can be used by the doctoral students. However, given a still low level of international cooperation of academic staff (see section 1.5.3 in particular) in terms of high levels publication in the field of law and minimum number of research projects, doctoral students' improvement in terms of internationalization of their studies is very limited due to the lack of relevant mentorship. Lack of collaborative research culture, including possibility to work within established research groups, publishing in recognized journals in the field of law, impedes the progress of the PhD studies.

Based on the SAR (section 3.3.2) the BIA organizes an international scientific-practical conference “Transformation Process in Law, Regional Economy and Economic Policy: Current Problems of Economic-Political and Legal Relations” every year in cooperation with Daugavpils University and Riga Stradiņš University. Both mentioned universities also implement doctoral study programmes in law. During the conference, doctoral students and university research staff have the opportunity to exchange views and discuss the most topical issues in the field of law. Annually, BIA doctoral students and lecturers participate in conferences of the University of Latvia, Daugavpils University, TURĪBA University, Riga Stradiņš University, where the Latvia scientific community and participants from other countries are introduced to the research results. Following the results of the conferences, doctoral students publish articles in the collections of scientific articles of Latvia higher education

institutions. Cooperation between universities is also implemented in the defence of doctoral theses.

2.3.3.

As stated in section 1.3 of this report the funding is available to all study programmes to the level described in section 1.3.

The main source of funding for the doctoral study programme is tuition fees. The amount of tuition fees and the mode of their payment for each academic year is determined and approved by the Senate of the Academy. The following options for payment of tuition fees for students have been established at the Academy: - for the entire course of study; - for one year of study; - for one semester; - for one month, in accordance with the payment schedule provided for in the study contract, with strict adherence to the payment dates and amounts.

According to the SAR (section 3.3.3 of the the study programme "Law" (51380)), the cost of the doctoral programme "Law" per student is 1815 euros per year. In the 2021/2022 academic year, tuition for full-time doctoral studies was 2,500 euros per year. Considering the number of students in the study (as of 1 October 2022 there were 11 doctoral students), the financial support of doctoral study programme "Law" is sufficient.

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

The financial situation of BIA is stable, although it requires constant monitoring in the context of slightly falling student numbers. The library physical resources in English are still not adequate. Available digital resources are well chosen (SCOPUS, WoS and EBSCO databases). The study and science provision, including resources provided within the framework of cooperation with other scientific institutions and higher education institutions, meets only minimum conditions for the implementation of the doctoral study programme.

Strengths:

1) Available digital resources are well chosen (SCOPUS, WoS and EBSCO databases).

Weaknesses:

1) Books in English in the library are outdated considering the specialization of the programme (e.g. European Union law, International law).

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

Despite the weaknesses identified, the study conditions are adequate and the financial situation is stable (section 3.3. of the SAR).

2.4. Teaching Staff

Analysis

2.4.1.

The SAR (section 3.4.1.) states that 21 lecturers were involved in the implementation of the doctoral study programme "Law" in the reporting period. All persons (100%) have a doctoral degree in a relevant field of science. Elected academic staff members constitute 57,14 %, not elected - 42,86 %. The quality of studies in the reporting period is ensured by 2 professors (9.52%), 3 guest professors (14.29%), 5 associate professors (23.81%), 3 guest professors (9.09%), 2 docents (9.52%), 5 guest docents (23.81%) and 3 leading researchers (14.29%). Considering the fact that the number of the students within the study programme is rather small, the composition is considered sufficient.

The main criteria for selecting lecturers include their education (degree), professional experience, research and creative activities, and communication skills. Some lecturers are practicing specialists, such as sworn advocates (section 3.4.1. of the SAR).

From this perspective, the qualification of the teaching staff members involved in the implementation of the study programme complies with the requirements for the implementation of the study programme and the requirements set forth in the regulatory enactments, except for the requirement for a peer-reviewed publications or practical experience, which is discussed in section 2.4.4. of the experts' report).

2.4.2.

