

Expert group joint opinion

Evaluation Procedure: Assessment of Study Field

Higher Education Institution: Baltic International Academy

Study field: Psychology

Experts:

1. Natalija Norvilé (Chair of the Experts Group)
2. Josip Burusic (Secretary of the Experts Group)
3. Aleksejs Ruža
4. Marta Viļuma (Student Union of Latvia)
5. Inese Putniece (Employers' Confederation of Latvia)

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

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The academic bachelor's study programme (hereafter - ABSP) "Psychology" (full-time and part-time form) and professional master's study programme (hereafter - PMSP) "Psychology" (full-time form) of the study field "Psychology" are implemented in accordance with the principles of the Bologna Declaration, the relevant laws and regulations of the Republic of Latvia and the normative, strategic and development documents of the Baltic International Academy (hereafter - BIA).

The previous accreditation of the study field "Psychology" was carried out in the 2020/2021 academic year and the study field received a two-years accreditation term, which at the moment of preparing this report has already expired. BIA demonstrated a commitment to improvement by incorporating a big portion of recommendations provided by the experts during the previous accreditation of the study field and developing normative administrative frameworks for managing psychology programmes. Programme managers actively engage in addressing programme needs and implementing student feedback, but issues with authority overlapping remain unresolved.

However, uncertainties exist regarding the succession of ABSP "Psychology" and PMSP "Psychology", alignment with industry developments, and clarity in programme management structures. Concerns also arise about assessment schedules, stakeholder involvement, and clarity in decision-making processes. Additionally, student scientific works' testing frequency using anti-plagiarism tools is insufficient.

In terms of quality assurance, while BIA has developed a system contributing to programme aims and learning outcomes, more involvement of employers in assessing student capabilities and labor market needs is necessary. There's a lack of formal feedback mechanisms for survey results, inconsistent involvement of employers in quality assurance processes, and no separate surveys for employers.

Financial management at BIA is clear, contributing to programme sustainability, and infrastructure resources support teaching and learning. However, improvements are needed in Moodle usage and teacher training, workload policy alignment, international staff mobility, and database access.

The integration of scientific research into the study process is commendable, but there's a need to improve research productivity and publishing, international cooperation, and mechanisms for involving teaching staff in research. Cooperation with international organizations is recognized, but needs improvement, especially in attracting international students and staff.

At policy level BIA ensures a balanced workload for teaching staff, with clear regulations and limitations to prevent overload and maintain quality, which is challenged with available evidence to existing teaching staff workload, indicating a clear case of overloading with the number of courses where staff is responsible for them and, consequently teaching hours which are allocated to those courses.

Despite these weaknesses, BIA demonstrates strong support for students, including individualized study approaches, access to necessary facilities, and positive feedback on the programme from students and graduates. However, there are areas, such as programme management structure, internship availability, academic staff language skills, academic staff workload, the lack of research activities, where improvements are needed to ensure the programme's effectiveness and

sustainability.

In conclusion, while BIA has addressed many recommendations in improving its study programmes, further attention and action are required to fully address the identified weaknesses and optimize programme outcomes. Continuous monitoring, evaluation, and implementation of recommendations will be essential for achieving excellence in education and research at BIA.

I - Assessment of the Study Field

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1.1 Management of the Study Field

Analysis

1.1.1.

The goals of the BIA study programme "Psychology" are formally defined and described in the self-assessment report (hereafter - SAR), which generally correspond to the main directions of the university's strategic development, where SAR (p. 9) provides information that in 2022 founders of BIA established the strategic specialization focusing their academic and scientific work in "Social sciences", however in this group BIA positions study fields "Hotel and restaurant service", organization of tourism and recreation" and "Social welfare" excluding study field "Psychology". On p. 10, of the SAR there are provided main objectives, tasks and main direction of the BIA, where to some degree BIA orientations toward "academic and scientific work" or "applied research" are used interchangeably.

The provided documents and information obtained during on-sites visits do not clarify study field's and programmes' and fully do not comply with the development trends of the needs of society and the economy. Obtained information clearly indicated needs for trained psychologists as a profession, still there are missing fully elaborated evidence based analysis. The content of the implemented programmes' corresponds to the training programmes' that were implemented in private universities in the period from 1990's to 2000's.

When analyzing the succession of the study programme between the bachelor's and master's level, uncertainty arises about their mutual relevance, which is indicated, for example, by the uncertainty about internships during bachelor's and master's studies. There is no connection that internships are aimed at the course of study and in general at in-depth understanding. In addition, there is no connection that the internships would be focused on the course of study and in general on a deeper understanding of the science of psychology, but on a rather unsystematized selection based on randomness.

The information provided by the graduates reveals that, in fact, almost all of them work in the field of clinical and/or health, school and/or educational, or counseling psychology, but not in the field of work and/or organizational psychology. This raises reasonable doubts as to whether the implemented program, especially in the regional branches, provides the students with sufficient quality knowledge so that later in their professional activities they can become good and excellent professionals in their field. It is possible that the university should consider changing the direction of the professional master's degree to what is demanded in the labor market, based on the empirical sourced evidence.

1.1.2.

The SWOT analysis performed by BIA includes elements which are considered on several levels, and

realistically targeted most important elements which are influencing functioning of BIA.

As stated in the SAR (pp. 28-29), to ensure collaboration with higher education institutions in Latvia (such as the University of Daugavpils and the University of Latvia) and abroad, BIA plans to establish agreements for visiting lecturers and professors. These agreements will encompass institutions both within Latvia and internationally, including countries like Ukraine, Spain, and Turkey.

To enhance the exchange of lecturers and students, efforts are underway to actively inform lecturers about opportunities to deliver lectures at foreign universities that have established cooperation agreements in the field of "Psychology". Furthermore, lecturers' intentions to participate in exchange programmes are clarified during their annual discussions with the Head of the department.

Efforts are also being made to secure funding to equip the study process with technological resources. Additionally, BIA claims to conduct systematic marketing research to identify the most sought-after topics for continuing education courses in various areas of psychology, enabling the development and provision of such courses.

In addition, BIA has analyzed the previous expert report and taken seriously into account the experts' recommendations, introducing improvements in the study programme "Psychology" at both the bachelor's and master's level.

Performed SWOT analysis marginally and not fully sufficiently addressed the issue of a coherence of the study programme with the general development trends of the industry in the country and the demand for specialists in the labor market. In conversations with graduates, the trend was clearly marked that it is quite conditionally possible to find vacancies in organizational and work psychology in the labor market. Of all the graduates in Riga, Liepāja, and Daugavpils branches, no one worked in the field of psychology, which can be perceived as a threat to the existence of the study program.

A more European dimension of SWOT analysis for study field and psychology programmes would have been an additional benefit (e.g. recent trends in development of psychology study programmes in Europe and compatibility of BIA with it, comparative analysis of changes in psychology programmes at European universities, recent development regarding to EuroPsy Diploma document).

1.1.3.

BIA has developed management structures and bodies which are fully committed to the issue of development of study field and psychology programmes and ensure their functioning. In addition, available administrative and technical staff enable well-functioning study programmes.

Provided information and discussion during on-site visit indicate some points which influence efficiency of study programmes, and in addition, reveal to some degree a very idealized picture of programme management. Conversations with BIA bachelor's and master's level programme managers, and managers of the Liepāja and Daugavpils branches reveal that they are actively involved in actualizing and realizing the necessary needs within the framework of the program. Their opinion is listened to and taken into account, including the identification and implementation of suggestions expressed in student surveys. What was not fully clear and open some issues about efficiency of management, is related to who has full authority regarding academic matters in programme functioning. SAR provided information on how founders of BIA have influence in almost every matter, including academic related ones. In addition, on-site visits provided information on

how branch managers (e.g. discussion with Daugavpils branch manager) influences academic related issues related to the programme of psychology, and not only organizational ones.

In the case of strategic development of the programmes, place and rule of the Study field council is highlighted in all relevant documents, where discussion with the involved stakeholders (e.g. staff, employers, students) did not provide information how those groups are fully aware or participating in activities of that body.

1.1.4.

The administrative procedure, and protocols are developed at the level of the BIA, and documentation provided comprehensive and detailed information. Individuals seeking recognition of the learning outcomes attained through prior education or professional experience are required to submit an application to the BIA. Alongside this application, they must provide documentation verifying the achieved learning outcomes. Upon receipt of the application, the Commission reviews it within a month and decides whether to recognize the previous education or professional experience's learning outcomes or to deny recognition (SAR, p. 33).

Each year, several students receive recognition for their prior educational achievements. Typically, general courses and foreign languages are recognized for students with existing higher education, while psychological courses are acknowledged for those with a background in psychology. If a student transfers from another university's psychology program, courses previously completed at that institution, with similar titles and content to those at BIA, may be recognized (SAR, p. 34).

During the meetings, in conversations with students and graduates, information was obtained that confirmed that during the study process, students are presented with the requirements clearly and their rights and responsibilities are explained to them. Some criteria, such as the application of tuition fee discounts to successful students, could be used more, although it is understood that this could be a financial challenge for a private university. In addition, the role of BIA founders in the process of admission (e.g. reduction of students tuition fee) is an issue of further needed discussion and improvements, as they influence academic related matters (e.g. number and structure of students in the program). Discussion with branch managers offers, in addition, the issue of role and involvement of them in recognition of previous learning outcomes.

1.1.5.

SAR and information obtained during site visit, indicate how BIA has developed functional methods, principles and procedures for assessing achievements of students, and clearly defined them and communicated on the various levels. The evaluation of academic progress encompasses a range of assessment methods, including written, oral, practical, and blended tests, as well as individual and group evaluations. Various forms of assessment tasks such as control works, presentations, defenses, assignments, project work, examinations, group activities, and case studies are utilized. Successful completion of a course is achieved when the programme's requirements are met by the conclusion of the examination period, unless an extension has been granted.

In addition, BIA developed a procedure for determining and analyzing the aims of study programmes and needs of students, still there is clearly indicated a place and needs for substantial improvements (e.g. more active involvement of stakeholders in determining study aims, etc.).

Regarding assessment of students results, in conversations with BIA students, especially in Liepāja and Daugavpils branches, the opinion was expressed that students are not only intensely motivated to continue studying and not to give up when faced with the first difficulties, but sometimes they are

even persuaded to continue their studies, possibly without strictly observing the session schedule and times. It should be noted that when listening to lecturers and students, contradicting or inconsistent information was received about the schedule of examination sessions in the study process. If the lecturers and branch managers emphasized that there are no examination sessions in the study process, then the students revealed a different picture and confirmed that there is still time for the examination session in the study process.

1.1.6. Based on the information provided in the SAR, BIA has implemented an anti-plagiarism tool and supports principles of academic honesty and integrity. It was stated during onsite visit that BIA has concluded an agreement with University of Latvia for joining a plagiarism control system, which is used for Master and Bachelor thesis check. However, in the opinion of the expert group, there is no discernible common framework and procedures for the control and actions of plagiarism in student papers. During the onsite visit, the expert group got the impression that other relevant course papers and research papers are not subjects for plagiarism check even though such a system is present. In the opinion of the expert group, it has to be changed and all student works have to go through plagiarism checks with appropriate use of references in their papers. This aspect does correlate as in the SAR it is stated that since 2021, there have been no cases of plagiarism.

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

In conclusion, BIA has placed the study field of psychology amongst their priorities and provided, at the level of Academy, necessary administrative frameworks, developed a mechanism, procedure and tools for managing the study field. In preparation of needed documents, BIA performed realistic and comprehensive SWOT analysis, considering various influences and factors. BIA has made efforts to address previous recommendations and uphold academic integrity, there remain some areas for improvement in ensuring programme relevance, clarity in management structures, and consistency in assessment procedures. Addressing these weaknesses is crucial for enhancing the quality and effectiveness of both study programmes' "Psychology" at BIA.

Strengths:

1) Programme managers are actively involved in addressing programme needs and implementing student feedback, contributing to ongoing development efforts.

Weaknesses:

- 1) There is some information which indicates uncertainty about BA and MA programmes succession, and in the case of MA, its orientations toward 'work and organizational psychology'.
- 2) There are concerns about the programme's alignment with industry developments and job market demands, potentially impacting graduates' employability.
- 3) Issues with clarity, consistency, and stakeholder involvement in programme management raise questions about the effectiveness of decision-making processes.
- 4) Conflicting information about assessment schedules highlights issues with clarity and consistency in the evaluation process, potentially impacting student performance and understanding.
- 5) Student scientific works with a use of anti-plagiarism tools are tested only once in 2-3 years based on the length of the study programme at the end of their studies - thesis.
- 6) Although programme managers are actively involved in addressing programme needs and implementing student feedback, contributing to ongoing development efforts, there is still an open issue of overlapping of authority.

1.2. Efficiency of the Internal Quality Assurance System

Analysis

1.2.1.

BIA has developed and maintains a quality assurance system and as stated in the SAR p.40, it is a central component of the Academy Management System (AMS). As it has been described by the Academy, the AMS is a management system that covers all the study programmes and study fields as well as involves all the departments and branch offices of the Academy.

The Academy has developed a document that specifically describes the BIA Study quality assurance system, which on p.2 specifies that the general management system of the Academy includes: 1. Quality policy and other relevant policies and documents; 2. Management, educational management and resource management processes and 3. Supporting documents and databases. The document can be accessed here: https://bsa.edu.lv/docs/nolikums/BSA_Studiju_kval_nodros_sist_eng.pdf

BIA has established a quality policy, which has been published on BIA website and can be accessed under section "About us" sub-section "Documents" and can be found under documents listed of "Quality Management". The website of the BIA is accessible in three languages - Latvian, English and Russian. Quality policy is provided in English and Latvian. The link to the quality policy document in English is available here: https://bsa.edu.lv/docs/nolikums/quality_policy.pdf.

The quality policy document addresses aims and development plans of the Academy in the future. For example, it states that the quality policy is aimed at 1. Continuous quality improvement; 2. Achievement of the vision, mission and strategic development goals; 3. Defining a set of quality-related principles and actions necessary for their achievement in higher education and scientific research, technology and innovation development, organizational visibility and cooperation with society. The quality policy also enlists quality principles of the Academy such as 1. Commitment to excellence in studies and research; 2. Ethical and equitable treatment; 3. Student-centered studies; 4. A responsible attitude towards the development of the Latvian economy, environmental sustainability and the long-term interests of society at local, regional and global level.

Based on the information accessible in the SAR and that has been gathered during onsite visit, there is no clear specification on how the quality assurance system contributes to the achievement of the aims and learning outcomes of the study field and relevant study programmes, thus, it needs additional attention for clarification clearly how they contribute. However, it is clear that BIA is working on quality assurance implementation and tries to ensure continuous improvement of the study programmes that are implemented in the study field. One example that was mentioned during site visit was that study course descriptions are reviewed and updated before every academic year in accordance with the BIA approved regulations. As stated by the Academy representatives during the site visit in the quality management meeting and also specified in the quality policy document, the Academy applies a risk management approach to identify factors that may cause deviations from processes and planned performance. The Academy applies management tools and techniques to not only mitigate negative impacts, but also to take advantage of opportunities that arise.

1.2.2.

Based on SAR p.41, there is a system in place for development and review of relevant study programmes. Study programme amendments are approved by the BIA Senate on the basis of received recommendations from students, graduates, practice supervisors, international and national experts and auditors, as well as employers and professional organizations always in consideration of the current industry needs. Thus, it can be concluded that review and development of study programmes are conducted based on internal or external party feedback and given specifications of needed improvements.

Based on the information provided in the SAR pp.41-42 and the information gathered during meetings with students, it was clarified that students are a substantial part of the quality assurance mechanism as well as ensures continuous development and review of the study programmes. Student surveys are conducted two times per study year, every time at the end of the semester to review the quality of studies of the specific study courses students had and the general study quality. During an onsite visit in Riga and meeting with Quality Assurance representatives and involved parties, there was an example survey shown to an expert group of a student questionnaire in paper form. Student surveys include both - open and closed questions and are conducted electronically. They are anonymous and include various kinds of questions such as 1. How much does the BIA studies match your expectations? 2. Are you satisfied with the offer of study courses in the study programme? 3. Are you satisfied with the material and technical provision? 4. How do you evaluate the acquired skills to work with information? 5. How do you evaluate international cooperation opportunities? 6. Also improvements can be added. Based on the % provided by the Academy representatives, student responsiveness in the surveys is around 70%, which is considered a high response rate. However, the Academy representatives stated that they wish to increase the numbers and are trying to find new ways of student involvement in surveys. As clarified during the onsite meeting, all the survey results from branches of Liepaja and Daugavpils are delivered electronically to Riga. The information is gathered and analyzed by the Data Centre.

Students of Daugavpils branch specified that sometimes after a lecture there are short surveys that they fill in the class and there are open discussions with the lecturer of possible suggestions of changes in the course that they appreciate as students. In the expert opinion, this is a positive and encouraging practice that other branches can implement as well to monitor the satisfaction rate of students. In that way, there is closer connection between students and the lecturer and it is easier to monitor student satisfaction with their studies and the feedback is immediate not only at the end of the semester.

According to the information accessible in the SAR pp.43, the graduate surveys are conducted once a year. However, based on the information gathered during onsite meetings with graduates, the information differed a little based on the branches.

One graduate from the Riga branch mentioned that once in 6 months there is a survey of cooperation sent as well as there are calls from administration rather regularly with invitations to participate in conferences or Academy events. Another graduate from the Riga branch stated that there was a graduate survey sent and filled after graduation as well as there is an established active cooperation between this person and the Academy as this person has been a guest lecturer at the Academy for 4 years now with regular participation in conferences.

In Daugavpils branch, all graduates simultaneously agreed that after graduation they received a survey form and they filled it. Now, their cooperation with the Academy is based on receiving invitations for various events such as the Academy annual celebration. The expert group asked, if they have an interest to return to the Academy as guest lecturers, they all stated that they do not lecture here as their main purpose is to provide internships to students.

In the case of the Liepaja branch, the graduates seemed very active and involved, still maintaining close cooperation with the branch management and stated that they have participated in graduate surveys. During the meeting with the graduates, an expert group asked about the closeness of cooperation of the graduates with the Academy after they finished their studies and it was clarified that it depends on the individual, but there is no Alumni club, which unites them. To conclude, it is clear that graduate surveys have been sent out by the Academy and the majority of the graduates

recall receiving them and filling them out. Based on the information provided by the representatives of the QA management, the graduate response rate is the lowest from all three groups of stakeholders, which is around 50-60%.

According to the SAR p.42, there is a form of communication established with the employers. As stated in the report, there are surveys of employers that are conducted once a year. During the onsite visit, the expert group tried to clarify the system and form of employer surveys. During the meetings with employers, the expert group found that the only form of a survey that is being filled by the employers is internship evaluations, not a separate form of survey of employer opinion of the quality of the programme. Based on the information gathered during the QA management meeting, employers are rather active in filling internship evaluations, which is around 80% of response rate, which is considered high. As in the case with students, and graduate students, provided information indicating how beyond surveying satisfaction of them with programmes and/or internships, systematic, a well-developed and functioning system of including those stakeholders in strategic or mid-term development of study fields and programmes in psychology is not fully considered or functioning. In summary, there is a separate survey questionnaire "Research of Employers' Opinions", but expert group also had to consider the information that has been gathered during onsite visit, where other information was shared. Also, the feedback that derives from face-to-face interactions without an actual proof of the conversation is not considered formal, thus, there is a need for formal proof of exchange of thoughts, suggestions and ideas for improvement of the study programme, processes in place and others.

In Riga branch employers specified the procedure is as follows - students come with their survey forms and the employers are aware of it. When students fill in their surveys in accordance with the concluded triple agreement, the student is being evaluated by the employer.

In Daugavpils branch, one of the employers stated that internship surveys are filled by students themselves after they have concluded their internship at their institution. In terms of communication between the branch management and the employers, the cooperation is being maintained actively through organized meetings a few times per year. In general, it depends on the necessity. There have been occasions when they have met more than three times in a month because there was a cooperation with foreign institutions and foreign guests needed to be welcomed in 2023 from Denmark and Poland. One of the employers mentioned that they have concluded a cooperation agreement to provide internships to BIA students.