During the reporting period, the analysis of the doctoral study programme "Law" indicates that the teaching staff initially comprised 22 people but decreased by 2 at the beginning of the 2023 academic year (SAR section 3.4.1.). Evaluating staff dynamics from the reporting period to the submission of accreditation documents reveals only minor changes that do not significantly affect the quality or quantity of the staff. BIA cites the involvement of new scientists, including recent doctoral graduates, and an increase in the number of foreign lecturers as part of its academic staff development policy (SAR section 3.4.1.). However, it remains unclear why two academic staff members left, whether they were elected members, and the specifics of their departure. Despite this lack of clarity, the change is considered insignificant as it only involves the departure of two staff members.

2.4.3.

Out of 21 academic staff members in the study programme 11 academic staff members have publications. 4 out of 11 academic staff members have only one publication each (Annex "Baltic International Academies the list of publications of the teaching staff of the doctoral study programme "Law", SAR), just meeting the minimum requirement with publications in Latvian Gazette Lawyer's Name, RSU electronical scientific journal "Socrates", Baltic Journal of Legal and Social Sciences, Etnograficheskoe obozrenie, Research Papers of Wroclaw University of Economics and Business. The staff member with the most publications is an early career researcher, which limits his participation in the doctoral study process.

Most publications are in national or regional journals with limited international reach. This limitation in the academic staff, supervisors, and mentors in doctoral studies hinders doctoral students' prospects for producing high-impact research in law. This is evident from the list of doctoral student publications (Annex 1 of the SAR), where conference proceedings dominate.

Only 1 member of the academic staff from the study programme is involved in research project activities - "Public Health and Medical Law of European Countries at the End of the 19th - Beginning of the 20th Century." However, the person involved in the project is an early career researcher (Annex 2.4.3 of the SAR), whose participation in doctoral study programme is still very limited. This

indicates a very limited engagement in externally funded research activities of the academic staff of the study programme.

The limited involvement of academic staff in research projects and international research restricts doctoral students' opportunities for hands-on research experience and mentorship, significantly hindering their academic and professional growth. Thus, the scientific publications and current involvement in research-related projects of the academic staff involved in the implementation of the doctoral study programmes contribute to the implementation, however does not ensure high-level quality of the doctoral study programme. Strengthening the research engagement of the academic staff is crucial to enhance the overall quality and impact of the doctoral study programme.

2.4.4.

It is not demonstrated in the SAR if all academic staff members included in the study programme comply with the formal requirements. First, out of 21 academic staff members in the study programme 11 academic staff members have publications. 4 out of 11 academic staff members have only one publication each (Annex "Baltic International Academies the list of publications of the teaching staff of the doctoral study programme "Law", SAR) over the reporting period.

The courses related to international law are taught by a researcher who is not a practitioner and has not published in peer-reviewed journals since 2021. Although the researcher actively participates in conferences and publishes in conference proceedings and collections of articles based on conference presentations, there is no evidence that these collections undergo peer-review.

Second, the SAR does not explain how the rest of the teaching staff of the study programme is selected (based on which merits, if not research). Some staff members are included in the list of academic staff members of the study programme, however, their name does not appear neither in the general list of the teaching staff members of the field of law, nor the SAR provides his / her CV (e.g. teaching staff member No. 12 or No. 13 in the list (SAR Annex "Composition of the academic staff").

2.4.5.

The SAR (section 3.4.5) mentions that annual strategic seminars are held for lecturers to discuss opportunities for developing and improving the study process. However, there is no data on when these meetings were last held or evidence of how synergy is ensured during them. The SAR also notes (section 3.4.5) that cooperation among lecturers is enhanced at annual scientific conferences, providing a platform for discussing scientific innovations and identifying common interests. While encouraging academic staff to participate in these conferences alongside students is a positive development, it does not ensure synergy between study courses. Moreover, the role of the doctoral school in this process remains unclear. Strengthening the collaboration and communication among lecturers through these seminars and conferences is essential, but it requires a more structured approach to ensure it effectively enhances the coherence and integration of the study programme. Establishing clear objectives and outcomes for these events, and documenting their impact, could greatly improve the strategic development of the study programme.

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

In conclusion, while the policy for involving new staff is in place, the study programme faces challenges with insufficient publishing practices, minimal researchers' engagement and low participation in research projects. Many staff publications are limited to conference proceedings, and a significant number of researchers only meet minimum requirements.