In the case of the Liepaja branch, the frequency of cooperation between the Academy and the employer differs. One of the employers stated that it does not have any connection with the Academy. Another employer stated that it gets calls and questions and if they are willing to take some interns for internships. Another one has not cooperated in the last year and a half with the Academy, which means that they do not have an exchange of views of opinions and recommendations. One employer mentioned that they can implement meetings in the future and give suggestions to the Academy but the person would not have any practical suggestions as everything is okay. Another employer said it would be a good idea to have such an exchange of information and closer cooperation with the BIA to improve the skills and prepare qualified specialists, and discuss topical issues in the form of guest lectures. Based on this information, it can be concluded that the employer cooperation with the branch is unclear and unstructured.

Based on this information provided, the expert group concludes that there is not a common form of communication with employers and the intensity and regularity of communication with employers depend on their personal needs and the approach differs based on the branch. At this point the

information that has been stated in the SAR on employer's surveys is not in alignment with the information that was gathered during onsite visit.

In the case of branches, graduates in large extent are also employers, which is a positive thing, however, it should be encouraged that they are also interested to provide guest lectures, provide insights to the current students with newest trends and necessities of the work market. Expert group received an impression that the majority of graduates and employers are not interested in providing lectures and get personally involved, which raises a question: why is that so?

1.2.3.

In accordance with the SAR p.43, complaint and suggestion procedure is established by the BIA study quality management system. According to the information provided in the SAR p.44, complaints and suggestions can be submitted in the paper form by filling in the application form, which is available at the BIA study information center, the BIA branches and the BIA website. Students can submit their complaints and suggestions in a paper form at the BIA study information center, the BIA branches or by sending the scanned copy of completed form by email to info@bsa.edu.lv.

During onsite visit, the expert group asked students whether students are aware and informed of the existing complaint and suggestion submission procedure. All students confirmed that they are familiar with it. They added that in case they submit official complaints, they know that they are registered officially and there is a person chosen by the Academy who is going to review it and is responsible to provide a response to the student or group of students within 10 days. However, students noted that there rarely are situations where they submit official complaints. As the Academy is a private institution, students enjoy more of a personal approach, they noted that all lecturers know students by names and they feel comfortable to approach lecturers in case there is something that they wish to change in the study content or go to management and say directly if something is not efficiently working in the study process. One of the members of academic staff mentioned an example of an issue in the case of one student where the internship supervisor refused to provide an internship for a specific student and the situation was settled internally without going through the official procedure.

1.2.4.

According to SAR p.46, the statistical data collected by the BIA are regularly summarized according to the needs of the study process and prepared for submission to the external institutions and internal departments. When the relevant information has been gathered on relevant data such as the number of students of the study programmes, dynamics of enrollment, material and technical resources of the study field and student, graduate and employer survey results, directors of the study field and study programmes analyze the information received, prepare the study year self-assessment reports and take the other measures to improve the study quality.

In accordance with the SAR p.47, the analysis of student, graduate and employer surveys are a substantial part of development and improvement of the implemented educational study programmes. For the improvement of the study field, the main statistical data used are the number of students as the number of enrolled students, expelled students, analyzing separately each reason for expulsion, tuition fee debt, non-completion of the study programme, voluntary withdrawals.

As stated in the SAR p.47, survey results are analyzed and compiled by the BIA Analytical Centre/Data Centre. Integrated analysis of data from all three stakeholders provides an understanding of the educational process. The results obtained are then used to develop

recommendations aimed at improving training programmes, adapting students to the demands of the labor market, and maintaining a high level of quality of studies.

During an onsite visit, the expert group tried to clarify the existing feedback system that is established for providing survey data analysis when analyzed back to the stakeholders. It was specified by the QA management that once the data is analyzed in the Data Centre, the data is sent to students and they are informed about the results. These results are also given to study direction management, there is some communication with lecturers and they can change around 20% in the study course content or in general in the study programme, if necessary based on agreement with the study programme director. During the meeting with students, they specified that the feedback (completion of feedback loop) is given usually onsite. During the meetings with employers and graduates - none of them mentioned that they receive information with data of their survey results and stated that usually all what is necessary is discussed in person. The expert group strongly suggests implementing a formal way of information transfer through forms of e-mail for graduates and employers and in Moodle for students to ensure that all parties have equal access to the relevant information of survey results that they have taken part in. In addition, a clear and more systematic evidence based system which will efficiently use all available information will be a strong benefit in future development of the study fields and psychology programmes.

1.2.5.

The information that is published on the website of BIA can be accessed in both implementation languages of the study programmes which are Latvian and English. All the relevant information can be easily found in regards to the study programmes on both levels - Bachelors and Masters. There is a clear description of the implementation languages, duration of studies, course credit points, study modes and places of implementation. The information can be found here: <https://bsa.edu.lv/index.php/en/bachelor-study-programmes/psychology.html> and <https://bsa.edu.lv/index.php/en/master-study-programmes/psychology.html>. One thing that the expert group found on the website was when a student pressed "Apply Course", then the table to fill in personal information to apply can only be seen in Latvian, which can be less convenient to understand for foreign students, when they wish to apply for their studies. Regarding the information accessible on the VIIS platform, the information there corresponds to the information on E-platform and BIA website. However, on the VIIS platform it is still possible to see the programmes of psychology studies that were closed in 2021, so, if possible as they are not relevant anymore, to delete that information from the platform.

It is important to mention that the experts team could not find any information about the accreditation term and its expiration on the BIA website (although students confirmed they knew about the expired term).

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

There is an established quality policy that is publicly available as well as a QA management system, which has recognized points for future improvements. It can be stated that BIA has developed and maintains a quality assurance system, which contributes to the achievement of the aims and learning outcomes of the study field and the relevant study programmes. The system partially ensures continuous improvement, development, and efficient performance of the study field and the relevant study programmes, however, employers have to be involved and monitored more in terms of their opinions and views of the student capabilities and necessary skills for the labor market. The procedures for the development and review of the relevant study programmes of the study field and the feedback mechanisms have been defined and are clearly implemented, except for employer surveys, as stakeholders groups. Employers and the BIA exchange information through internship

surveys or informally, but the expert group suggests that there has to be a formal way of additional information exchange, which ensures more transparent communication and understanding of the market needs, especially if the study programme is implemented in different regions with various labor market dynamics and the demands can significantly differ from one another. The mechanism developed for submission of student complaints and suggestions is effective, promotes the implementation of improvements, students are informed about such opportunities and receive feedback. The information published on the website of the BIA about the study programmes provides applicants and students with important information that is published in all languages of implementation of the study programme.

Strengths:

- 1) Well-developed complaint and suggestion mechanism.
- 2) Students appreciate the individualized studies approach.

Weaknesses:

- 1) There is no formal way of providing feedback of survey results to stakeholders (students, graduates and employers) of the data that has been gathered through surveys. The feedback loop is not concluded with graduates and employers, which is especially important in future development of the study field and its programmes.
- 2) Inconsistency of regularity and involvement of employers in QA processes based on branches.
- 3) No separate form of surveys for employers. The current way of communication between employers and the Academy is through internship surveys and through informal ways of communication such as phone calls and onsite meetings.
- 4) No clear specification on how the quality assurance system contributes to the achievement of the aims and learning outcomes of the study field.

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

BIA partially ensures continuous improvement, development, and efficient performance of the study field whilst implementing their quality assurance systems. The efficient performance is ensured by the supervision of the processes taking place at the BIA and implementation of surveys to monitor the satisfaction of all stakeholders - employers, graduates and students. However, it has to be pointed out that a large part of the teaching staff overlaps across branches, it would be of importance to collect and analyze information not only at individual level but also to compare the results of the branches separately.

- 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

BIA has an established policy and procedures for quality assurance of higher education, which are determined by internal regulatory documents. They define the quality mechanisms of the study process at BIA and which apply to all study programmes.

- 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

Rules of development, approval and amendment of the study programmes at the BIA have been worked out and approved at the meeting of the BIA Senate. However, the document link is not active - https://bsa.edu.lv/docs/nolikums/Development_approval_new_study_programme_me_09072020.pdf. These Rules regulate the procedure of development and approval of the study programmes, principles of the study programme structure, content and management of the academic, professional bachelor's and master's studies, requirements for obtaining the professional qualification.

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

It has been specified in the SAR p.16, that rules of assessment of the study results of the BIA have been developed and approved at the BIA Senate meeting - https://bsa.edu.lv/docs/nolikums/Regulations_Evaluation_Study.pdf.

Study course descriptions are approved by the study direction council.

Criteria for assessment of student performance are incorporated in the study course descriptions compiled by the lecturer of the respective study course, and the course description is coordinated with the director of the respective study programme.

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Regulations on the academic positions of the BIA have been developed and approved at the BIA Senate meeting (Protocol No.131, 23.10.2017).

https://bsa.edu.lv/docs/nolikums/Regulations_Academic_Positions.pdf.

Development of the study quality assurance system of the BIA is a coordinated activity of the hierarchy of all departments of the BIA and professional activity of all its academic staff. For the future, it would be advisable that each year compliance assessment is conducted, and the mechanisms are reviewed and specific persons are assigned to perform such procedures.

- 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

The BIA has established a system of collection and analysis of information and relevant data. At the end of each semester the information on student performance is collected, analyzed, and summarized. Rules of assessment of the study results of the BIA describing the performance records and procedure of their preparation have been developed and approved at the BIA Senate meeting. https://bsa.edu.lv/docs/nolikums/Regulations_EvaluationStudy.pdf. The BIA receives the information about the students satisfaction with the implementation of the study programmes and the efficiency of the lecturers work using the information provided in the questionnaires of the students and graduates.

However, in Daugavpils branch, it was mentioned by the head of the branch that they are not aware of collection and analysis of student survey results among branches. It has to be pointed out that a large part of the teaching staff overlaps across branches, it would be of importance to

collect and analyze information not only at individual level but also to compare the results of the branches separately.

- 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 higher education institution partially ensures continuous improvement, development, and efficient performance of the study field whilst implementing their quality assurance systems. This is described in section of 1.2.1. and 1.2.2. of expert report. The most important indicators of activities of the BIA are reflected in the annual study reports and study programme self-assessment reports which are available on the BIA website. However, based on the information that has been gathered during onsite visit, it is clear that some improvements are necessary such as regularity and involvement of employers in QA processes based on branches. On the other hand, during onsite visits, representatives of the stakeholders stated that they do not take part in it. At least, those that were present during site visit.

1.3. Resources and Provision of the Study Field

Analysis

1.3.1.

Based on the SAR (pp. 49-55) as well as information obtained during the site visit, it could be concluded that BIA has a well-defined system for determining and redistributing financial support required for the implementation of the Psychology study field and its corresponding programmes.

BIA has a unified budget approved by the founders, which contributes to the development of the institution, optimal programme structure, and distribution of work assignments. The budget is executed annually with a report provided to the appropriate authorities.

BIA's financial stability is highlighted by its total assets and stable financial indicators (more info on this is provided in Annex "BIA Financial Stability Indicators.docx"). This stability allows the institution to address financing issues promptly and in small groups within strategic specializations.

The income sources for the Psychology study field include student tuition fees, scientific activity funding (from state budget, EU funds, etc.), and other miscellaneous incomes (more info on that is provided in Annex "Income of the Baltic International Academy in the period of 2016 - 2022.docx"). As was highlighted during the meeting with the management during the site visit, the tuition fees for the Psychology programmes' are outlined along with a mention of a discount system and opportunities for study and student loans. Additionally, budget places for full-time studies are determined annually, and there's a positive note about no tuition fee increases until a certain academic year.

The main use of financial resources of the BIA is reflected in the SAR Appendix "BIA expenses". In the experts' team opinion, the expense structure, including wages and operational expenses, seems to be in line with average indicators for higher education institutions in Latvia. The SAR also mentions the maintenance of real estate used for educational purposes (p. 53).

It could be confirmed that there is a positive balance between income and expenses for the Psychology study field, with expenses per student covered by income. The funding system ensures quality education by guaranteeing necessary resources for students, including contact hours, library resources, and research activities in all branches. Funding for scientific activities is mainly from

internal resources and EU structural funds, with investments made in research facilities and software. Apart from academic and scientific activities, BIA's budget priorities include co-financing EU projects, safety measures, interaction with social partners, staff support, and image-building.

Overall, it appears that BIA had an operational system for determining and redistributing financial support for the Psychology study field and its corresponding programmes' (BA full-time and part-time, MA full-time). The evidence from SAR and obtained during the site visit shows clear financial planning, stability, and allocation strategies to support the sustainability and quality of the programmes.

1.3.2.

BIA has identified the necessary infrastructure resources and material and technical support required for the implementation of the Psychology study field as well as key areas for development within the Psychology study field. They include the purchase of study and scientific literature, modernization of computer equipment, enhancement of internet access, and repair/equipment of classrooms.

Additionally, BIA has established a TV-bridge system and multimedia equipment for real-time lectures and seminars, facilitating communication between lecturers and students across different locations. Students from Liepaja and Daugavpils branches expressed their satisfaction with the opportunity to participate in online lectures and had no complaints about the quality of connection, video, or sound.

The SAR (pp. 56-57) indicates that students and academic staff have access to necessary resources, such as internet access, email, multimedia, and software tools for educational purposes. This information was confirmed during the site visit, and it can be concluded that the infrastructure in BIA appears to support the needs of both students and teaching staff in all three branches.

The SAR (pp. 56-57) mentions the purchase of new equipment and hardware as part of their technical development plan. They have equipped classrooms with copying equipment, visual presentation equipment, computer hardware, and TV equipment for teleconferencing. Additionally, in the SAR a list of software applications available for use is provided, indicating a systematic approach to providing technological resources. However, it is worth noting that the information on available software provided in the SAR (p. 57-58) is misleading, because it states that BIA is using very outdated software (e.g. Microsoft Windows 2000/ XP, Microsoft Office 2000/ XP / 2003/2007 etc.), but as was witnessed during the site visit, the actual software is much newer.

In general, based on the information provided in the SAR as well as obtained during the site visit and discussions with management, academic staff, students and graduates, BIA meets the criteria for infrastructure resources and material and technical support necessary for the Psychology study field. They have identified key areas for development, ensured availability of resources to students and staff, and established systems and procedures for improvement and purchase of necessary provisions.

1.3.3.

BIA has developed a system and procedure for the improvement and purchase of methodological and informative provision, including library resources and databases, which are available to students in all three branches and meet the needs of the Psychology study field.

As was observed during the site visit, BIA's scientific library provides access to educational

literature, periodicals, electronic databases, and other resources necessary for students and academic staff. They have a central library in Riga and Information and Service Points (ISP) in Liepaja and Daugavpils. The entire library collection is included in an electronic catalog, facilitating easy access to resources.

The library facilities, including computerized workplaces, copying, printing, and scanning services, are accessible to students and staff, and this information was confirmed by students and alumni. The library staff assists users in finding necessary information and offers consultations on using electronic services. Additionally, the library is open for extended hours, including Saturdays, to accommodate users' needs. The library collection is regularly replenished according to the study programme's needs, with a wide range of methodical and scientific information sources, in the frame of available financial resources. According to SAR (p. 60), books are purchased in proportion to the number of students, based on mandatory reading lists and market demand. The collection is updated through purchases, donations, and subscriptions to databases like EBSCO, SCOPUS, and ScienceDirect. Students are generally satisfied with the access provided by the BIA to use the databases, however, during onsite visit, it was specified that the databases can be accessed at the premises of BIA and only in specific occasions such as thesis writing, students can request external access to these databases. For example, as of 2024 05 06, there are 35 open-access journals in Psychology on Science Direct (available without institutional login) vs 190 journals that require institutional credentials, suggesting that only part of the scientific articles / publications is available to those who access this database from home.

During the site visit the experts' team has noticed that the library system has kept pace with rapid information technology development by modernizing computer classrooms, libraries, and auditoriums. The usage statistics provided in the SAR (p. 60) indicate a significant number of library visits and users, demonstrating the library's importance and relevance to the academic community.

The library collection includes publications in Latvian, Russian, and partially English languages, relevant to psychology, with an increase in the number of titles acquired since 2018.

Overall, based on the information provided, it could be stated that BIA has developed a robust system for the improvement and purchase of methodological and informative provision, with a well-equipped library system and access to relevant resources for students and academic staff in the Psychology study field.

1.3.4.

In the 2018/2019 academic year, the e-study environment Moodle was introduced. According to students' feedback gathered during the site visit, Moodle e-learning platform appears to be a suitable solution for BIA's study process, providing a virtual communication environment where students can access educational materials, recordings of lectures, participate in group assignments, submit independent work, view test results, and communicate with lecturers and peers. Its flexibility allows for both group and individual lessons, accommodating different teaching methods and learning styles. Moodle enables differentiated delivery and interactivity of learning, repetition of learning material, continuous learning and methodological support, learner self-monitoring, creation and implementation of individual learning plans, and confidentiality of learning. The platform allows for objective feedback, fostering a more successful learning process.

As was mentioned in the SAR (p. 67), lecturers develop course descriptions and materials, including theoretical content, self-examination tasks, and independent work tasks, which are uploaded to Moodle classrooms. Students have access to these materials at any time, allowing for self-paced

learning and revisiting of course content.

Student feedback indicates a desire for modernization of Moodle, reflecting practical experience in its use and a willingness to engage independently with digital tools in the study process. Continuous improvement and training for teachers should be highlighted as essential for successful use of Moodle.

In general, the use of Moodle at BIA supports the study process, particularly in the context of remote learning. The platform's features and functionalities align with the needs of students and lecturers, providing a versatile environment for teaching, learning, communication, and collaboration. However, continuous improvement and support are crucial for maximizing the potential of Moodle in enhancing the educational experience at BIA.

1.3.5.

BIA promotes a flexible recruitment policy, aiming to attract highly qualified academic staff. As mentioned in the SAR (p. 68), criteria for election into academic positions are outlined in the Regulations on BIA Academic Positions, and they are described in Regulations on academic positions of the Baltic International Academy (https://bsa.edu.lv/docs/nolikums/Regulations_Academic_Positions.pdf). These criteria include achievements in scientific and pedagogical activity, coherence with the mission of the study field, and professional competence.

Based on Regulations mentioned above, recruitment into academic positions is based on open competition, ensuring transparency and fairness in the selection process. Vacant positions are announced publicly, and applicants are evaluated according to established regulations. Various stakeholders, including the Senate, Council of Professors, Study Council, and students, participate in the election process. Their involvement ensures representation from different perspectives and promotes transparency. Evaluation of applicants includes reviewing scientific biographies, meeting minutes, self-assessment reports, student results, and references. The Senate assesses qualifications that align with the goals and tasks of the study field and program.

Teaching staff are obliged to comply with study programme implementation conditions and legal requirements, including qualifications, language skills, and pedagogical experience.

The number of academic staff is approved by the Senate. In cases of vacant positions, guest teaching staff may be temporarily involved in the study process, subject to approval. The study programme plan, including staff qualifications, is made available to students.

In summary, BIA demonstrates a structured and transparent approach to attracting qualified teaching staff, still there are demonstrated challenges in the number and structure of teaching staff, which is subject of analysis in this report. The recruitment process follows established criteria and involves various stakeholders to ensure fairness and alignment with academic goals. Continuous development and monitoring of staffing dynamics further contribute to maintaining the quality of education provided by BIA.

1.3.6.

Based on information provided in the SAR (p. 70), as well as obtained from meetings with programme managers and academic staff, BIA offers various opportunities for professional development, including participation in scientific conferences, methodological seminars, and guest lectures by foreign experts. These activities enable teaching staff to enhance their knowledge and

skills, contributing to their professional growth.

As was clarified during the meeting with academic staff, BIA provides financial support for teaching staff's participation in training courses, conferences, and English language courses, which is dominantly targeted towards conference participation. It could be concluded that co-financing of qualification courses, methodological seminars, and conference attendance incentivizes continuous learning and development among the teaching staff.

BIA encourages international engagement through activities such as participation in exchange programmes' like Erasmus mobility, collaboration in research projects, and attendance at conferences organized by other universities. In experts' team view, these experiences broaden the horizons of teaching staff and facilitate knowledge exchange. However, it should be noted that the usage of international mobility should be further encouraged, and structured in-house training to continuous professional development (hereafter - CPD) of teaching staff should be enriched.

The effectiveness of professional development measures is evaluated through student surveys and assessments of teaching staff's knowledge and skills. As was mentioned in the 1.2. chapter of this report, students confirmed their participation in these surveys. It's important to continue to gather feedback from students (and systematically use it), as it helps identify areas for improvement and assesses the impact of professional development activities on teaching quality.

The provided information in SAR (p. 71) highlights the positive impact of professional development initiatives, including an increase in internationally recognized publications and the effective utilization of e-learning environments like the BIA Moodle system and BigBlueButton system. However, the number of relevant and internationally comparable scientific projects (e.g. HORIZON, ERASMUS+ and similar) of ABSP and PMSP members are still very modest. In addition, there are existing differences between staff members in contribution within some forms of activity (e.g. publishing), which should be systematically targeted in the future.

During the onsite visit, members of the teaching staff mentioned that they would appreciate that there was a system for them to be remunerated extra for high quality work, for example, their positive performance as a lecturer and good student feedback of their course, and the experts team recommends considering these additional motivational measures.

Overall, BIA demonstrates a comprehensive approach to determining the professional and didactic development needs of its teaching staff and implementing appropriate improvement measures. The evaluation of these measures, coupled with feedback mechanisms and quantitative indicators of impact, ensures continuous enhancement of teaching quality and academic excellence at BIA.

1.3.7.

Based on the information from SAR (pp. 71-74) and discussions with management and academic personnel during the site visit, BIA ensures a balanced academic, research, and administrative workload for its teaching staff in the Study Field "Psychology" as a policy position, which is challenged with available evidence about teaching staff workloads. Information provided in the SAR document, in the analysis of teaching staff, indicates that there are many visible shortcomings, indicating a clear case of overloading with the number of courses where staff is responsible for them and, consequently teaching hours which are allocated to those courses (see text at the end of this 1.3.7. criteria).

BIA employs teaching staff with diverse qualifications, including those with master's and doctoral

degrees in Psychology (information from Annex "CV_EN.pdf", and Teaching_Staff_Courses_Languages_1.xlsx). The percentage distribution of academic staff with doctoral degrees meets the requirement of at least 50% set by the Law on Higher Education (currently, the percentage is 77.4%), where a share of teaching staff who hold doctoral degrees not in the academic field of psychology is high.. Most lecturers have their main job at BIA, indicating a primary commitment to the institution.

BIA has established clear regulations for determining the workload and remuneration of academic staff. The workload is determined based on positions, with specific hourly rates assigned to each category of staff. The workload includes both in-class and out-of-class responsibilities, such as participation in events, organization of conferences, and writing of scientific materials.

The annual workload for academic staff is limited to 1000 academic hours per academic year, in compliance with Cabinet Regulations. This limitation helps prevent overload and ensures a balanced workload for teaching staff. However, as students mentioned during the meeting, they can contact their lecturers as much as they want (e.g. when writing a final paper), and this raises a question about personal - work boundaries. Analysis of structure of programmes and course allocation of teaching staff challenged this proclaimed policy (e.g. 1000 academic hours per year) and evidence provided for experts clearly indicate how some of teaching staff should have much higher workload, based on the analysis of allocated courses within psychology programmes structure (e.g. there are teachers who is responsible for a total of 10 psychology courses, teacher who is responsible for a total 6 psychology courses, teacher who is responsible for a total 14 psychology courses, teacher who is responsible for a total 16 psychology courses, teacher who is responsible for a total 18 psychology courses, teacher who is responsible for a total 9 psychology courses, teacher who is responsible for a total 9 psychology courses, or teacher who is responsible for a total 11 psychology courses) (note: in the report we omit the names of teachers, this information is available in annexes to SAR).

Academic staff involved in programmes' taught in English are required to have confirmed proficiency in the language, as indicated by their higher education documents (Annex "Study field Psychology Academic staff knowledge of English language.edoc") and self-assessment in the EUROPASS Language Passport. However, it is worth mentioning that during a site visit a great part of the staff used the help of an interpreter, which challenged issues of quality of proclaimed policy and effectiveness of that policy in practice. The fact that in this study field the study programme is implemented in English requires that the teaching staff can freely communicate with the students and understand their questions, helping if needed throughout the study process. One thing is stating that you have B2 level language skills, another thing is to prove it when meeting an expert committee. If a person, for example, is not teaching foreign language stream students, of course, then B2 English knowledge is not a requirement. However, if it is and the interpreter is needed also for those who are teaching study courses in English, then it is an indicator of lack of English knowledge.

In summary, on the policy level BIA shows a systematic approach to balancing the workload of its teaching staff, ensuring that they can effectively fulfill their academic, research, and administrative responsibilities within a structured framework, where available information indicates how realization of the programmes does not correspond with the policy.

1.3.8.

BIA has established a comprehensive support system to meet the needs of its students, including pre-programme support, orientation week, individualized support, Study Information Center, career

guidance, student self-government, and extracurricular activities.

BIA offers various forms of support to prospective students, including Open Days and individual counseling sessions to help them make informed decisions about their programme selection.

As is mentioned in the SAR (p. 74), the Freshman Week organized by BIA at the beginning of the academic year includes activities such as meetings with programme administration, language and computer skills testing, and introductions to library resources and cultural centers. In experts' team opinion, this helps new students acclimate to their academic environment and understand the resources available to them.

As were many times highlighted during the various meetings, BIA faculty and staff work closely with students to address any study or communication problems they may encounter. This includes offering individual consultations, homework assistance, access to additional resources, and personalized tuition schedules to support student learning and research participation.

During the meeting with alumni, they shared their personal experiences from study time where their thesis supervisors were cooperative and forthcoming, which they highly appreciated. One of the examples was that the supervisor was very structured and they had specific deadlines and negotiations of the following steps of the thesis writing. Another two examples, in expert opinion, were a bit extreme where the supervisor was accessible even during the vacation time when the supervisor was on a trip to Bali. In the other case, the supervisor was available after working hours around eleven in the evening. As the expert group concludes, the graduates tried to reflect the responsiveness of the supervisor, but there has to be clear boundaries of the working hours and accessibility to ensure healthy work and life balance of the teaching staff.

BIA provides a Study Information Center aimed at offering counseling to students on various aspects of the study process, communication with the administration, and engagement with the teaching staff. This centralized resource helps students navigate academic and administrative matters effectively.

BIA provides career guidance services to help students transition between educational levels, start their careers, and make informed decisions about employment opportunities. This support helps students develop their skills and promotes social inclusion.

BIA has a student self-government system led by a Student President and composed of group activists from each study group. The Student Council organizes student activities, proposes improvements to the study environment, and collaborates with programme directors and BIA administration to address student needs.

A variety of extra-curricular activities are organized on a regular basis, fostering a sense of community among students, promoting civic participation, and providing opportunities for personal growth and development.

Overall, BIA's support system is multifaceted and aims to address the diverse needs of its student body, including international students, part-time students, distance learners, and those with special needs, ensuring a supportive and inclusive learning environment. Evidenced weakness is noted with the issue of the alumni club, which is not established and activities with graduate students do not function in the systematic ways.

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

BIA demonstrates a well-defined system for financial management, with stable indicators and clear allocation strategies contributing to programme sustainability and quality. The Academy has identified necessary infrastructure resources and invested in modernization, ensuring students and staff have access to adequate facilities and technological resources. BIA has established a robust system for methodological and informative provision, with equipped libraries and access to relevant resources for academic staff and students. Moodle effectively supports the study process, providing a versatile environment for teaching, learning, and communication, though continuous improvement is necessary. BIA follows a structured and transparent approach to recruiting qualified academic staff, ensuring alignment with academic goals and student needs. The academy offers comprehensive opportunities for professional development, promoting continuous learning among teaching staff and enhancing teaching quality, with particularly not justified high concerns on the conference participation versus other CPD activities. BIA ensures at policy level a balanced workload for teaching staff, with clear regulations and limitations to prevent overload and maintain quality, which is challenged with available evidence to existing teaching staff workload. The Academy has established a comprehensive support system for existing students, addressing various needs and promoting an inclusive learning environment.

Strengths:

- 1) Clear financial management system contributes to programme sustainability.
- 2) Robust methodological support system ensures access to relevant resources.
- 3) Effective use of Moodle enhances the study process.
- 4) Professional development opportunities for teaching staff aimed to foster continuous learning.

Weaknesses:

- 1) Continuous improvement of Moodle and training for teachers are necessary.
- 2) Proclaimed policy related to teaching staff workload is not congruent with existing evidence about course allocation and related workload needed for its realization.
- 3) Boundaries between personal and work hours for teaching staff may need clarification, as they indicate less systematic approach and increase effective workloads of teaching staff.
- 4) Encouragement of international mobility for staff could be strengthened.
- 5) Only internal access to databases and students cannot use them from home or outside BIA premises.

1.4. Scientific Research and Artistic Creation

Analysis

1.4.1.

According to the long-term strategy of the BIA's operation and development for 2022-2025 (https://bsa.edu.lv/docs/nolikums/strategija_2022_en.pdf/), it is reported, that the main lines of BIA's scientific research activities are as follows: promoting the research activity of lecturers and students, especially in those areas that are important for the further growth of Latvian economy and culture; motivating academic staff in the preparation and submission of scientific publications, especially publications included in internationally recognised databases (Web of Science, Erih+, etc); developing and expanding scientific and methodical cooperation with other Latvian scientific institutions, Baltic Sea region, European and world science centers, with Latvian and foreign universities for joint scientific research; promoting the development of shared scientific infrastructure (development of scientific research laboratories, creation of an analytical and competence center, creation of a psychological assistance center, etc.); introducing new and modernized study courses in all study fields, using the possibilities offered by a modern laboratory; attracting EU structural funds and social funding for BIA academic staff scientific research; involving

students in conducting research and preparing publications, ensuring the principle of succession in all areas of study implemented by BIA; organizing regular international scientific conferences and seminars in BIA research fields. Most of these activities mentioned in the long-term strategy of the BIA operation and development are partly or fully implemented within the study field of the institution. The visible weakness is related to unclear strategic orientation of BIA research, where still in mission, vision and task session is operated interchangeably with concepts of scientific, professional and applied research. In addition, many written elements in SAR are based on the high importance of the Laboratory of Neurocognitive Implicit Processes, however it is not clearly documented and confirmed by research staff activities.

1.4.2.

Scientific research of the Study Field "Psychology" in BIA is carried out mainly in the subfields of Social, Cognitive, Organizational and Occupational Psychology. The subfields of Social Psychology and Occupational and Organizational Psychology are mentioned as the most important lines of research during the reporting period. Academy has a psychological laboratory (Laboratory of Neurocognitive Implicit Processes), equipped and actively used by students and academic staff for research purposes. During the meeting with students they reported that a laboratory is available for them during the study process and the research activity of some academic staff (e.g. PhD thesis "Research of consumer attitude towards Latvian and foreign product brands using implicit and explicit methods") is grounded on implicit measurements held in the laboratory. In Social Psychology, special attention is directed to the study of the cognitive mechanisms of implicit social cognition, and the implementation of applied research of implicit attitudes in various fields of professional activity (in the field of Occupational and Organizational Psychology). Also, implicit experimental procedures are being developed in this area to measure psychological constructs in various areas of Applied Social Psychology. During on-site visit involvement of students in projects research activities wasn't fully confirmed and integration of research activities in study programmes activities is a place for improvement.

1.4.3.

The staff members of the Study Field "Psychology" have an experience and actively participate in several international cooperation and research projects, funded from the different sources, for example: "Implicit competence and self-determination". Research grant of the Republic of Latvia for forcibly displaced persons (example of Ukraine), Project No. BSA-L-SP-01/22; ESF Project No. 8.3.2.1/16/I/002 "Implementation of national and international measures for the development of student talents"; ESF Project No. 9.1.2.0/16/I/001 "Integration of ex prisoners into society and the labor market". "Implementation of the resocialization programme for imprisoned parents "Parental Skills"; NORDPLUS project "Strategies of Coping with COVID-19 Induced Stress for Women Working from Home" (NPAD-2021/10125). The implemented projects have a relationship to Social, Cognitive, Organizational and Occupational Psychology and are relevant to the study programmes within Study Field "Psychology" of BIA. Still, there is missed focused research strategy on projects which purely represent thematic streams in current work and organizational psychology and include relevant stakeholders (e.g. business and innovations sectors) and researchers, especially international ones, in those research.

1.4.4.

The academic staff involved in the implementation of the BIA study field "Psychology" provides sufficient scientific capacity for the performance of scientific activities. During the assessment visit, the teaching staff of the programmes confirm their involvement in international scientific projects, writing scientific papers and other scientific activities such as participation in international congresses, conferences and symposia in Europe and worldwide. However, there is a lack of

developed mechanisms for the involvement of the teaching staff in scientific research at an institutional level. In addition, there is visible orientation on conferences and similar activities, as focus, which should be changed with focus on research projects, especially which are internationally founded and peer-reviewed (e.g. HORIZON, ERASMUS + etc.). This fact was clarified during the experts' visit meeting with academic staff. The motivation to be involved in scientific research of the teaching staff is mostly internal and has a little external support from the academy: professors of the academy are mostly motivated to be reelected for the post of professor, and so, they have to meet the requirements determined by State, but young academic staff, especially those, who are PhD students are doing their research in the frame of the PhD research in order to complete and defend PhD thesis. In addition, the absence of self-governing activities related to research does not enable efficient research activities as there doesn't exist a well-functioning procedure.

1.4.5.

As it is reported in SAR, p. 85, within the study programmes, students collaborate with the academic staff, engaging in a range of research initiatives and international scientific conferences, and contributing to the publication of scientific papers. Students present their research results at conferences and actively participate with their reports at both local and international conferences. Master students also actively participate in scientific conferences, as participation in conferences and publication of scientific articles is part of the practical training included in the requirements of the Master's study programme. During on-site visits some of participating students possessed weak and scarce information about research activities in the programmes, including about functioning Laboratory. There is in addition weak information about common research work, and especially joint publication among research staff and students. BIA provides information about journal publishing of teaching staff and students independent publishing, which is in the same volume of one journal (without articles authored by teaching staff and students together).

1.4.6.

There is a real opportunity in the Academy to conduct fundamental research on the cognitive mechanisms of implicit social cognition, as well as contemporary applied research focused on the study of implicit attitudes in various professional fields. The Baltic International Academy has established the Laboratory of Neurocognitive Implicit Processes, which has a potential to significant positive impact on the study process and be a resource in attracting students and teachers for the study of various programmes - psychologists, lawyers, economists, marketers, entrepreneurs, prospective and topical research fields. That has significantly increased the possibilities of the Academy to cooperate with Latvian and European researchers and to participate in joint international, scientific-research programmes. The laboratory is used for fundamental and applied scientific research in the field of neuropsychology and psychophysiology and implicit social cognition, as well as academic purposes and work with students providing all necessary resources for elaborating the bachelor's and master's theses. It is reported in SAR p. 89, that there are the following research topics developed on the laboratory basis: Study of attitudes towards risky driving using explicit and implicit methods; Study of attitudes towards criminal violence; Study of consumer attitudes using explicit and implicit methods and Study of attitudes towards healthy and unhealthy food using explicit and implicit methods. However, at the moment, the Laboratory has basic equipment and presents only resources for expected innovation solutions, which should be developed.

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

The study field of Psychology at BIA is aligned with its goals and the broader field of study. The academic staff and students actively participate in research initiatives and international scientific

conferences annually organized by BIA. The quality of scientific papers published by academic staff and the involvement of students in addressing contemporary issues demonstrate the relevance and significance of the research conducted in this field. The use of the Laboratory of Neurocognitive Implicit Processes may have a significant positive impact on the quality of the research papers and students' motivation to be involved in the research process. However, during the visit, both students and teaching staff of the Academy demonstrated a strong commitment to research, international cooperation, and innovative solutions, positively impacting the study process. However, the Study Field did not provide sufficient evidence for well developed research activities. The number of research articles published in academic peer-reviewed journals is insignificant. It is extremely important to develop a plan on how to improve research activities, to define the research focus and to rearrange their resources (human, financial, spatial etc.).

Strengths:

- 1) Students of the Academy are highly motivated and actively involved in scientific research and scientific projects.
- 2) Students and academic staff participate in conferences and publish research papers in BIA conference proceedings.
- 3) The Laboratory of Neurocognitive Implicit Processes may be effectively used for both research and academic purposes.

Weaknesses:

- 1) There is a lack of mechanisms developed at the Academy's level for the involvement of the teaching staff in scientific or applied research.
- 2) There is a lack of international cooperation with scientists and researchers recognized in the field.
- 3) Poor research productivity/publishing (quantity, regularity, international academic peer-reviewed journals, insignificant number of published journal articles in international journals with some exception, and main research activities are conference proceedings and participation in some conferences).

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

There are some scientific activities within the study field. However, the research productivity is rather low (number of published scientific articles in internationally recognized journals related to the field) and a lack of clear research direction is also evident, as the majority of 133 publications is written by 2 members of the academic staff.

1.5. Cooperation and Internationalisation

Analysis

1.5.1.

When looking at the documents submitted for study field assessment, as well as in conversations with graduates, an interesting picture emerges about cooperation partners. Cooperation partners are mostly sought in such state or government institutions and other institutions (e.g. secondary schools, gymnasiums), as well as in small sized private partnership companies, in which the owners and/or managers of various levels are BIA graduates. This type of cooperation does not contradict the legislation and/or regulatory enactments, however, it does not create confidence about the

potential specialists' real job opportunities in the chosen profession. It would even be commendable in a sense that graduates are involved in future professional activities in the training and education of future specialists, however, this raises concerns about the students' real opportunities to compete in the labor market. Many study internships probably give students an incomplete idea of the field of organizational and work psychology in the industry (as big companies, relevant business representatives are not in the list of cooperation partners), but open up a broader insight into the adjacent fields of clinical and health, as well as school and educational psychology, in which, in turn, they lack specific, in-depth knowledge.

1.5.2.

As stated in the SAR (p. 92), BIA engages in various forms of international cooperation, including staff and student exchanges through mobility programmes' and projects, participation in international projects, hosting and attending international scientific conferences, congresses, and seminars, organizing international academic weeks, as well as maintaining membership in international associations.

The selection of the cooperating institutions, according to SAR, is based on several criteria: relevance to the field of psychology (the institution's work profile aligns with the field of Psychology); willingness to collaborate in research activities (this includes participation in international conferences, seminars, master classes, and joint research projects), availability of internship opportunities (institutions are prepared to offer internships for students) and capability to facilitate academic staff and student exchange programmes' in psychology (institutions possess the resources and infrastructure to support the implementation of exchange programmes' for both academic staff and students in the field of psychology).

According to the information obtained during the site visit of BIA, in the Liepāja branch, students have the opportunity to actively participate in experience exchange trips in Lithuania. However, since the Liepāja branch carries out only a bachelor's programme and on the Lithuanian side the internship is connected to an educational institution, the motivation and criteria for choosing such cooperation are not clearly understood, as it does not correspond to the specialization of the master's programme offered by BIA, if we assume that students after the bachelor's programme graduation, continue their studies at the BIA master's degree.

Students of all BIA branches were given the opportunity to listen to guest lecturers within the framework of ERASMUS from Lithuania, Poland, Turkey, as well as from India, Russia, Ukraine, Israel and the USA, however, in general, it would be valuable to further improve and develop this.

1.5.3.

Visiting the BIA branches in Riga, Liepāja and Daugavpils, experts come to the conclusion that the Riga branch has greater opportunities both to accept foreign students and to attract guest lecturers from other Latvian universities and foreign countries. It should be noted that the study process of incoming mobility should be improved and modernized, as the current guest lectures reflect more the actualities in the field of psychology in the previous decade, for example, focusing on Emotional Intelligence.