Strengths: No strengths identified

Weaknesses:

- 1) Currently still low level of internationalization of the study results due to lack of internationally oriented mentoring by supervisors (e.g. publications).
- 2) Publishing practices are not sufficient for high level research, staff publications are often texts in conference proceedings.
- 3) A significant part of researchers in the study programme complies only with minimum publishing requirements.
- 4) Insufficient engagement in research projects.

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: Partially compliant

At least one researcher has not published in peer-reviewed journals since 2021. High quality research may not be ensured due to lack of high level research outputs (Annex "Baltic International Academies the list of publications of the teaching staff of the doctoral study programme "Law", "CV_ENG").

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: Partially compliant

Descriptions of the study courses and the study materials are in Latvian and in English. However, the attendance of lectures is one of the criterion for evaluation. See: SAR Annex Study Course DescriptionsLAW.docx

- 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

Enclosed sample of diploma complied with requirements present during submission of the SAR for evaluation. It is expected that it will comply with the newest amendments in the Article 59 of the Law on Higher Education Institutions and Cabinet regulations No.70. See: SAR, Annex "Sample diploma with attachments_TZdoctor.pdf". For example, there must be indication of the educational cycle.

- 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: Fully compliant

Written confirmation by acting rector of BIA of 27 December 2023. See: SAR, Annex "Confirmation_acad_stuff_DOCTOR_ENG.edoc".

- 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

Written confirmation by the acting rector of BIA. See: SAR, Annex "Study direction Science of Law Knowledge of the state language of the academic staff.edoc"

- 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

Just now the programme is provided only in Latvian. BIA has asked permission also to perform it in English. See: SAR, Annex "Study direction Science of Law English language skills of the academic staff.edoc" There are some doubts about proficiency of English by academic staff as only 12 persons in BIA in total has provided documents confirming knowledge of English. (Additionally provided information during visit of experts in BIA).

- 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 same sample of agreement is used for all study programmes. It complies with the Cabinet regulations No.70. See: SAR, Annex "Agreement_TZAb_pl.docx"

- 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

There is an agreement with Turiba University that students have opportunity to study in similar doctoral study programme in Turiba with the same degree. See: SAR, Annex "BIA Study field Science of Law opportunities to continue education in another study program or high school.pdf"

- 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

Document on the performance of obligations signed by Members of the Board of 30 August 2023 No. VT_23/1844. It provides guarantee that students losses will be compensated in particular cases. See: SAR, Annex "2.1.4. BIA obligations.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: Not relevant

Assessment of the requirement [8]

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

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

Compliance with most formal regulatory requirements is established. However, the study course descriptions need to be revised.

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

There is a low level of internationalization of the study results due to a lack of internationally oriented mentoring by supervisors, which is evident from the limited number of publications in international journals. The publishing practices among staff are insufficient for high-level research, with many publications being confined to conference proceedings rather than peer-reviewed journals. A significant part of the researchers in the study programme only meets the minimum requirements for demonstrating research competencies, which hampers the study programme's academic standing. Additionally, there is insufficient engagement in research projects, further limiting opportunities for innovation and advancement in the field. Furthermore, a considerable portion of students (30%) are currently in suspension, indicating issues with engagement, satisfaction, or external factors affecting their ability to continue their studies. Decreasing enrollment numbers pose a threat to the programme's sustainability and growth, compounded by

high dropout rates. Relevant actions can be made in 2 years, however, it must be recognized that the results of addressing these deficiencies will not be seen quickly and may take up to way more than two years to fully manifest.

Assessment methods lack clarity, with most course descriptions not specifying the exact types of assessment methods used. This general approach, often described only as exams or tasks, fails to provide clear expectations for students. Similarly, the course content in some areas, such as International public law, does not stress the advanced level required for doctoral studies and appears more suitable for master's level. The doctoral study programme also lacks adequate development of interdisciplinary and transversal competences essential for early career researchers, such as project development and science communication. Finally, there is a lack of clarity regarding the implementation of the study programme fully in English language, including the necessary human resources and the scope of the study programme.