At the same time, it should be added that the academy could think about expanding the range of participating teaching staff during the study process. Since the academy offers a professional master's program, various field professionals could be invited to deliver lectures and lead modules, which would allow students to gain much broader knowledge and understanding of the field they are studying, as the current teaching staff, with an uneven distribution of courses, is very limited in

number. Some staff teach a very large number of courses, which raises concerns and doubts about the quality of the studies taught, since it is impossible for the same person to be very knowledgeable in so many different areas of psychology.

Analyzing the documents submitted by the BIA and basing the conclusions on the compliance of the curriculum implemented by the BIA with the training of specialists in the state - regulated profession "psychologist", for example, "The development plan of the field of study "Psychology" from 2023 to 2029", it can be concluded that formally the BIA implements the study programme in accordance. Teaching staff and students participate in both outgoing and incoming mobility, which provides added value to the implementation of the study process and the quality of studies. At the beginning of each year, the compliance of the study area with the EU educational space and accreditation guidelines is assessed. As well as by the end of each academic year, cooperation agreements are concluded with universities of partner countries in the EU education space within the framework of ERASMUS+

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

There is relatively established cooperation with various academic and non-academic organizations in the country, which is amended with several international cooperation agreements that have been signed with employers for internships. However, the impact of internationalization on the study process is not visible enough. There is a lack of invited international academic staff members, practitioners and researchers involved in the field. This option should be used more actively, especially taking into account the number of international students in all programmes. Additional actions are needed in order to attract more international students and academic staff either just for short visits or study visits.

Strengths:

- 1) Relatively well-established cooperation with academic and non-academic organizations in the country.
- 2) Awareness of the importance of international cooperation.
- 3) International cooperation agreements have been concluded with employers for internships.

Weaknesses:

- 1) Infrequent visits of international academic staff members, practitioners and research fellows.
- 2) Internships might give students an incomplete idea of the field of organizational and work psychology in the industry, as big companies and relevant business representatives are not in the list of cooperation partners.

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 cooperation implemented within the study field with various Latvian and foreign organizations partly ensures the achievement of the aims of the study field, internships give students an incomplete idea of the field of organizational and work psychology in the industry.

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

Analysis

1.6.1.

There were 12 short-term and 11 long-term recommendations provided for the study field during assessment of the study field. According to SAR Annex 3, as well as information obtained during the site visit, the majority of the recommendations were addressed:

Short-term recommendations:

- 1) Update information on Erasmus+ partnerships - addressed. Mobility opportunities for both students and academic staff were strengthened through programmes' like ERASMUS+.
- 2) Remove bilingual study types - addressed. In the lecture plans for the 1st and 2nd year students, which are posted on the BIA website, the type of training has been changed (from bilingual to Latvian).
- 3) Modify study agreements - addressed. Study Agreements have been reviewed, and corrections were made (Study Field "Psychology", section 2.1, subsection 2.1.4).
- 4) Assign an Erasmus coordinator - addressed. The Annex 3 mentions strengthening the capacity of incoming mobility of academic staff, indicating a role of an Erasmus coordinator and assistant. Students are systematically informed about Erasmus+ opportunities to study abroad.
- 5) Review application of regulations on teachers' remuneration - addressed. In compliance with the amendments to the "Regulations on Teachers' Remuneration", the salary rates at the BIA were changed from 01.05.2021.
- 6) Establish a system for graduate and employer surveying - not fully addressed, but in progress. As the graduates' and employer survey system has been incorporated into the BIA Quality System since 31.12.2023, by the day of writing this report it is difficult to evaluate its efficiency, as the system is very new.
- 7) Develop a strategy for academic staff motivation - partially addressed. There are measures to strengthen the research capacity of academic staff presented, however the research productivity is still quite low, especially for some members of staff.
- 8) Develop a mechanism to increase lecturer mobility - partially addressed. The SAR (chapter 2.5) mentions increasing the capacity of incoming mobility of academic staff by inviting foreign lecturers within the framework of Erasmus programme (from Lithuania, Poland, Turkey, Ukraine) as well as beyond Erasmus programme (from India, Ukraine, Israel and USA), although the numbers of incoming mobility remain low - 11 visits and 9 visits respectively.
- 9) Increase accessibility of guest lecturers - partially addressed. The SAR (chapter 2.5) mentions an increase in the number of guest lecturers from various countries. However, the choice of invited guest lecturers could be further improved, because among the guest lecturers, the names of the best-known professors in the field in Latvia cannot be found. It is understandable that a certain recognition is not and cannot be the only criterion to be put forward as the determining factor for ensuring the quality of studies. At the same time, one cannot fail to notice that such words do not appear at all in the list of lectures.
- 10) Improve the amount of branch contact hours (face-to-face classes) by attracting more local lecturers and/or previous programme graduates - addressed. In the period from 2020/2021 to the 2022/2023 academic year, not only the quantitative composition of the teaching staff has changed, but also its qualitative changes took place. This follows from BIA's teaching staff development policy - to involve BIA graduates who have obtained master's/doctoral degrees in Psychology in the teaching process. In BIA branches (Liepāja and Daugavpils, where only part-time, face-to-face classes are available), there has been an opportunity to attract local lecturers, as well as lecturers from other higher education institutions. When developing part-time studies (Liepāja branch, Daugavpils branch), there are fewer contact hours (30%) than in full-time study cohorts (for example, in Riga). The proportion of independent work is correspondingly higher, and the emphasis

is on information in the e-study environment. Students' independent work is oriented more towards independent learning of the material (see Appendix 9 and 10). In addition to contact hours in the form of lectures and seminars, several other formats of contact hours are implemented in each study course, including individual consultations, guest lectures, participation in the BIA's annual international student scientific conference and other wider public scientific and research events.

11) Establish a transparent system for library book purchase - partially addressed. The budget for the procurement of textbooks for the BIA Study Field "Psychology" is determined in proportion to the number of students and lecturers. The principles of budget formation and the overall distribution of funding for the performance of higher education institution functions are approved by the BIA Founders. The BIA budget is formed in a dialogue between the BIA Founders, BIA management, and the Student Council. Although it should be noted that despite the fact that there is a system for purchasing books, the number of literature available in the English language is still very low.

12) Improve Latvian language knowledge for staff - addressed. According to Annex 3, several of the teaching staff have improved their Latvian language skills individually in language courses.

Long-term recommendations:

1) Establish more cooperation agreements for mobility with countries where a language barrier will be less problematic, and studies can be held in English - partially addressed. There's mention of strengthening mobility opportunities, but no specific mention of establishing more cooperation agreements.

2) Evaluate cooperation possibilities with RSU Liepaja branch - partially addressed. In June 2023, a letter of intent to ensure cooperation between branches was prepared and sent to RSU Liepāja branch Director. Ensuring cooperation is in the process, however by the date of writing this report, the information about RSU's response / intent to respond has not been provided.

3) Conduct analysis on the necessity of a doctoral programme - not addressed. In the Annex 3 BIA states that the required analysis of the creation of a Doctoral Study Programme "Psychology" has not been fully performed.

4) Continue English language improvement courses - partially addressed. There are opportunities for staff to improve their English language skills, however from the meeting with the staff it was obvious that teachers should invest more in improving their English skills as it ensures effective communication with students, enhances clarity in delivering complex psychological concepts, and fosters a positive learning environment conducive to academic success.

5) Provide more opportunities for English language improvement during the study process - partially addressed. Various opportunities were suggested to improve English language skills for both students and staff, however from the meeting with the students and above mentioned staff it was obvious that more time should be invested in improving their English skills.

6) Provide students with information regarding extracurricular activities for improvement of English language skills and organize such activities - partially addressed. Students improve their knowledge of English by participating in BIA guest lectures, seminars and conferences conducted in English, however, as the number of scientific events in English is very low, students do not have many opportunities to develop their English language skills.

7) Conduct marketing analysis for new programmes' - not addressed. In order to assess the demand for occupational and organizational psychologists in the Latvian labor market, the lecturers of the BIA Professional Master Study Programme "Psychology" conducted a survey in companies and organizations in cooperation with students (see more in Annex 3). The survey was conducted in April 2023. The survey results showed to BIA that the demand of organizations and companies for the services of occupational and organizational psychologists in Latvia is sufficiently high. BIA is planning to conduct this analysis systematically (once a year). However this survey was focused on the demand for occupational and organizational psychologists, which is the focus of the current study program, but not on marketing analysis for opening new programmes.

8) Create a long-term financial plan - addressed. To increase financial resources, the following actions were taken: a) Systematic increase in the number of students (see Chapter 2.3 of the Study Field "Psychology", Table 2.3.1), b) Funding for science (participate in announced EU structural fund projects) (see Other Appendices: "Plan for the Development of Experimental Works in the Laboratory of Neurocognitive Implicit Processes for the 2024-2025 academic year"), c) Operation of the Psychological Counseling Centre, providing paid services.

9) Establish a transparent funding system for scientific research - addressed. BIA has developed a system for promoting scientific activity, which includes: a) Organization and management of international conferences, b) Publication of scientific papers in Web of Science, SCOPUS and ERIH + databases, c) Writing, editing and reviewing scientific, educational and methodical materials from 2 to 5 academic hours (considered when determining the study load). The BIA Board awards grants to support the conduct of scientific research.

10) Create a unified system for purchase of provisions - addressed. All financial decisions are made at the Board level. The provision of technical procurement is closely related to the BIA internal quality system and is described in the Appendix "Scheme of a unified system for the provision of material and technical procurement" (see Study Field "Psychology" section 2.3, subsection 2.3.2).

11) Increase staff participation in research projects - partially addressed. Staff presented their research findings at conferences and wrote scientific articles, however the participation in research projects remains low and must be strengthened.

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

The evaluation of the short-term and long-term recommendations for the study field at BIA indicates that a significant portion of the recommendations has been addressed, showing a more reactive approach towards improving various aspects of the study programmes. The implementation of these recommendations has contributed to enhancing the quality of education, research activities, and overall academic environment at BIA. However, there are still significant portions of the recommendations, where further attention and action are required to fully meet the recommendations and achieve optimal outcomes.

Strengths:

1) BIA has addressed a significant part of the recommendations, indicating a commitment to continuous improvement and excellence in education.

Measures have been taken to strengthen mobility opportunities for both students and academic staff through programmes' like ERASMUS+, contributing to internationalization and cultural exchange.

2) BIA has established a transparent system for funding scientific research and procurement of provisions, ensuring accountability and efficiency in resource allocation.

3) Opportunities for professional development, such as participation in conferences and research projects, have been provided to academic staff, fostering intellectual growth and contributing to the advancement of knowledge.

Weaknesses:

1) Part of the recommendations, particularly those related to language improvement and cooperation agreements, lack specific details or comprehensive plans for implementation, potentially limiting their effectiveness.

2) Considerable number of lecturers and students do not have solid English language skills (in branches) which raises questions - how are students able to study / read and work with materials of newest research in English?

3) The effectiveness of some implemented measures, such as the graduate and employer survey system, may be difficult to evaluate due to their recent implementation, highlighting the need for

ongoing monitoring and assessment.

4) In some areas, such as the evaluation of cooperation possibilities with other institutions and the necessity of new programmes, there appears to be a lack of comprehensive analysis, which could hinder strategic decision-making.

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

After analyzing SAR, Annex 3, and also taking into account the information obtained during the site visit in BIA, the team of experts concluded that the management of BIA has taken good steps to fix the problems that were identified during the previous accreditation. The big part of the issues that could be amended between accreditations have mostly been addressed, and reforms have been initiated to tackle the remaining issues. Some results are difficult to evaluate at the present moment.

From the list of short-term recommendations, some were only partially addressed: the research productivity is still quite low, especially for some members of staff; the numbers of incoming mobility remain low, and the choice of invited guest lecturers could be further improved; the number of literature available in the English language is still very low.

1.7. Recommendations for the Study Field

Short-term recommendations

1) Implement formal mechanisms for providing feedback to stakeholders, including students, graduates, and employers, on survey results, ensuring the feedback loop is closed and addressing concerns raised by stakeholders to management of the study field.

2) Clearly define the links between bachelor's and master's programmes, particularly regarding orientations such as 'work and organizational psychology', to provide students with a clear academic pathway.

3) Conduct a comprehensive assessment of industry developments and job market demands to ensure the programme's curriculum remains relevant and enhances graduates' employability.

4) On the policy and operational level fully clarify an issue of involvement of BIA stakeholders in academic related matters, avoiding influences of non academic (e.g. branch managers, founders) in academic related ones.

5) Implement a separate form of surveys for employers. Internship evaluations are not the same as employer surveys. The current form of communication between the employers and the Academy is either informal or through phone calls and in person meetings, but not in all branches.

6) Ensure consistency and similar involvement of employers in all branches of the implemented study programmes.

7) Purchase more SPSS (or other statistical package) licenses or ensure students and staff use other free of charge programmes' for the analysis of statistical data (e.g. JASP, PSPP etc.)

8) Develop standardized assessment schedules and procedures to ensure clarity and consistency in the evaluation of learning outcomes process, thereby minimizing confusion and enhancing student performance and understanding.

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| 9) Fully implement and harmonize policy regarding teaching staff workload, avoiding over working in case of some staff members. |
| 10) Implement the QA system to enhance study field management through a systematic, evidence-based approach. Ensure efficiency and effectiveness by focusing on actionable insights that directly impact study fields. Avoid merely collecting information without linking it to the development and improvement of the study field. |
| 11) Implement systematic anti-plagiarism testing for student scientific works throughout the academic year to uphold academic integrity consistently. |
| 12) Ensure that the quality assurance system contributes to the achievement of the aims and learning outcomes of the study field. |

Long-term recommendations

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|---|
| 1) Develop strategies to encourage greater participation from employers in guest lectures, quality assurance processes, and surveys, fostering stronger and proactive collaboration between academia and industry. |
| 2) Strengthen efforts to establish international cooperation with recognized scientists and researchers in the field, facilitating knowledge exchange, research collaboration, and opportunities for staff and student mobility. |
| 3) Implement language improvement programmes' for lecturers and students, particularly in branch locations, to ensure students can effectively engage with English-language research materials and enhance their academic and professional prospects. |
| 4) Provide ongoing training and support for teaching staff to enhance their skills in utilizing Moodle and other educational technologies, promoting effective online learning experiences for students. |
| 5) Develop mechanisms to enable students to access databases from outside BIA premises, enhancing their ability to engage with academic resources and conduct research remotely. |
| 6) Establish mechanisms for involving teaching staff in scientific or applied research projects, providing opportunities for professional development and contributing to the advancement of knowledge in the field. |
| 7) Conduct comprehensive analyses, including evaluations of cooperation possibilities with other institutions and the development of new programmes, to inform strategic decision-making and ensure the long-term viability and relevance of the study field. |
| 8) Develop a system and strategy for staff recruitment and personnel planning that is integrated into the development plan of the study field. |
| 9) Enlarge the number of publications in internationally recognized reviewed scientific journals. |
| 10) Continue facilitating incoming and outgoing student and academic staff mobility. |
| 11) Implement additional motivational measures, such as establishing a system for remunerating teaching staff for high-quality work. |

II - "Psychology" ASSESSMENT

II - "Psychology" ASSESSMENT

2.1. Indicators Describing the Study Programme

Analysis

2.1.1.

The ABSP "Psychology" (43313) corresponds to the field of psychology studies and was established in accordance with the Cabinet of Ministers' regulations of May 13, 2014 No. 240 "Regulations of State Academic Education" (<https://likumi.lv/ta/id/266187-regulations-on-the-state-standard-of-academic-education>). The purpose of the psychology programme is to provide students with knowledge and understanding of psychological theories, as well as to promote independent research activity and promote analytical and critical thinking within the field of study "Psychology". The results of psychology studies coincide with the field of study "Psychology". The compulsory, limited optional and methodological parts of the programme also correspond to the study field.

Undergraduate education in the study programme "Psychology" provides a broad insight into the field, for example, such study courses as the biological foundations of the psyche, history of psychology and introduction to psychology, as well as general, experimental psychology, neuropsychology, etc., allow students to gain a broad insight into the studied field.

When looking deeper into the descriptions of the study courses, in all the mentioned subjects, the topics covered in general terms correspond to the field of psychological science, the course descriptions are regularly improved and supplemented with the latest trends in the industry, which allows students to gain an adequate idea for bachelor's level studies in the field of psychology. However, in experts' team opinion, the academic practice in the bachelor's programme does not allow one to really understand exactly how the knowledge learned in the general and experimental psychology courses will be practically applied and how the knowledge of statistical and scientific research methodology will be integrated which are essential in the field of psychology.

2.1.2.

The ABSP "Psychology" belongs to the field of study "Psychology" with the education classification code 43313. The last three digits (313) denote psychology according to the Latvian education classification (MK no. 322), which can be accessed at <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/291524-regulations-on-the-classification-of-education-in-Latvia>. The purpose of the psychology programme is to enable students to obtain basic academic education in psychology, to develop theoretical knowledge and research skills in psychology and related fields (interdisciplinary), to develop analytical and critical thinking skills, communication, problem solving and decision making skills; ability to choose and use information technologies in their professional activity and research.

The tasks of the bachelor's study programme include building students' knowledge and understanding of the fundamental and applied issues of psychological science, as well as promoting the acquisition of basic research skills, keeping up with the current affairs of the field of psychology. According to the self-assessment report of the BIA, the results of the study programme provide for students, as young specialists, to develop and promote:

Knowledge: 1) Systematic knowledge about key areas of psychology, the ability to analyze, compare and critically evaluate major research theories and methods in the context of psychology and related disciplines. 2) Understanding of key concepts and regularities of a given discipline or professional field in psychology and in the interdisciplinary context. 3) Knowledge of the

methodological basis of psychological research and principles of its formation, as well as basic knowledge of methods of psychological research and its evaluation.

Skills: 1) To demonstrate effective communication skills. 2) To plan, select, and conduct research; to analyze, interpret and present the data obtained by various methods. 3) To formulate and analytically describe relevant to the field of psychology information, problems and their solutions; to explain, present and reasonably discuss the latter with both specialists and non-specialists. 4) To structure their training independently; to direct their further training and professional development; to demonstrate a scientific approach to problem solving. To take responsibility and initiative working individually, in a team or leading other people, to make decisions and find creative solutions in changing or uncertain circumstances.

Competences: 1) The ability to independently obtain, select, analyze and critically evaluate information from various sources and use it. 2) The ability to make decisions and solve problems based on empirically based knowledge in psychology and other social sciences. 3) The ability to conduct research in the field of psychology that is consistent with basic principles and ethics of psychology. The ability to assess the impact of their professional activities on the environment and society, to participate in the development of the field of psychology.

The condition for admission to the psychology programme is secondary education. The psychology programme is implemented in Latvian and English languages. Upon successful completion of their studies, students are awarded a degree - Bachelor of Social Sciences in Psychology. The psychology programme is implemented in the form of full-time and part-time studies, a total of 180 CP (credit points).

It could be concluded that the bachelor psychology programme name, code, degree to be obtained, objectives, tasks, learning outcomes and admission requirements are interconnected and formally, outwardly meet these requirements. The duration and extent of implementation of the psychology programme, as well as the language of implementation, are reasonable and justified.

As for studies implemented in English language, experts have several concerns. A low amount of literature in the English language (described in 2.3.1 chapter) hinders academic research and access to resources for students. Also, some members of the teaching staff are not very fluent English speakers, which raises concern about the quality of teaching process.

After analyzing the documents submitted by the BIA and comparing the descriptions included there with the information obtained during onsite meetings with students and graduates of the BIA, expert group has to conclude that externally, the standard of the educational profession to be obtained is formally respected, sufficient hours are allocated to lectures, work and practices during the study process.

2.1.3.

According to SAR (p. 105) and ABSP main parameters, several main corrections were made: study programme amount has been changed (in accordance with transition to ECTS), study programme learning outcomes were adjusted and English implementation variant for part-time studies was excluded.