Available digital resources are well chosen (SCOPUS, WoS and EBSCO databases), however, the books in English in the library are outdated considering the specialization of the study programme (e.g. European Union law, International law).

Evaluation of the study programme "Law"

Evaluation of the study programme:

Average

2.6. Recommendations for the Study Programme "Law"

Short-term recommendations

1) Update the goal of the study programme to accurately reflect its scope (focus on criminal and civil law), providing clear and comprehensive information to potential students.

2) Update existing course descriptions to clearly indicate the advanced level of content, ensuring alignment with doctoral-level standards.

3) Revise the assessment strategy and methods to align with ECTS standards. Ensure that the assessment comprehensively evaluates a PhD candidate's knowledge, skills, and research capabilities, while allowing professors the discretion to choose evaluation methods based on the specific nature of the subject.

4) Allocate funds to purchase a selection of up-to-date books in key subject areas and purchase at least to satisfy minimum needs.

5) Provide training sessions on high-quality research methodologies and publishing standards to both, doctoral students and their supervisors. This will help to enhance their research output and publication quality in a short term.

6) Implement a policy requiring all doctoral study programme candidates to demonstrate proficiency in English or another foreign language, enhancing the study programme's internationalization and research quality.

7) Develop and implement comprehensive students' retention strategy, including, e.g. mentorship programmes, ensuring regular check-ins with academic advisors, etc. to reduce the student dropout.

8) Document the meetings of the teaching staff and (or) administration, and (or) other stakeholders dedicated to the development of the study programme.

9) Ensure that the awarded diploma complies with the amendments to the Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No. 202.

Long-term recommendations

1) Create and implement a detailed strategic plan outlining the objectives, curriculum, and outcomes for the English study programme. Ensure that all faculty and staff are trained and aligned with the study programme's vision.

2) Establish support system for research collaborations with foreign universities that would include foreign academic staff members and doctoral students (e.g. seed funds).

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:	Partially compliant	The internal quality system is in place and has seen various improvements since the previous accreditation. However, several improvements are still needed. The assessment strategy in different study programmes must be reviewed to better prepare students for the State Exam, oral exams must be recorded to enable the use of the appeal procedure, the assessments must be fully related to the achievement of intended learning outcomes rather than merely stimulating participation in lectures. There is no systematic gathering of data from graduates and employers, so BIA lacks comprehensive data on the relevance and effectiveness of its study programmes. Additionally, BIA has not established KPIs associated with the strategic goals, and there is no process to collect data or measure the achievement of set goals. BIA lacks a comprehensive internal professional qualification development system.

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)		Partially compliant	Weak internationalization of research activities, non-active involvement in research projects (2.4.4. section in the SAR), few publications in high-impact journals in the field of law.
R3 - The cooperation implemented within the study field with various Latvian and foreign organizations ensures the achievement of the aims of the study field.		Partially compliant	The BIA works mainly with public sector employers, that are not systematically involved in the development of the study programmes. The cooperation with employers is mainly limited to the provision of internship positions for students and ad hoc meetings. The impact of the agreements with foreign partners is limited, with low student and staff mobility. The offer of study courses in English for incoming students is still poor.
R4 - Elimination of deficiencies and shortcomings identified in the previous assessment of the study field, if any, or implementation of the recommendations provided.		Partially compliant	Some main areas of law have only outdated books in the library (e.g., international and EU law); not enough level of English proficiency of academic staff for bachelor level studies (additionally submitted information by BIA on English proficiency of academic staff); no evidence that BIA has made systematic efforts to improve the English skills of students or to enhance internationalization through outgoing mobility.

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	Science of Law (41380)	Not relevant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Good
2	Science of Law (43380)	Not relevant	Fully compliant	Partially compliant	Fully compliant	Average

No.	Study programme	R5	R6	R7	R8	Evaluation of the study programme (excellent, good, average, poor)
3	Science of Law (45380)	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Partially compliant	Partially compliant	Average
4	Science of Law (47380)	Partially compliant	Fully compliant	Partially compliant	Partially compliant	Average
5	Law (51380)	Partially compliant	Fully compliant	Partially compliant	Partially compliant	Average

The Dissenting Opinions of the Experts

None.