In accordance with Section 1, paragraph 8 of the Law on Higher Education in Latvia, the conversion of Latvian credit points (CP) to European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) credit points is performed by multiplying the number of Latvian credit points by 1.5. Additionally, credit points are rounded to

whole numbers. Consequently, adjustments were made to the credit points of certain study courses within the ABSP "Psychology": the study course "Statistical Methods in Psychology I" was reduced from 4.5 CP to 3 CP, as its content encompasses theoretical knowledge and skills related to data processing using the SPSS program. Simultaneously, to provide students from the first semester of the first year with a better understanding of the practical application of methodological principles in modern scientific research within psychological sciences, the content of the study course "Theory of Scientific and Academic Work" was slightly expanded. This expansion led to an increase in the number of credit points from 1.5 CP to 3 CP.

After analyzing the documents submitted by the BIA and gathering the information obtained during onsite visits, it could be concluded that the BIA is trying to introduce corrections, referring, for example, to student surveys about lecture courses. However, it should be understood that students cannot always see the usefulness of certain requirements for themselves 100% objectively. It would be important to measure and balance the satisfaction of students' demands with the principle of reality.

2.1.4.

In regions where the opportunity to get an education in psychology without traveling to the capital is limited, for example the branch in Liepāja is the only higher education institution in the Kurzeme region that offers psychology studies, however, in the opinion of the expert group it opens up wider opportunities for BIA to develop and expand the student circle. This was also revealed by BIA graduates working in the regions during onsite visit, who confirmed that there is a lack of specialists in the regions. The programme is designed to promote psychological and emotional well-being, support people in crisis situations, develop individual potential, and reduce the risks of developing deviant behavior. Graduates cannot engage in professional activity with only a bachelor's degree. However, many graduates choose to continue their studies in the BIA professional master's study programme.

During the reporting period from 2020 until 1 October 2023, the number of students in the ABSP "Psychology" has increased in general from 103 to 240 students (SAR Appendix 5). During the reporting period, the number of part-time students has significantly increased from 67 to 177 students. This is especially noticeable in the Riga branch (from 51 to 131 students). In the Liepāja branch, the number of part-time students increased from 8 to 32 students, and in the Daugavpils branch from 8 to 14 students. The number of full-time students has increased only in the Riga branch: from 36 to 63 students.

In the reporting period of 2020-2023 academic years, until 1 October 2023, the number of students matriculated in the Academic Bachelor Study Programme "Psychology" is 323 students (SAR Appendix 5). The largest number of matriculated students is in Riga - 275. During the reporting period, full-time matriculated students can be observed only in Riga - 132 matriculated students. The number of part-time registered students in Riga is 143, in Daugavpils - 18, in Liepāja - 30. The total number of part-time matriculated students is 191. The number of matriculated students gradually increases from 103 to 112 by academic years.

According to SAR Annex 5, in the period of 2021/2022 and 2022/2023 academic years, the number of graduates is 25 - increasing from 4 to 21. There are 13 graduates in full-time programmes and 12 graduates in part-time programmes. The largest number of graduates is in Riga - 23 graduates. However there is a big difference in numbers of matriculated students and graduates, suggesting that the number of drop-outs is quite high. BIA should carefully analyze the reasons for drop-out and make sure they provide all necessary support to students.

In the 2021/2022 academic year, in the month of October, a survey was conducted in which 59 students of the bachelor's study programme "Psychology" participated. The results of the survey showed that 43% of the respondents are completely satisfied with the chosen educational institution, 42% are partially satisfied, 15% are partially dissatisfied, and 0% of the respondents are completely dissatisfied. Summarizing the assessment given by the graduates about the strengths of the bachelor's study programme "Psychology", the graduates especially emphasize the responsiveness and support of the lecturers, which coincides with the information obtained during site visit interviews. In the 2021/2022 academic year, in the month of October, a study was conducted on the quality of the study process in the bachelor's study programme; to get an idea of the quality of education and its impact on the career growth of graduates and the results showed that 86% of respondents believe that the education they received has contributed to their chances of finding a job. 38.5% of employers believe that graduates are able to perform their professional duties independently and immediately after graduation, while 53.8% of employers believe that graduates are capable of performing their professional duties after a short training period. However, some employers (7.7%) admit that graduates of the bachelor's programme have good theoretical preparation, but insufficiently acquired practical skills, and employers also had their own recommendations, such as improving the understanding of professional ethics requirements among students; expand training courses for the acquisition of fundamental professional knowledge, for example in cognitive psychology.

2.1.5. N/A

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

The ABSP in Psychology at BIA corresponds to the field of psychology studies and is designed to provide students with a comprehensive understanding of psychological theories, research methodologies, and analytical thinking. The programme covers various aspects of psychology, including biological foundations, history, and experimental psychology, offering a broad insight into the field. However, there are concerns about the practical application of knowledge and integration of research methodologies. The programme meets formal requirements in terms of objectives, tasks, learning outcomes, and admission criteria. Study programmes implementation in branches, particularly its branch in Liepāja, contribute to promoting psychological well-being and addressing regional needs. Graduates generally express satisfaction with the programme and acknowledge its contribution to their employability, although some employers suggest improvements in practical skills and professional ethics.

Strengths:

- 1) Comprehensive coverage of psychological theories and research methodologies.
- 2) Contribution to regional development, particularly in areas with limited access to psychology education.

Weaknesses:

- 1) Concerns about the practical application of knowledge and integration of research methodologies.
- 2) Gradual increase in the number of graduates, but concerns remain about the readiness of graduates for professional roles.
- 3) Some employers highlight deficiencies in practical skills and suggest improvements in professional ethics education.
- 4) Challenges related to regional competition and attracting students in branches outside the capital.
- 5) Quite a high drop-out rate of students.

2.2. The Content of Studies and Implementation Thereof

Analysis

2.2.1.

The content of the Academic Bachelor Study Programme (ABSP) "Psychology" of the Baltic International Academy (BIA) in general is topical and well organized, the most of study courses are interconnected and complement each other. The analysis of the content of the programme based on study plan for full-time and part-time studies presented in Annex 9 of SAR and study course description presented in Annex 10 shows, that ABSP "Psychology" demonstrates critical understanding of knowledge in scientific branches, emphasizing the most important concepts and regularities, both within the boundaries of psychological science and in cross-disciplinary aspects as well as the ability to independently obtain, select, analyze and critically evaluate information from various sources and analytically describe information, problems and solutions. Thus, the content of the study programme corresponds to the objectives of the study programme and ensures the achievement of learning outcomes. The ABSP "Psychology" of BIA provides an opportunity to obtain a general education in Psychology. Within the framework of this programme, courses are implemented that give students the opportunity to acquire knowledge about the guidelines, principles, structure and methodology of Psychology, the history of the development of Psychology and current issues within the main subfields of Psychology, as well as allow to understand the characteristics and problems of Psychological Science in an interdisciplinary aspect. Thus, the programme in general meets the needs of the industry, labor market and scientific trends. As stated in annex Annex 6. "Compliance of the ABSP Psychology with the state education standard", BIA's ABSP "Psychology" was created in accordance with the regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers of May 13, 2014 No. 240 "Regulations on the State Academic Education Standard" (<https://likumi.lv/ta/id/266187-noteikumi-par-valsts-akademiskas-izglitiba-standartu>: available in Latvian only). Correspondence of the study programme content with the specific normative regulations such as Psychologists Law (<https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/290115>) and Regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers Nr. 301 May 29, 2018 Psychologists Rules (<https://likumi.lv/ta/id/299322-psihologu-noteikumi>, available only in Latvian) is presented in annex Annex 7. "Correspondence of the study programmes of the study direction "Psychology" to the specific normative regulation of the relevant branch". Thus, ABSP "Psychology" of BIA complies with national regulations.

One of weak points of the ABSP "Psychology" of BIA is inclusion and highlight on the professional practice at BA level, which is not in accordance with the general structure of recognized BA programmes in psychology, which are not intended to professional formation of psychologist, and professional practice by its purpose and scope is intended to professional formation of psychologist.

The experts also identified that the current study plan generally does not give the impression that students are acquiring systematized knowledge aimed at deepening understanding psychology science, but rather gives the impression of randomly grouped lecture courses, for example, psychopathology, differential psychology, health psychology, psychodiagnostics are overlapping fields that could definitely deepen their understanding of various personality aspects, pathologies and their research possibilities. As well as for potential employers, it could be confusing by the practice implemented within the framework of the bachelor programme, which would probably be more useful to replace with coursework writing, which would provide more direct work with theoretical literary sources and research and analysis of scientific articles, leaving professional practice for the master level studies. The number of credit points of certain study courses, for example, 3 CP for Zoopsychology and 6 CP for Communication Psychology, which should be more valuable, for example, should be devoted to Anatomy, because it is not clear how students can be

taught Neuropsychology without it. Also, in the opinion of the experts group, it would not be necessary to include courses in adjacent fields, such as sociology, economy, medicine or from other non-psychology fields related to psychology, in the training process, to more degree (as suggested by the EuroPsy - European Diploma in Psychology). Our arguments are supported a) how many courses are not logically related b) there are missed courses c) there is scientific internship in BA, d) number of allocation of credit points is not reasonable.

However, it would probably be worthwhile to replace the practice of the undergraduate programme with some courses targeted to students' orientation in the fields of psychology, as is appropriate to BA programmes in psychology. Also, the fact that those studying at the bachelor level are involved in the performance of such work during internships, for which certified specialists would receive the due remuneration, causes concern. In addition, the question is also about the quality of practice in connection with the ethics of the psychologist's professional activity, specifically, confidentiality. The experts team consider that BA programmes in psychology are not intended for professional formation of psychologists. The experts' comment relates to recommendation to replace the practice of the undergraduate programme with some courses targeted to students' orientation in the fields of psychology.

From the meetings with students during the site visit, it can be concluded that the students' assessment of the education they receive is very positive.

2.2.2. N/A

2.2.3.

The use of different teaching methods are chosen according to the aims, specifics and planned learning outcomes of each study course. In teaching study courses, the lecturers try to integrate active study methods, stimulating discussions and organizing work in small groups, making students present their independent work. Active study methods are widely used in seminars. With the help of these methods, the academic staff of the programme create a democratic and free atmosphere of the study process, which in turn stimulates personal and professional development of students. Furthermore, these methods can be used more extensively as students access a wider range of study literature that they can read independently. Thus, the study implementation methods contribute to the achievement of the aims and learning outcomes of the study courses and the study programme. During the experts visit the students, particularly those who study in Liepaja and Daugavpils branches were satisfied with friendly attitude and individual approach from the side of academic staff, availability of study resources and materials, as well as emphasize a high availability of communication with academic supervisors. Thus, student-centered learning and teaching principles are considered in the study process. Students during on-site visits indicated how lectures as teaching method is dominated, where other methodical approaches targeted in achieving expected learning outcomes are less presented.

In the opinion of the expert group, the study programme should be improved and refined by restructuring both study courses and supplementing the teaching staff of the BIA. From the interviews with BIA graduates, experts got the impression that, especially those who graduated from BIA 10 or even more years ago, have gained a sufficiently broad insight into the field of psychology, because it corresponded to the understanding and setting of that time, how education in this field should be implemented. Currently, the teaching of many lecture courses raises questions - for what purpose should students learn them. Also, there is no real and significant benefit from the experimental laboratory.

2.2.4.

There is an internship provided in the content of ABSP "Psychology" of BIA. The tasks of which students perform consecutively throughout the study period. Its aim is to acquaint students with the principles of conducting psychological research, to provide knowledge of psychodiagnostic methods and to teach psychological research using the necessary methodologies, using different methods of processing and interpreting the results. Special attention is paid to the choice of diagnostic methods and the code of ethics. The programme includes workshops where students are offered situations to analyze and select diagnostic techniques to justify their choices. Independent work involves the development of individual or group work, in which at least three presentations on the use of the topics presented in the lectures to develop one's own ideas, based on lecture materials and recommended literature, are required.

Although the internship within the academic bachelor's study programme is not widely used practice in Latvia, it is not prohibited, and students expressed a high satisfaction with an internship, emphasizing its importance for the further studies. Still, such structure of BA programmes strongly challenged comparability of ABSP "Psychology" of BIA, as general foundations of BA programmes in psychology are not targeted to formation of professional competencies in psychology and such a degree does not authorize graduates to work as a certified psychologist. In addition, allocating time in the BA programme structure to practice, internship etc. are not clearly efficient as students don't have enough competencies at that level to actively participate in an internship under professional psychologist supervision. That highly narrows internship focus and activities.

The academic Bachelor's programme in "Psychology" incorporates two sets of practicum experiences. The primary focus of the first practicum is to familiarize first-year students with the professional responsibilities of psychologists across diverse fields. The specific goals include cultivating the capability to analyze knowledge gained in the "Introduction to Psychology" course and applying it practically, fostering communicative skills and adherence to professional ethics in professional interactions, acquiring proficiency in observation and interview techniques, articulating clear goals and objectives, and promoting self-reflection for evaluating knowledge and competencies acquired during the practicum. In contrast, the second practicum (academic practicum) aims to enhance students' research skills. The objectives encompass developing organizational, research execution, and presentation skills under the guidance of a scientific supervisor. This involves selecting and justifying research methods aligned with the research's purpose and objectives, preparing a scholarly paper, and delivering a public presentation at a conference. A crucial aspect across all practicums is the mastery of crafting internship reports in accordance with methodological guidelines, as well as the ability to defend and substantiate one's perspective independently. In the process of realization of the goals and tasks of the practice, the students are supported by the practice coordinator and practice supervisor of the BIA Bachelor's study programme "Psychology". The duties and rights are described in the Tripartite Agreement on Practice Assistance and the Practice Regulations of the BIA academic Bachelor's degree programme "Psychology" (SAR Annex: Regulation on student practice).

The internship report serves as the primary document for assessing the practicum, along with the presentation delivered during the internship defense seminar, emphasizing the skills of defending and articulating one's viewpoint. To ensure the internship for students studying in English, the "Regulations on Internships at the Baltic International Academy", "Regulation on student practice" were translated into English and are explained to the students in the training classes on internships. BIA does not undertake to provide internships for students, since when looking for internships, students develop their communicative skills and competences. If choosing the internship site causes difficulties for the student, BIA offers help in the implementation of the internship. As there are many

branches of foreign companies operating in Latvia (for example SIA Tripodlink, Exupery International Secondary School, Crisis and Consultation Centre "Skalbes", Latvian Association of Psychologists and Psychotherapists), students studying in English have the opportunity to find internships in a company both in Latvia and in their own country, as well as apply for an internship within the student exchange programme ERASMUS+.

2.2.5. N/A

2.2.6.

Many students opt to explore research papers within social and organizational psychology. This trend underscores the close alignment between the chosen topics of student papers and their future professional interests, particularly within the work and organizational psychology field of the professional Master's programme in "Psychology." Students exhibit a keen interest in diverse subjects, such as investigating the correlation between stress and burnout syndrome among police officers, exploring the relationship between temperament and stress resilience in medical professionals, and examining the interplay between professional stress and personality traits among sales employees. In the realm of social psychology, students delve into topics like attitudes towards violence and attachment styles among students, as well as engaging in ethno-cultural studies. Within health psychology, their interests extend to subjects such as attitudes towards the consumption of healthy and unhealthy food, exploring the personality traits of students, and investigating the relationship between attachment styles and addictive behavior in youth struggling with alcohol addiction. Notably, students also demonstrate a positive inclination towards topics related to developmental psychology and general psychology.

In summary, students tend to select socially relevant and practically significant topics, thereby contributing to the expansion of existing knowledge in research and fostering a deeper understanding of specific issues in Latvia.

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

The content of ABSP "Psychology" of BIA is compliant with state requirements. The study implementation methods effectively contribute to achieving the programme's goals and learning outcomes.

Strengths:

- 1) Students are satisfied with the content of the study programme. They reported that workload is optimal for them.
- 2) There are part-time studies in the regions with high demand for psychologists. Part-time studies allows students to combine the learning process with other responsibilities.
- 3) There is a possibility for international students to acquire an education in English.

Weaknesses:

- 1) Allocating time in the BA programme structure to practice, internship etc. are not clearly efficient, as general foundations of BA programmes in psychology are not targeted to formation of professional competencies in psychology and such a degree does not authorize graduates to work as a certified psychologist.
- 2) There is no real and significant benefit from the experimental laboratory within the BA study programme.
- 3) Lectures as a teaching method are dominating in the study process.

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

Not relevant

2.3. Resources and Provision of the Study Programme

Analysis

2.3.1.

The use of the Moodle e-learning environment and the implementation of BigBlueButton for online lectures, seminars, and remote consultations indicate a modern approach to delivering course materials and facilitating interaction between students and lecturers. During the site visit, bachelor students confirmed that they are satisfied with the availability of online resources and various communication channels, and that teachers are demonstrating efforts to ensure accessibility and engagement in the study process.

As mentioned in SAR (p. 123), the procurement of books and periodicals for the BIA library, including both Latvian and English titles, contributes to supporting scientific activities and providing informational resources for students and academic staff. It should be noted that currently the books in the English language compose about 10 percent of all available literature, and it is recommended investing more into purchasing books (or e-books) in English.

The use of the BIA information systems NEXUS and Mans BSA, along with the My BIA system for accessing schedules, academic progress, and financial information, facilitates efficient communication and access to important information for both students and lecturers.

Information about the study programme is available on the BIA website and serves as a valuable resource for students and potential students, however the experts team could not find any mention about the accreditation term and its expiration on the BIA website (although students confirmed they knew about the expired term).

It is worth mentioning that BIA has signed an agreement with the University of Latvia for joining a plagiarism control system, indicating a commitment to academic integrity and research ethics.

In experts' team opinion, the facilities in Riga, Liepaja and Daugavpils, including auditoriums equipped with modern technical aids, access to computers and internet, printing, copying, and scanning services, contribute to creating a conducive learning environment with necessary infrastructure and resources. According to the annex "Baltic International Academy branches - Liepaja, Daugavpils.pdf", the premises in Liepaja are the smallest (1111.5 sq.m), followed by Daugavpils (2146 sq.m).

Necessary informative, material, and technical resources are provided to support the achievement of learning outcomes. Specific provisions, such as the development of the Laboratory of Neurocognitive Implicit Processes, purchase of the SPSS program, acquisition of specialized books, and participation in international conferences, indicate investments in programme development and enhancement of resources. However, it is important to mention that the current amount of SPSS licenses is too small and should be bigger (keeping in mind SPSS availability to academic staff and

students). The Laboratory of Neurocognitive Implicit Processes for students from branches in Liepaja and Daugavpils is accessible in branches using E-Prime - a component program that allows students to perform cognitive tests. This topic is explored in more detail in Chapter 1.3 of this report (“Resources and Provision of the Study Field”).

Overall, BIA’s Bachelor Study Programme in Psychology provides adequate study, scientific, informative, material, and technical, and financial provisions to support the achievement of learning outcomes and ensure a high-quality study process. BIA expenses for carrying out scientific activities in the study field “Psychology” in 2022 were 86,7 thousand EUR (out of total 406,1 thousand EUR) and remain quite stable over the years. In the period from 2019 to 2023, 11,274 EUR were invested for the development of the BIA Neurocognitive Implicit Processes Laboratory and 9,527 EUR for the purchase of the SPSS software. The procurement of books and periodicals for the library, along with investments in modern technical aids and infrastructure, demonstrate a financial commitment to providing good study conditions and resources, however it is recommended to invest more in purchasing books and ebooks in English, as current numbers of English literature are very scarce and symbolic.

2.3.2. N/A.

2.3.3.

As stated in SAR (pp. 124-125), the main source of funding for the study programme is tuition fees, which are determined and approved by the BIA Senate. Various payment options for tuition fees are provided to students, including full payment for the entire program, academic year, semester, or monthly payments. The tuition fees for different study options differ (full-time, part-time, in Latvian, and in an English language), as well as fees for Latvian citizens, international applicants from the EU/EEA countries, CH and the UK, international applicants from the CIS/Central Asian countries, Georgia and Ukraine, and for international applicants from other countries (see more on <https://bsa.edu.lv/index.php/en/tuition-fee.html>). However, there is no justification or clarity on the BIA website why the study fee is different for different groups of students.

Registration fees also significantly differ based on the group of countries the student is applying from. For international applicants from the EU/EEA countries, CH and the UK, for example, the non-refundable registration fee for admission and visa processing is 50 €, while for international applicants from the CIS/Central Asian countries, Georgia and Ukraine it is 150 € and those from other international countries - 250 €. For international students from other international countries, the guarantee fee of 500 € is refunded upon successful completion of the study programme and defense of the diploma which is specified here: <https://bsa.edu.lv/index.php/en/tuition-fee/tuition-fees-for-international-applicants-from-other-countries-effective-from-1-september-2023.html>. It is not clear when such payment has to be made and in what case it has to be paid prior study admission and why it has to be done specifically for one group of students.

The financial support for the study programme is deemed sufficient based on the number of students enrolled, and the income generated from tuition fees covers study expenses. In experts’ team opinion, the study programme maintains a positive balance between income and expenses, indicating profitability. The cost per student is provided in SAR (p. 125), and it is mentioned that study expenses are completely covered by income per student, ensuring financial viability.

The financing system is structured to ensure quality education for every student, irrespective of the number of students in the group, by guaranteeing necessary resources, contact hours, library

access, and research opportunities. BIA founders are involved in controlling expenses and setting minimum student numbers.

Overall, based on the provided information, the ABSP in Psychology demonstrates sufficient funding, financial viability, and investments in programme development to ensure a quality study process.

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

The BIA's ABSP "Psychology" demonstrates a commitment to modern education practices and student engagement through the use of e-learning platforms like Moodle and BigBlueButton. The provision of diverse communication channels and online resources contributes to accessibility and satisfaction among students. Additionally, investments in library resources, information systems, and infrastructure across multiple locations enhance the learning environment and support academic activities. BIA's financial model, primarily reliant on tuition fees, ensures financial viability and enables the provision of necessary resources for students. However, there are areas for improvement, such as expanding the availability of SPSS licenses and ensuring equitable access to resources for all students, and purchasing more books in English language.

Strengths:

- 1) Utilization of modern e-learning platforms like Moodle and BigBlueButton.
- 2) Investment in library resources and infrastructure across multiple locations.
- 3) Involvement of BIA founders in controlling expenses and ensuring access to education for minority groups.

Weaknesses:

- 1) Limited availability of SPSS licenses, potentially hindering academic research.
- 2) Room for improvement in ensuring equitable access to resources for all students.
- 3) A low amount of literature in the English language.
- 4) Lack of transparency regarding information about registration fees.

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: Partially compliant

The majority of the resources are sufficient for the successful implementation of the ABSP "Psychology". A low amount of literature in the English language is the main drawback. The finances are balanced.

2.4. Teaching Staff

Analysis

2.4.1.

SAR providing comprehensive information about teaching staff and discussion related to teaching staff was focused during in-site visit. BIA programmes in psychology faced a decrease in teaching staff from 2020/2021 to 2021/2022 academic years. Recent data for the last and on-going academic year are not provided. Among 31 members of the teaching staff in BIA psychology fields, 29 of them are involved in the ABSP programme, 22 hold PhD. Information provided in Annex

(Teaching_Staff_Courses_Languages_1.xlsx) and information obtained during on-site visit challenged some issues of structure of teaching staff. SAR provided information that 3 professors and 4 associated professors are elected. On-site information and SAR annex data indicate how in teaching staff composition a smaller number of them are substantially and professionally based and elected in the scientific field of psychology or obtained PhD in the field, where most of them have another scientific field (e.g. in engineering, in sociology). Situation at the academic level of assistant professor/docent indicates that only some of staff members have an academic qualification in psychology. Therefore, achievement of the aims of ABSP programmes and psychology related learning outcomes of the programme and particular psychological programme courses is based in fact on the engagement of 5 academic staff members, and another 24 staff members are not able to have central and pivotal roles, based on their own academic qualification or academic level (e.g. lectures).

From another point of analysis, programme structure indicates how some academic members hold various, to some degree not compatible academic courses (e.g. one of the staff members teaches general, experimental, personality, abnormal, counseling, or another – general, experimental, social, cognitive, research methodology). On another side, many of the academic staff, who do not have academic qualification in psychology, and hold professor or associate professor positions are engaged in non-core subject or non-psychological course subjects and don't contribute substantially to achievement of central psychology course aims. Provided information about organization of courses in 3 branches (Rīga, Liepāja, Daugavpils) indicate various engagement of some academic staff in provision of BA programmes in Riga Liepāja, Daugavpils, and that has a potential negative effect on the quality of the programme and its quality.

Formally, the qualifications of the Academy lecturers meet the requirements of bachelor study programme and regulatory acts for the implementation of the bachelor level study programme process. The extremely wide range of lecture courses delivered by individual university lecturers is a cause for concern, which raises questions about the quality of the courses in terms of whether students really receive the latest and most relevant information and knowledge. Some teachers have as many as 8-9 lecture courses, each of which are from a different field of psychology, such as family psychotherapy and psychometrics, etc., which raises questions about how professionally and qualitatively these lecture courses are taught.

2.4.2.

BIA provided several measures related to teaching staff competence regarding the study programme, which include training courses related to methodology, language proficiency, digital skills or using digital tools in preparing and organizing teaching. They are comprehended with support related to conference, mobility, cooperation, and exchange. During on-site visit, the low capability of teaching staff in using foreign language is clearly demonstrated which currently and in mid-term obstruct expected quality of programme implementation in English. The gap between teaching staff professional age where senior teaching staff hold management positions and attracting junior teaching staff is a challenge which should be targeted by measures to ensure transition and ensure quality of programme realization present a challenge. In addition, focus on conference participation (in organization of BIA, or another type of conference) as one of the dominant activities targeted to professional development of staff is limited and needs to be enriched and supplemented with a significantly larger number of measures and activities (longer-term seminars and workshops, internal materials aimed at professional development, etc.).

Based on the information provided by the BIA and the information obtained in the interviews, it can be concluded that formally the BIA carefully monitors and analyzes the impact of possible changes

in teaching staff on the study process and its quality. However, after a closer look at the various documents, experts come to the conclusion that the academic staff of the university would benefit from changes and improvements in terms of the professional orientation and qualifications of the teachers, which would allow students to gain in-depth and expanded knowledge in the latest trends in the field of psychology.

2.4.3. N/A.

2.4.4.

Provided information in the SAR Appendix 4.4.1. and information obtained during site visit, and list of publications provided in SAR Appendix 4.4.2., as well, indicated publication output of academic staff. In the list of publications is provided how 31 academic staff members published in total 130 publications over the period of 2020-2023 (Annex 4.4.2). Analysis of structure of publications indicate how among them journal articles form a smaller share, and the share of published items in the conference proceedings is a larger part in the list of publications. At the same time, the list of published papers also includes contributions that do not belong there (e.g. published abstracts in books of abstracts or encyclopedia entries. Examples: conference abstract published in Book of Abstracts. Psihološka obzorja / Horizons of Psychology, 31, 419. Ljubljana, Slovenia. http://psiholoska-obzorja.si/arhiv_clanki/2022/ECP_2022_Abstracts.pdf or: encyclopedia item about Emil Dirkem.

Among 31 academic staff members included in the list of psychology teaching staff members, 29.03% of total teaching staff did not publish articles (or comparable publication as book chapters etc.) in peer-reviewed editions (note: teaching staff names who are not published are here in report skipped).

Analyzing the list of BIA staff publications, it could be concluded that the amount of scientific research is relatively small. Basically, the publications of BIA teaching staff are reports and presentations of presentations in the collections of publications.

2.4.5.

Provided information indicates commitment of BIA and Programmes in psychology to cooperation of the teaching staff in the implementation of the study programme. Many teaching staff members participate in providing both – Bachelor and Master programmes, which is one of the ways to ensure high quality cooperation and coordination. There are some open issues regarding the involvement of all teaching staff in providing programmes at all branches (Rīga, Liepāja, Daugavpils), as is indicated how some of the members are included in one of them, where issues of quality comparison of teaching could be faced.

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

Teaching staff consists of 31 members, where a smaller number of professors, associate and assistant professors have academic background related to psychology (e.g. PhD in psychology). The future development of academic staff has a solid base as many of them are in the position of assistant professor. Overload of professors who had academic background in psychology is high, and courses where those staff are course leaders are to some degree incompatible, challenging the issue of quality of teaching. Expected publication outputs are not met, as almost one third of teaching staff did not publish peer-reviewed articles or similar proposed outputs. The institution ensures measures to improve professional development of teaching staff, which are not fully effective (e.g. language proficiency).

Strengths:

1) Number of teaching staff in junior positions, which has potential to strengthen the teacher capacity of BIA in mid-term and long-term perspective, is high and represents a good base for many future developments.

Weaknesses:

1) The proportion of teaching staff who don't have an academic background in psychology is too high, and to some degree artificially increases the total number of staff, which is visible from the structure of courses allocation, where courses allocated to them are mainly general and not psychology fundamental courses.

2) The number of teaching staff with academic background in psychology in the course leaders positions is challenging for programme quality.

3) Some academic staff members are over engaged and have extremely high overload.

4) Some academic staff members are course leaders for courses which require different academic expertise (e.g. general, experimental, social, cognitive, work psychology), and issues of quality of programme organization and realization are therefore open.

5) Proposed requirements to dissemination and publishing outputs in the case of peer-review articles or equivalent valuable publication is not met.

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

In the structure of teaching staff, number of teaching staff with academic background in psychology in position of course leaders is small; Dissemination and publishing evidence in peer-reviewed publication. The English language competences of the teaching staff should be improved.

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

In accordance with the annex Annex 6. Compliance of the academic Bachelor study programme Psychology with the state education standard.docx, the content of the study programme complies with the State Academic Standard corresponding to Cabinet Regulations No 240. of 13 May 2014 "Regulations on the National Standard for Academic Education"
<https://likumi.lv/ta/id/266187-notika-par-valsts-akademiskas-izglitibas-standartu>.

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

Assessment of compliance: 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 study course descriptions are prepared in English and Latvian that can be accessed under annexes - Annex 10. Academic bachelor's study programme Psychology course description.pdf and 10.pielikums. Akadēmiskā bakalaura studiju programmas .Psihologija studiju kursu apraksti.pdf. Descriptions comply with regulations set forth in Law on Higher Education Institutions.

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The provided Diploma sample - Bachelor Full-time Study Diploma with Supplement _1.pdf complies with the procedure by which state-recognised documents of higher education are issued according to Cabinet Regulation No. 202 "Kārtība, kādā izsniedz valsts atzītus augstāko izglītību apliecinošus dokumentus".

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

In accordance with the requirements for the academic staff pursuant to Section 55, Paragraph one, Clause 3 of the Law on Higher Education Institutions, the academic study programme complies with the requirements based on the annex 55.pants ENG_15032023.pdf

- 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

Based on the acquired information onsite as well as relevant annexes: CV_EN.pdf and Study field Psychology Academic staff knowledge of Latvian language.edoc it can be evaluated that the

language proficiency of teaching staff is compliant with Cabinet Regulation. Nr. 733 "Regulations Regarding the Extent of the Knowledge of the Official Language, the Procedures for Examining the Proficiency in the Official Language and the State Fee for Examining the Proficiency in the Official Language".

- 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: Partially compliant

As one of the implementing languages of this programme is English, it is required for the teaching staff to have at least B2 level English. The attached documents: CV_EN.pdf and Study field Psychology Academic staff knowledge of English language.edoc provide reasoning that academic staff complies with this requirement. However, during the onsite meeting, the expert group identified that this requirement is not met due to the need for the majority of teaching staff to use an interpreter during meetings with the expert group. The fact that in this study field the study programme is implemented in English requires that the teaching staff can freely communicate with the students and understand their questions, aiding if needed throughout the study process. One thing is stating that you have B2 level language skills, another thing is to prove it when meeting an expert committee. If a person, for example, is not teaching foreign language stream students, of course, then B2 English knowledge is not a requirement. However, if it is and the interpreter is needed also for those who are teaching study courses in English, then it is an indicator of lack of English knowledge. The Expert group must bear in mind that during lectures there is no safety net for them to reach out to in case they lack specific vocabulary.

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The sample of study agreement as provided in the annex AGREEMENT.docx complies with the provision to be included in the study agreement in accordance with Cabinet Regulation. Nr. 70 "Studiju līgumā obligāti ietveramie noteikumi".

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

BIA has provided confirmation that students will be provided with opportunities to continue their education at Daugavpils University academic Bachelor's study programme Psychology (43313), if the implementation of the study programme is terminated in accordance with the annex AGREEMENT between BIA and University of Daugavpils.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

BIA has provided confirmation that students are guaranteed compensation for losses if the study programme is not accredited or the license is revoked due to actions of BIA and the student does not wish to continue their studies in another study programme in accordance with Section 55(8) of the Law on Higher Education Institutions and Cabinet of Ministers No 795 of 11 December 2018 "Regulations on Licensing of study programmes", Paragraph 13.4. based on the annex The Performance of Obligations.pdf

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The study programme complies with the specified other regulatory requirements that apply to "Psychology" study programme as Regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers Nr. 301 May 29, 2018 - <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/299322-psihologu-noteikumi> based on the annex Correspondence of the study programmes of the study direction "Psychology" to the specific normative regulation of the relevant branch _1.docx

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 mostly complies with regulatory enactments, however, the majority of the teaching staff clearly lacks English knowledge skills on B2 Level to provide high quality of studies for students.

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

The ABSP in Psychology at the BIA is designed to provide students with a comprehensive understanding of psychological theories and research methodologies. While the programme meets formal requirements and contributes to regional development, there are concerns regarding the practical application of knowledge and the integration of research methodologies. Despite these challenges, BIA demonstrates a commitment to modern education practices and student engagement through various initiatives, including the use of e-learning platforms and investments in library resources and infrastructure.

Starting with strengths, the programme covers a wide range of topics within the field of psychology, offering students a comprehensive understanding of various aspects of the discipline. The programme offers students a broad insight into various aspects of psychology, including biological foundations, history, and experimental psychology. Additionally, BIA's formal alignment with programme objectives, tasks, learning outcomes, and admission criteria ensures that students receive a structured and well-rounded education. The curriculum is designed to meet the formal requirements of the field, and sufficient resources are allocated to lectures, practical work, and internships. Students generally express satisfaction with the education they receive, indicating

positive feedback on the study experience.

Another strength lies in the utilization of modern e-learning platforms such as Moodle and BigBlueButton, which enhance accessibility and satisfaction among students. Moreover, investments in library resources and infrastructure across multiple locations contribute to the overall learning environment and support academic activities. BIA's financial model, primarily reliant on tuition fees, ensures financial viability and enables the provision of necessary resources for students. Additionally, the availability of part-time studies in regions with high demand for psychologists allows students to balance their learning with other responsibilities.

Despite its strengths, the ABSP in Psychology at BIA faces several challenges. The gradual increase in the number of graduates does not necessarily correlate with their readiness for the workforce, as some employers highlight deficiencies in practical skills and suggest improvements in professional ethics education.

Furthermore, the institution faces challenges related to regional competition and attracting students outside the capital. Limited availability of SPSS licenses and a low amount of literature in the English language hinder academic research and access to resources for students. Moreover, there are strong concerns about the composition and workload management of the teaching staff, with a high proportion lacking an academic background in psychology and issues regarding the quality of programme organization and realization. Additionally, the workload among teaching staff members has a strong impact on the quality of instruction and student learning experiences, and is a point of big concern and needed improvements.

The programme's internship structure and assessment methods may need revision to ensure alignment with industry expectations and ethical standards. The programme could benefit from more targeted courses aimed at preparing students for specific career paths within psychology.

Regarding student enrollment and accessibility, efforts should be made to expand access to education, particularly in regional branches where there may be limited opportunities for students. This expansion could contribute to the programme's growth and development while addressing the need for psychology professionals in various regions.

Experts have raised significant concerns regarding the implementation of the study programme in the English language. The scarcity of literature available in English impedes academic research and restricts students' access to essential resources. Moreover, the proficiency level of some teaching staff in English is not optimal, posing potential challenges to the quality of the teaching process. As such, experts suggest addressing these issues to ensure an effective learning environment for all students.

Despite these weaknesses, BIA shows promise for future development, particularly in enhancing teaching staff capacity and improving programme quality. The experts team believes that implementing targeted improvements in these areas will better prepare students for careers in psychology and ensure the programme's alignment with industry standards and student needs.

Evaluation of the study programme "Psychology"

Evaluation of the study programme:

Average

2.6. Recommendations for the Study Programme "Psychology"

Short-term recommendations

- 1) Conduct a thorough review of the bachelor's programme curricula to ensure mutual homogeneity and congruence, addressing gaps in essential subjects for in-depth knowledge acquisition.
- 2) Conduct a thorough analysis to determine the reasons for dropout rates, particularly in the Liepaja branch, and implement targeted interventions to address these issues promptly.
- 3) Provide training and support for academic staff to update their knowledge and teaching methodologies, moving away from outdated theoretical principles and enhancing the use of experimental laboratories.
- 4) Address the limited availability of SPSS licenses by procuring additional licenses or exploring alternative statistical software options to ensure uninterrupted academic research activities.
- 5) Revise and improve the internship programme to enhance its place, efficiency, and effectiveness, ensuring it provides valuable academic learning experiences for students.
- 6) Implement measures to ensure equitable access to resources for all students, including enhancing library resources, providing additional study materials in English, and improving access to software and databases.
- 7) Increase the availability of literature in the English language to support the diverse learning needs of students and facilitate access to international research and academic resources.
- 8) Address the lack of English knowledge of the teaching staff on B2 level to provide high quality of studies to students.

Long-term recommendations

- 1) Develop strategies to address the high proportion of teaching staff without an academic background in psychology, including recruiting qualified faculty members and providing professional development opportunities to enhance their expertise in psychology-related areas.
- 2) Increase the number of teaching staff with academic backgrounds in psychology in course leader positions to ensure the quality and relevance of the programme curriculum and instructional delivery.
- 3) Implement workload management strategies to address issues of over-engagement among academic staff members, ensuring a balanced workload to maintain quality teaching, research, and student support services.
- 4) Review and adjust course leader assignments to ensure that academic staff members lead courses aligned with their academic expertise, thereby improving the quality and coherence of programme organization and delivery.
- 5) Strengthen quality assurance measures, particularly in ensuring the quality of programme organization and realization, by aligning course leadership with appropriate academic expertise and standards.

6) Enforce proposed requirements for dissemination and publishing outputs, particularly in peer-reviewed articles or equivalent valuable publications, to enhance the scholarly contributions and reputation of the study field.

7) Increase various forms of teaching methods, lowering the share of lectures as a dominant teaching method.

II - "Psychology" ASSESSMENT

II - "Psychology" ASSESSMENT

2.1. Indicators Describing the Study Programme

Analysis

2.1.1.

The purpose of the PMSP "Psychology" (120 CP) is to develop and improve the competencies and practical skills necessary for a psychologist, as well as to increase the level of students' theoretical knowledge acquisition and understanding of the science of psychology in order to obtain a professional master's degree in psychology and the qualification of a psychologist. Graduates of the PMSP "Psychology" are prepared to perform the professional duties of a psychologist under the supervision of a certified specialist in accordance with the requirements of the Law on Psychologists. Graduates of the master's programme can continue their studies in doctoral study programmes.

The ratio of theoretical and practical courses can be formally considered to be in accordance with the regulations and confirms the correspondence of the study programme to the degree to be obtained. In the field of psychology studies, upon graduation, students obtain a professional master's degree in psychology and the qualification of "Psychologist". It formally indicates that the study programme meets the requirements and standards set for the field of study.

2.1.2.

The PMSP "Psychology" belongs to the field of study "Psychology" with the education classification code 47313. The last three digits (313) denote Psychology according to the Latvian education classification MK Rules No. 322, which can be accessed here: <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/291524-noteikumi-par-latvijas-izglitiba-klasifikaciju>. The aim of the professional Master's study programme "Psychology" is to develop and deepen practical skills as well as to raise the level of theoretical expression and understanding in psychology constituting a professional master's degree in psychology and qualification "Psychologist".

Regarding the study programmes aims, during on site visits, in several related discussions the issue of MA programmes' specialization (e.g. work and organizational psychology) has arisen with uncertainty of it, how the programme aims to "develop and deepen practical skills as well as to raise the level of theoretical expression and understanding in psychology constituting a professional master's degree in psychology and qualification 'Psychologist' will be achieved. Reasons for doubt are further discussed in the text of this report (related to programme and course structure, involved staff, organization of students internship, procedure of involvement of key stakeholders in assessing achievement of programme aims).

The tasks of the study programme include: 1) Provide studies of professional psychologist work and organization based on the theoretical foundations of the field sciences, harmonized with the standards of the profession, adequate for practice and relevant to the modern Latvian context. 2)

Facilitate the ability to apply and critically evaluate various methods of assessment of psychologist work, organization, counseling and support. 3) Promote the ability to understand, compare and critically evaluate various theories of professional development. 4) Promote the implementation of high standards of professional ethics. 5) Provide an opportunity to create new or improve existing psychologist work skills and prepare students for creative, research and practical work in the field of Psychology. 6) Promote the skill of developing independent psychological research that is scientifically creative and consistent with the basic principles of research. 7) Promote the acquisition of a professional Master's degree in Psychology and the qualification of a Psychologist, as well as to give students the opportunity to learn the specificity of psychologist work and organization, which would promote their competitiveness in changing socio-economic conditions.

The outcomes of the study programme include:

Knowledge: 1) The ability to demonstrate in-depth or expanded knowledge and understanding of psychology as well as knowledge and understanding of the latest developments in the professional field of work and organizational psychology. 2) The ability to critically evaluate, analyze and compare different theories of psychology, to understand the regularities of the science of psychology, as well as to understand the problems of science in the interaction of different fields.

Skills: 1) The ability to apply the professional skills required by the psychologist's professional standard, namely: psychological counseling skills, skills in individual and group or organizational psychological assistance, psychological research (assessment) skills, skills in preparing a psychologist's expert opinion, skills in providing feedback on the results of psychological research, skills to cooperate and work in a team and cooperate with other professionals in the process of client psychological reception, performance appraisal skills. 2) The ability to successfully establish contact and effectively use communication skills in accordance with clients' needs and psychologist's tasks, behaving in a supportive manner, respecting their professional work boundaries, neutrality and integrity. 3) The ability to present a reasoned explanation and discuss complex or systemic aspects of the discipline or profession concerned both with professionals and non-specialists. 4) The ability to independently advance their development and specialization, to take responsibility for their continuing education and professional development, to attend professional supervision, and to act responsibly to their psychological state and seek help when if necessary. 5) The ability to independently start a business, to offer innovations in psychology, to conduct research or to continue studies in difficult and unpredictable circumstances and, if necessary, to transform them by applying new approaches.

Competences: 1) The ability to independently formulate and critically analyze complex scientific and professional issues, to justify decisions, and to conduct further analysis if necessary. 2) The ability to integrate knowledge from different fields, to contribute to creation of new knowledge and development of methods of professional activity. 3) The ability to understand and apply the ethical principles of psychology as well as to take independent decisions and solve problems in order to provide high quality psychological assistance services.

The study programme is implemented in Latvian and English. After successful completion of studies, students are awarded a professional master's degree in psychology and the qualification "Psychologist". The master's programme "Psychology" is implemented in the form of full-time studies, with a total of 120 CP, which must be obtained within 2 years.

According to experts, formally the programme name, code, degree and qualification to be obtained, objectives, tasks, learning outcomes and admission requirements, as well as the duration, scope and manner of implementation are interconnected, reasonable and justified.

As for studies implemented in English language, experts have several concerns. A low amount of literature in the English language (described in 2.3.1 chapter) hinders academic research and access to resources for students. Also, some members of the teaching staff are not very fluent English speakers, which raises concern about the quality of teaching process.

After analyzing the documents submitted to the BIA and comparing the descriptions contained in them with the information obtained by meeting with the students and graduates of the Academy in person, the expert group comes to the conclusion that the standard of the externally acquired education profession is formally respected, sufficient hours are allocated for lectures, practical work and practices in the study process.

2.1.3.

After analyzing the documents submitted by the BIA and gathering the information obtained in interviews during site visits, it could be concluded that the BIA is trying to introduce corrections, referring, for example, to student surveys about lecture courses. However, it should be understood that students cannot always see the usefulness of certain requirements for themselves 100% objectively. It would be important to measure and balance the satisfaction of students' demands with the principle of reality.

Based on the recommendations of the previous accreditation experts, in which it was recognised that the titles of many study courses are not correctly formulated in Latvian. Therefore, in accordance with the use of terms on the Latvian National Terminology Portal, it was necessary to make changes in the titles of several study courses.

According to paragraph 8 of Section 1 of the Law on Higher Education, higher education in Latvia uses credit points that are equated to European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) credit points. When recalculating ECTS, the number of Latvian credit points is multiplied by 1.5. Credit points are expressed in whole numbers.

As stated in SAR (pp. 137-138), improvements have been made and the names of the study courses have been improved, which allows for a better understanding of the content of the study course, as well as promotes understanding of the achievable study results. Changes were made to several study course titles: the study course "Psychology of Professional Development" was renamed to "Professional development of employees", the study course "Psychology of Professional Activity (Theory and Practice)" was renamed to "Work Psychology (Theory and Practice)", the study course "Engineering Psychology and Ergonomics" was renamed to "Organizational Psychology", the study course "Management Science" was renamed to "Entrepreneurship and Management", the study course "Cross-cultural Psychology: Business Communication (Theory and Practice)" was renamed to "Cross-cultural communication (theory and practice)", the study course "Professional Psychological Counseling and Support" was renamed to "Workplace counseling", the study course "Communicative Psychotechnology in Professional Activity (Practicum)" was renamed to "Business Communication in an Organisation (Practical Work)". The titles of study courses fully correspond to their content.

Based on the recommendations of previous accreditation experts, as well as in accordance with the Cabinet Regulations No. 305 "Regulations on the National Professional Higher Education Standard" of 13 June 2023, the Professional Master Study Programme "Psychology" was supplemented with one new study course: "Work Ethics of a Psychologist" (3CP).

All study courses include the necessary sections: course name, abstract, purpose, tasks, study

results, which include knowledge, skills and competences, description of study results and their evaluation, study course content and main topics, as well as independent work. Study results are achieved using active study methods (lectures, seminars, work in groups, discussions, project activities, "brainstorming", role-playing games and trainings, interactive technologies (Moodle, Zoom, Skype, etc.) are used in the study process, which allows effective involve students in the study process and achieve the desired study results.

BIA has taken into account the recommendations of experts and made corrections in the Study Agreement, Lecture plans for the 1st and 2nd courses, which are posted on the BIA website. The type of training has been changed (from bilingual to Latvian). Study contracts have been reviewed and changes have been made.

2.1.4.

The economic and/or social justification of the PMSP "Psychology" implemented by the BIA can be seen more as formal, since this is a training programme implemented by a private higher education institution, moreover, only in the Riga branch, which is definitely affected by the intense competition with other Universities.

The number of enrolled students at MA level is small - in the reporting period from 2021/2022 to the beginning of the 2022/2023 academic year, the number of students in the PMSP "Psychology" has decreased from 25 to 17 students. The drop in the number of students is rather related to the overall drop in the number of students in Latvia, however, the data provided by the BIA in the self-assessment report show that the decrease is not dramatic from 22 students in the 2021/2022 academic year to 13 students in the 2022/2023 academic year, but the number of students studying in English increased from 3 students in the 2021/2022 academic year to 4 students in the 2022/2023 academic year. The number of student dropouts in the 2021/2022 academic year was 3, and in the 2022/2023 academic year 4 students, on the other hand, the number of graduates increased fivefold - from 2 students in the 2021/2022 academic year to 10 students in the 2022/2023 academic year for graduates of the master's programme.

As it was already mentioned, the chosen fields do not coincide with the master programme, so it is difficult to assess how much of the knowledge acquired in the study process is decisive for a BIA graduate to get a job, but how much is determined by the additional skills and abilities acquired after the studies.

The survey results show that the majority of graduates (79%) admit that they are currently working in a profession related to their education at BIA. According to the information provided in the BIA self-assessment report, it seems that most graduates work in the field of work and organizational psychology (16%), in the field of educational and school psychology (21%), in the field of counseling psychology (26%), some graduates work in the field of legal psychology (16 %) and only 21% of graduates not working in their profession. From the wording of the sentence, we can see that the information is presented in such a way that it appears that the scope of the graduates' professional activity coincides with the direction of the professional master's programme in work and organizational psychology implemented by the BIA, however, in essence, when we delve into the numbers, we can clearly see the coincidence with the information obtained in interviews during site visit, that the majority of graduates develop their professional activities in the field of educational and school psychology (21%), in the field of counseling psychology (26%). According to experts, this only confirms that BIA could expand its master's studies by introducing these directions in the study programme.

In addition, from the information collected by meeting students in person, it can be concluded that the students' assessment of the education they received is very positive. However, the statement of some graduates of the master's study programme is cause for concern. That they have intensively supplemented their professional skills in the field of psychology in order to be able to work fully in the chosen direction. It is understood that since 2019, the profession of psychologist is a regulated profession, which provides for the certification of specialists in the chosen field (the law does not prohibit a psychologist from being certified in a field other than the obtained education, for example, receiving a master's diploma in Organizational Psychology, the psychologist is not prevented from being supervised for the next 2 years by a supervisor and then get certified, for example, in clinical and health or consulting, or any other field!) and every psychologist is obliged to take care of his own further education, however, the master's programme implemented by the BIA does not ensure the completion of courses that would allow young specialists to successfully enter the labor market. It should be understood that such a specialist may be more expensive for a potential employer, such as a hospital, because his/her knowledge must be significantly supplemented if he/she has studied work and organizational psychology. Interviews with graduates in regional branches confirmed that there is a greater demand in the labor market specifically for clinical & health and school & educational psychologists than for work & organizations.

2.1.5. N/A

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

The PMSP "Psychology" aims to provide professional studies based on theoretical foundations in psychology sciences. The programme focuses on improving knowledge of current trends in psychology, understanding professional activities, developing psychologist competencies, and promoting independent self-growth motivation. The study programme includes various outcomes related to knowledge, skills, and competences, and it is implemented in both Latvian and English. Upon completion, students are awarded a professional master's degree in psychology and qualify as psychologists. The programme comprises full-time studies totaling 120 credit points to be completed within two years.

Strengths:

- 1) The study programme includes outcomes related to knowledge, skills, and competences, ensuring comprehensive training for students.
- 2) Offering the programme in both Latvian and English expands accessibility to a wider range of students.
- 3) The institution has made efforts to improve course titles and align with national standards based on recommendations from accreditation experts.

Weaknesses:

- 1) The study programme's focus on certain fields like work and organizational psychology may not align with the demands of the labor market as graduates predominantly find employment in fields like educational and counseling psychology, suggesting a potential misalignment between the program's focus and market demands and potentially limiting graduates' employment opportunities.
- 2) Despite efforts to maintain programme quality, a decrease in the number of enrolled students may raise concerns about the study program's attractiveness or relevance.
- 3) Some graduates feel the need to supplement their professional skills intensively after completing the study programme, indicating a potential gap in preparing students for the workforce.

2.2. The Content of Studies and Implementation Thereof

Analysis

2.2.1.

The content of the Professional Master Study Programme (PMSP) "Psychology" of the Baltic International Academy (BIA) in general is topical, the most of study courses complement and interconnect with each other. The analysis of the content of the programme based on study plan presented in Annex 9 and study course description presented in Annex 10 shows, that PMSP "Psychology" of BIA the majority of study courses demonstrate in-depth or extended knowledge and understanding of psychology as a science, as well as knowledge and understanding of the latest developments in the professional field of Work and Organizational Psychology. For the formation of theoretical understanding, the study courses guarantee the outcomes of the EQI Level 7. The objective of the study programme is to ensure 10 learning outcomes based on the European Qualifications Framework (presented in Appendix 8 "Mapping of study courses for achieving the learning outcomes of the study programme"). The content of the courses in general aims to develop professional performance skills set by the standard of the psychologist profession: psychological counseling skills, individual and group or organizational psychological assistance skills, psychological research (assessment) skills, skills to prepare psychologist's opinions, skills to provide feedback on the results of psychological research, skills to cooperate and work in a team and to cooperate with other professionals in the process of psychological reception of the client, the skills of evaluating one's performance. In general, these outcomes meet the needs of the industry, labor market and scientific trends. However, the current plan generally does not give the impression of students acquiring systematized knowledge aimed at deepening understanding and heralding professional formation, but gives the impression of randomly grouped lecture courses. Potential employers could be confused by the courses implemented within the master's program, which are directly oriented to entrepreneurship and management and business planning in psychology and marketing of psychological services, as this may create a false impression that the studies are focused on business development. It might be more useful to replace these courses with specific courses in work and organizational psychology that would provide a more in-depth understanding and professional development in the professional field.

The issue of harmonization of BA and MA programmes within the study field are arising during discussion, regarding orientation toward academic and professional orientations, structure and place of some courses, and place of professional practice and internship.

The content of the study programme complies with national regulations such as the Standard of the Psychologist Profession (developed and agreed by the National Tripartite Council for Professional Education and at the meeting of the Tripartite Cooperation Sub-council for Employment of 12 June 2019, Minutes No. 4), the standard of the psychologist profession, in accordance with the Cabinet Regulations No. 633 "The procedure for the development of the occupational standard, the professional qualification requirements (if the profession is not approved by the occupational standard) and the sectoral qualification structure of the sector" of 27 September 2016, the Cabinet Regulations No. 264 "Regulations on Classification of Occupations, Key Tasks of Occupations and Main Qualification Requirements" of 23 May 2017, the Cabinet Regulations No. 305 "Regulations on the National Standard of Professional Higher Education" of 13 June 2023 (Min. No. 32 § 29, Riga), as well as the Psychologist Law <https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/290115>.

However, the PMSP at BIA has some evident weaknesses. It contains a course which is not appropriate at MA level (EQF 7 level) like course "Methods of psychological research, data analysis and interpretation (A2)", where full course description in the Annex 10 (SAR), fully confirms it. In this course description expected learning outcomes indicate (among others) ".. to gain knowledge about

the basic principles of constructing and conducting qualitative and quantitative research in psychology” and at Master level students should receive more than just ‘basic principles” and basic research methodology knowledge. In addition, content of the course indicates topics which are targeted to basic orientations in research methodology (e.g. differences between some methodological approaches, information about types of research methods, differences between some basic statistical concepts such as population and sample etc.).

To some degree, course “Cross-cultural Communication (theory and practice”) is not fully appropriate to MA level, as structure of the course and proclaimed learning outcomes (Appendix 10, pp. 12-15) are not operationalized at EQF 7 level (e.g. To acquaint with the basic principles and theoretical ideas of modern cross-cultural psychology.). It is suggested to include such a course at BA level, as it provides students with general and basic orientation in some psychology related streams. Comprehensive analysis of structure of other courses included in the MA program, indicates further need for harmonization with courses and learning outcomes at BA level, to ensure expected in-depth knowledge at Master’s level.

2.2.2.

It is supposed that the PMSP “Psychology” of the BIA provides an opportunity to develop professional competence in Work and Organizational Psychology, in accordance with the fields of professional activity defined in the Psychologist Law. It focuses on the analysis of the work environment and the optimal functioning of employees in a specific work environment; providing support in the process of professional self-determination, as well as in the implementation of preventive measures for health promotion with the aim of improving occupational safety and efficiency of employees. Thus, the awarding of a degree is based on the achievements and findings of the relevant field of science (“psychology”), while optimizing programme in one of major psychology sub-fields (“work and organisational psychology”) is not fully justified.

2.2.3.

It is reported (SAR p. 152.) that the programme is designed taking into account the diversity of students’ needs. Each lecturer within the study course uses appropriate learning paths and uses different ways of programme implementation, using various pedagogical methods according to the circumstances, where obtained information during on-side visit indicates dominance of lecturers among them. In order to test the knowledge acquired in lectures and seminars and their application, tests, practical work, independent work, reports are used, which allow to evaluate the acquired knowledge in the learning process. Thus, the study implementation methods in general contribute to the achievements of the aims and learning outcomes of the study courses and the PMSP Psychology. During experts' visit meetings with students the most of them confirmed that student-centered learning and teaching principles are considered and actively used. They have reported that academic staff in general demonstrate a high motivation to understand the students’ individual demands as well as a good contact possibility and availability of scientific supervisors.

2.2.4.

There are four internships (Practice) included in PMSP at all study semesters. Each internship has its own task description, but all practices included in the programme are aimed at students' learning to apply the knowledge acquired in theoretical courses into practice. In the most direct way, students have to put into practice the knowledge gained in psychological research and psychological counseling courses. Each student has the opportunity to discuss their work as part of the practice, with individual guidance and support from the supervisor. To provide students with diverse practice opportunities, two long-term contracts have been signed, with SIA Latenta and the Certification Centre of Latvian Railway correspondingly. With other places of practice, fixed-term contracts are

signed each year. It is reported (SAR p.156.) that for many years, there has been going on successful cooperation with various organizations, the cooperation enabling to provide practice in accordance with work and organizational psychology.

The internship for international students are provided in accordance with the Regulations on Practices at the Baltic International Academy (https://bsa.edu.lv/docs/2020/BSA_Prakses_nolikums_en.pdf) and BIA professional master's study programme "Psychology" Practice Regulations and Methodological Instructions for the development and defense of the practice report (Approved by the BIA Senate on 26.08.2021. Decision No. 01/021). Thus, the internship complies with the requirements of regulatory enactments.

During on-site visit, the incongruence between MA programme orientations and internship was discussed, where available information indicates how the majority of internship is realized out-side of business or company sectors, with prevalence of practice in clinical and related fields. That strongly decreases the quality and effectiveness of internships. Another visible challenge is the absence of work, business, organizational and industry sectors as representatives of employers, who were scarcely represented. The MA programme targeted to work and organizational psychology should be primarily targeted to co-operation with them.

2.2.5. N/A

2.2.6.

It is reported (SAR p.157.) that students in general choose to write their academic papers on the topics in work and organizational psychology, that testifies to the fact that the topics of student papers are related to their further professional and academic interests. However, most of the PMSP 'Psychology' students are also interested in topics related to personality psychology, cognitive psychology and legal psychology. The most of the master's theses are of interdisciplinary aspect, the trait corresponding to the development tendencies of modern psychology. Special attention is paid to the study of cognitive mechanisms of implicit social cognition, as well as to the applied research of implicit attitudes in different spheres of professional activity.

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

The study programme formally corresponds to the study field, however the master programme would be recommended to be more structured and oriented directly towards the specialization.

Strengths:

1) The most of the master's theses are of interdisciplinary aspect, the trait corresponding to the development tendencies of modern psychology.

Weaknesses:

1) MA programme contains courses that are not appropriate at MA level, and some courses include in its structure learning outcomes or allocation of time to topics which should be at BA level.

2) Most of the certified graduates work in other fields of professional activity (e.g. clinical or counseling).

3) The cooperation of the MA programme with the business and industry sector is an issue which should be strongly prioritized and evidenced in programme organization and realization.

4) The quality and effectiveness of internships is not at a high level, as evidence indicates how companies, business sector are represented very scarcely in the total number of internship places.

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 is partly based on advances and knowledge in the field. Most of the Master's theses have an interdisciplinary aspect, which is in line with the current trends in psychology. However, there are weaknesses in the content of the programmes, such as courses that are not appropriate for the Master's level and some courses that include learning outcomes in their structure or the allocation of time to topics that should be at undergraduate level.

2.3. Resources and Provision of the Study Programme

Analysis

2.3.1.

The provided information in SAR (pp. 156-159), as well as obtained during site visit shows that the study provision, informative provision, material and technical provision, and financial provision align with the specific features and conditions required for the implementation of the Professional Master Study Programme "Psychology" at BIA.

BIA effectively utilizes the Moodle e-learning environment and BigBlueButton system to provide learning support materials, facilitate communication between students and lecturers, and conduct online lectures, seminars, and consultations. Students of a master study programme agree that this modern approach enhances accessibility and engagement in the study process.

BIA's information systems, including NEXUS and "My BIA", play a crucial role in informing students and lecturers about schedules, academic progress, and financial matters. These systems enhance transparency and accessibility to important information for both students and faculty members.

The BIA library offers a collection of resources, including books, periodicals, electronic databases, and computer facilities. The provision of printing, copying, and scanning services further supports academic activities and research endeavors. It should be noted that, the same as in case of ABSP, currently the books in the English language (as reported) compose about 10 percent of all available literature, and it recommended investing more into purchasing books (or e-books) in English.

The facilities in Riga, equipped with modern studio technical aids, multimedia projectors, and internet connectivity, provide a conducive learning environment for students. The availability of cafes and vending machines enhances the overall experience for students and staff.

In experts team opinion, there is no real and significant benefit from the experimental laboratory, which, upon closer inspection, has remained unchanged since 2009, when its beginnings were found in the currently liquidated RPIVA.

This topic is explored in more detail in Chapter 3 of this report ("Resources and Provision of the Study Field").

The study process for the Professional Master Study Programme "Psychology" is concentrated in Riga. This could potentially limit accessibility for students residing outside of Riga. Students of bachelor studies (from branches in Liepaja and Daugavpils) expressed their wish for master studies

to also be organized locally.

Overall, it could be concluded that the provision of methodological and informational support, along with adequate library resources and infrastructure, ensures a good-quality study process at BIA's PMSP "Psychology". However, expanding access to branch locations could further enhance accessibility and inclusivity for students. Additionally, it is recommended to invest more in purchasing books and ebooks in English, as current numbers of English literature are very scarce and symbolic.

2.3.2. N/A.

2.3.3.

The SAR (p. 160) outlines the main source of funding, which is tuition fees, and provides clarity on the payment options available to students. It could be concluded that this transparency ensures stakeholders understand how the programme is funded.

According to the evidence provided in the SAR (p. 161) as well as in Annex "BIA Financial Stability Indicators.docx", the master study programme maintains a positive balance between income and expenses, indicating financial stability. The study expenses per student are covered entirely by the income generated from tuition fees, demonstrating the programme's profitability. However, while tuition fees are mentioned as the main funding source, the SAR does not elaborate on other potential funding sources or external grants that may contribute to the programme's finances. Also, it seems that currently the management of BIA focuses on the actual financial status of the programme but does not delve into long-term financial planning strategies. Discussing plans for future financial sustainability and growth could provide assurance regarding the programme's stability over time.

The funding system is structured to ensure that every student, regardless of group size, receives quality education. By controlling expenses and setting minimum student numbers (this is decided by the Board on a semester-by-semester basis), the programme aims to provide education to students in small groups, facilitating personalized learning experiences.

During the discussion with programme managers, academic staff and students it was highlighted that BIA provides necessary informative, material, and technical resources to support the achievement of learning outcomes. Specific resources, such as the development of a laboratory and the purchase of software like SPSS, indicate investments in enhancing the programme's quality.

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

The PMSP "Psychology" at BIA demonstrates effective provision of resources and financial stability; there are areas for improvement in terms of accessibility and long-term financial planning. Addressing these weaknesses could further enhance the quality and sustainability of the program.

Strengths:

- 1) BIA utilizes Moodle and BigBlueButton effectively, enhancing accessibility and engagement in the study process.
- 2) NEXUS and "My BIA" ensure transparency and accessibility to important information for students and faculty, contributing to a streamlined study process.
- 3) The BIA library offers a wide range of resources in Latvian language, supporting academic activities and research endeavors.

4) Facilities in Riga provide a conducive learning environment with modern amenities, enhancing the overall learning experience for students.

Weaknesses:

- 1) Concentration of the study process in Riga may limit accessibility for students residing outside the city, suggesting a need for expansion to branch locations.
- 2) The SAR does not delve into long-term financial planning strategies, which could provide assurance regarding the programme's stability over time.
- 3) A low amount of books and e-books in English language.

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: Partially compliant

The majority of the resources are sufficient for the successful implementation of the PMSP "Psychology". A low amount of literature in the English language is the main drawback. The finances are balanced.

2.4. Teaching Staff

Analysis

2.4.1.

The SAR documents with annexes and information provided about teaching staff and during onsite visits provided information targeted to teachers staff. In total 31 academic staff members are involved in programme fields of psychology at BIA, where 12 members of the academic staff are involved in the PMSP. Most members of the total teaching staff are actively involved in BA and MA programmes. They are realizing in total 17 courses (Business communication in organization (practical work) (B); Business planning in psychology and marketing of psychological services (B); Cross-cultural communications (theory and practice) (B); Elaboration and defense of Master's thesis (A4); Entrepreneurship and Management (A2); Latvian language (C); Methods of psychological research, data analysis and interpretation (A2); Organizational Psychology (A); Personnel psychology (A); Practice I (A3); Practice II (A3); Practice III (A3); Practice IV (A3); Professional development of employees (A1); Work Ethic of Psychologist (B); Work Psychology (theory and practice) (A1); Workplace counseling (B)).

Among 14 teaching staff, 1 is a professor with an academic background in psychology, there is no associate professor with academic background in psychology, 1 assistant professor, and 2 guest professors are with academic background in psychology. It represents 2 fully employed academic staff in some levels of professorship position (full, associate, assistant) with academic background in psychology (e.g. phd in psychology) involved in MA programme realization.

The number of courses in the MA programme and number of enrolled students in the MA programme enable at this moment realization of the program, with strong warranty in regards to programme quality.

BIA formally meets the requirements of the study programme implementation and the requirements specified in the regulatory acts, which should ensure adequate quality in the study process.

However, questions and concerns are raised by the professional capacity of some strongly academically oriented lecturers, ensuring the management of separate, especially practical lecture courses, such as family psychology, advertising psychology, etc., which are led by strongly academically oriented lecturers. Likewise, the high workload of individual lecturers and the excessively wide range of lecture courses is concerning.

2.4.2.

BIA provided in SAR documentation information about measures and activities targeted to teaching staff. There is a clear need for further activities and improvements as the number of fully employed academics involved in MA programme with academic background in psychology should be increased. There is an issue of high workload of some teaching staff members (e.g. case where 3 teaching staff together are course leaders for 40 courses. Such teaching staff overload is a sign that the quality of teaching and organization of courses is really challenging and a clear threat to quality. In addition, some teaching staff members are course leaders of several and many courses in the program, and have master degrees. This is an additional challenge to quality.

In experts' team opinion, BIA should additionally think about the changes in the teaching staff of the Academy, which could improve and raise the quality of studies. It seems that BIA has so far stuck to the involvement of its academic staff in the teaching process, which has resulted in a few lecturers delivering the majority of the courses, which reduces the opportunity to learn these courses in depth. It is difficult to imagine that the same lecturer has in-depth knowledge, for example, in psychometrics, family psychology, psychology of emotions and the psychology of sexuality, which by its very nature is an extremely specific industry.

Formally, the qualifications of teaching staff meet the requirements of the master study programme and regulatory acts for the implementation of the master level study programme process. However, questions are raised, for example, by the minimum number of guest lecturers, which, in experts' team opinion, could be successfully solved by the BIA, because the master's programme is a professional master's degree, which would allow inviting several professionals in the field as guest lecturers.

2.4.3. N/A

2.4.4.

Academic staff members involved in the PMSP programme published in total 81 peer-reviewed publications. There are three staff members who didn't publish peer-review articles (note: names are here omitted). Analysis of publication in regard to thematic focus and quality of publication indicate very represented diversity. Some of the publications are not expected articles or by level and quality comparable publication, rather representing abstracts, encyclopedic entries etc. Additional insights are provided in case of outputs of some staff members who are course leaders of MA important subject courses (e.g. Entrepreneurship and Management), as proclaimed the thematic focus of the MA programme is on the work and organizational psychology. In the case of course leaders for 'Entrepreneurship and Management (A2)' course, available information provided in 'Annex 4.4.2. List of publications, conferences, projects by teaching staff for the reporting period indicate very unfocused publications regarding the course, which is unrelated to them. In addition, as academic staff members are mostly employed at BIA as HEI, their practical experience in the field of work and organizational psychology outside of HEI is not covered by SAR documents (e.g. 2.4.2., pp. 84-85).

Analyzing the list of BIA staff publications, it could be concluded that the amount of scientific research is relatively small. Basically, the publications of BIA teaching staff are reports and

presentations of presentations in the collections of publications.

2.4.5.

BIA is organizing and providing BA and MA programmes, which is a solid base for good and efficient cooperation between teaching staff in the implementation of the study programmes and good harmonization of study programmes courses, especially when a focus is on the learning outcomes. The teaching staff workload is not optimized and this present barrier for mutual cooperation, as allocation of courses within study programmes on those level do not provide systematic orientation to expected cooperation, rather need to allocate courses. The present and clear challenges, which should be resolved, are a low number of academic staff with expected academic background in psychology. Many of the staff members who are on the psychology programmes staff do not have the necessary academic background which ensure high quality programmes. One of consequences of this practice is the really high workload of existing staff members (this is strongly evident for four teachers), where allocation of some courses seems to be artificial or not justified by any proof of competencies in the course fields. Therefore, the issue of needed and substantial cooperation is challenged. During onsite visit, information about cooperation of teaching staff with providers of internships are arising, and placement of Practice I-IV courses in the programme were challenged, as many of involved participants were not reported thematic focus of work and organizational psychology.

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

Academic staff members involved in MA programme are a weak part of MA programme, and should represent focus of the short-term and mid-term interventions, where involvement of some members should be strongly reduced, as current work overload is an obstacle to programme quality, especially to proven competencies of the staff. More balance between engagement in BA and MA programmes' is needed, which could include profiling and competence professionalization of some or many staff members. Publishing quality and amount is a visible weak point of the staff.

Strengths:

1) Organization of BA and MA programmes at same institution which has potential for mutual and good cooperation between academic staff.

Weaknesses:

- 1) Low number of academics who have an academic background in psychology.
- 2) Too many honorary engaged academic staff, with particular challenges regarding their academic background, or academic track record in the context of work and organizational psychology.
- 3) Visible imbalance in workload of some academic staff, with the open issues regarding track record and competencies related to some course.
- 4) Low quality and level of peer-reviewed publishing.
- 5) The involvement of staff and quality of organization of Practice courses and activities at the MA psychology level.

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

There are academic staff members who didn't publish peer-reviewed publications.
Structure of qualification background in relations to fields of psychology is challenging. The English language competences of the teaching staff should be improved.

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

In accordance with the Appendix 6. Compliance of the Professional Master Study Programme Psychology with the National Education Standards.pdf, the study programme complies with the National Education Standard pursuant to Cabinet Regulations No. 305, of 13 June 2023, "Regulations regarding the State Standard for Professional Higher Education", <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/342818-noteikumi-parvalsts-profesionalas-augstakas-izglitibas-standartu>.

- 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

The study programme complies with the valid professional standard in accordance with Annex 7. Compliance of the professional Master's study programme "Psychology" with the profession standard.docx pursuant to Protocol of the Tripartite Cooperation sub-council of Vocational Education and Employment, 12 June 2019 4: "PROFESSIONAL STANDARD FOR PSYCHOLOGIST".

- 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 study course descriptions are prepared in English and Latvian that can be accessed under annexes - Appendix 10. Description of study courses of the Master's study programme "Psychology".pdf and Appendix 9. Professional master studies' programme Psychology plan.docx.

Descriptions comply with regulations set forth in Law on Higher Education Institutions.

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The provided Diploma sample - Sample Dipl with attachment PS120_eng_merged.pdf complies with the procedure by which state-recognised documents of higher education are issued according to Cabinet Regulation No. 202 "Kārtība, kādā izsniedz valsts atzītus augstāko izglītību apliecinājumus dokumentus".

- 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

Based on the acquired information onsite as well as relevant annexes: CV_EN.pdf and Study field Psychology Academic staff knowledge of Latvian language.edoc it can be evaluated that the language proficiency of teaching staff is compliant with Cabinet Regulation. Nr. 733 "Regulations Regarding the Extent of the Knowledge of the Official Language, the Procedures for Examining the Proficiency in the Official Language and the State Fee for Examining the Proficiency in the Official Language".

- 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: Partially compliant

As one of the implementing languages of this programme is English, it is required for the teaching staff to have at least B2 level English. The attached documents: CV_EN.pdf and Study field Psychology Academic staff knowledge of English language.edoc provide reasoning that academic staff complies with this requirement. However, during the onsite meeting, the expert group identified that this requirement is not met due to the need for the majority of teaching staff to use an interpreter during meetings with the expert group.

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The sample of study agreement as provided in the annex AGREEMENT.docx complies with the provision to be included in the study agreement in accordance with Cabinet Regulation. Nr. 70 "Studiju līgumā obligāti ietveramie noteikumi".

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

BIA has provided confirmation that students will be provided with opportunities to continue their education at Daugavpils University the professional Master's study programme Psychology (47313), if the implementation of the study programme is terminated in accordance with the annex AGREEMENT between BIA and University of Daugavpils.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

BIA has provided confirmation that students are guaranteed compensation for losses if the study programme is not accredited or the license is revoked due to actions of BIA and the student does not wish to continue their studies in another study programme in accordance with Section 55(8) of the Law on Institutions of Higher Education and Cabinet of Ministers No 795 of 11 December 2018 "Regulations on Licensing of study programmes", Paragraph 13.4. based on the annex The Performance of Obligations.pdf

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

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

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

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The study programme complies with the specified other regulatory requirements that apply to "Psychology" study programme as Regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers Nr. 301 May 29, 2018 - <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/299322-psiologu-noteikumi> based on the annex Correspondence of the study programmes of the study direction "Psychology" to the specific normative regulation of the relevant branch _1.docx

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 mostly complies with regulatory enactments, however, the majority of the teaching staff clearly lacks English knowledge skills on B2 Level to provide high quality of studies for students.

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

PMSP "Psychology" at the Baltic International Academy exhibits several strengths that contribute to its overall effectiveness. Firstly, the curriculum of the programme is found to be topical and good-organized, with most study courses complementing and interconnecting with each other. This ensures that students receive a comprehensive understanding of the field of Work and Organizational Psychology. Additionally, the programme emphasizes the development of in-depth professional competence, aligning with national regulations and industry needs.

Moreover, the teaching methods employed within the programme are student-centered, promoting active engagement and understanding among students. This approach enhances the learning experience and facilitates the attainment of learning outcomes. Furthermore, the programme offers internship opportunities aimed at applying theoretical knowledge into practice, which is essential for students pursuing careers in psychology.

The resource provision at BIA, including methodological, informational, and material resources, supports the achievement of learning outcomes. Modern e-learning platforms and well-equipped facilities contribute to a conducive learning environment. Financial stability is also maintained, ensuring the programme's sustainability and profitability.

However, several weaknesses have been identified within the program. The curriculum structure lacks congruence and homogeneity, with courses appearing randomly grouped rather than structured to deepen understanding and professional formation in Work and Organizational Psychology. Some courses may not be appropriate at the master's level and could benefit from restructuring or removal to better align with programme goals.

Additionally, there is a concern regarding the composition of the teaching staff. The low number of academic staff with an academic background in psychology raises questions about teaching quality and expertise in certain course areas. Overload among teaching staff members further exacerbates these concerns and may impact programme quality.

Furthermore, the number and quality of peer-reviewed publications among teaching staff members are relatively low, with some publications unrelated to the programme's focus. This indicates a need for support and incentives to increase research output and enhance the programme's reputation.

Experts have raised significant concerns regarding the implementation of the study programme in the English language. The scarcity of literature available in English impedes academic research and restricts students' access to essential resources. Moreover, the proficiency level of some teaching staff in English is not optimal, posing potential challenges to the quality of the teaching process. As such, experts suggest addressing these issues to ensure an effective learning environment for all students.

Finally, the concentration of the study process in Riga may limit accessibility for students residing outside the city. Expanding access to branch locations could improve accessibility and ensure equitable educational opportunities for all students.

In conclusion, while the PMSP "Psychology" at BIA has several strengths, addressing the identified weaknesses is crucial for further enhancing the quality, relevance, and effectiveness of the program. Recommendations include curriculum restructuring, faculty enhancement, internship alignment, publication support, stakeholder involvement, and improving regional accessibility. The experts team believes that implementing these recommendations will contribute to the overall improvement of the programme and better prepare students for careers in psychology.

Evaluation of the study programme "Psychology"

Evaluation of the study programme:

Average

2.6. Recommendations for the Study Programme "Psychology"

Short-term recommendations

- 1) Conduct a comprehensive review of the master's programme curriculum to ensure mutual homogeneity and congruence between study courses, focusing on the inclusion of essential subjects for in-depth knowledge acquisition in psychology and relevant interventions.
- 2) Prioritize and strengthen collaboration with the business and industry sector to ensure the relevance and applicability of the master's programme curriculum, enhancing graduates' employability in diverse professional fields.
- 3) Conduct surveys or interviews with certified graduates to understand their career paths and preferences, and explore opportunities to align content offered in the programme with emerging professional trends, such as clinical or counseling psychology.
- 4) Explore opportunities for expanding the study process to branch locations to increase accessibility for students residing outside Riga, addressing concerns about geographical limitations.
- 5) Increase the acquisition of books and e-books in the English language to enrich the programme's resources and support students in accessing international literature and research.
- 6) Improve the quality and effectiveness of internships by implementing evidence-based practices and monitoring mechanisms to ensure valuable learning experiences for students.
- 7) Address lack of English knowledge of the teaching staff on B2 level to provide high quality of studies to students.
- 8) Revise the structure of the MA programme by reformulating some courses to be harmonized with MA expected level (EQF 7), and eliminate from some courses expected learning outcomes which are formulated on the lower qualification level.

Long-term recommendations

- 1) Develop and implement long-term financial planning strategies to ensure the stability and sustainability of the master's programme over time, providing assurance to stakeholders and enhancing confidence in the programme's future.
- 2) Implement initiatives to attract and retain more academics with backgrounds in psychology, including targeted recruitment efforts, professional development opportunities, and collaborations with psychology departments at other institutions.
- 3) Evaluate the roles and contributions of honorary academic staff, particularly in work and organizational psychology courses, ensuring alignment with academic standards and track records that support programme goals.
- 4) Address workload imbalances among academic staff by implementing fair workload distribution mechanisms and providing support for staff members to develop their competencies in specific areas of psychology.
- 5) Establish mentorship programmes, workshops, and resources to support faculty in improving the quality and quantity of peer-reviewed publications, fostering a culture of research excellence within the program.

6) Enhance the oversight and coordination of practice courses and activities at the MA psychology level, ensuring alignment with programme objectives and providing adequate support and training for staff involved in these courses.

7) Focus on strengthening cooperation with business and industry sectors (e.g. transfer of knowledge to business sector, innovations projects, involvement of business and industry sector in research projects at BIA, developing strong structure of internship etc.).

8) Increase the availability of books and e-books in the English language to support students' learning and research needs, facilitating access to international literature and resources.

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	BIA partially ensures continuous improvement, development, and efficient performance of the study field whilst implementing their quality assurance systems. The efficient performance is ensured by the supervision of the processes taking place at the BIA and implementation of surveys to monitor the satisfaction of all stakeholders - employers, graduates and students. However, it has to be pointed out that a large part of the teaching staff overlaps across branches, it would be of importance to collect and analyze information not only at individual level but also to compare the results of the branches separately.
R2 - Compliance of scientific research and artistic creation with the level of development of scientific research and artistic creation (if applicable)	Partially compliant	There are some scientific activities within the study field. However, the research productivity is rather low (number of published scientific articles in internationally recognized journals related to the field) and a lack of clear research direction is also evident, as the majority of 133 publications is written by 2 members of the academic staff.

Requirements	Requirement Evaluation	Comment
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 cooperation implemented within the study field with various Latvian and foreign organizations partly ensures the achievement of the aims of the study field, internships give students an incomplete idea of the field of organizational and work psychology in the industry.
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	After analyzing SAR, Annex 3, and also taking into account the information obtained during the site visit in BIA, the team of experts concluded that the management of BIA has taken good steps to fix the problems that were identified during the previous accreditation. The big part of the issues that could be amended between accreditations have mostly been addressed, and reforms have been initiated to tackle the remaining issues. Some results are difficult to evaluate at the present moment. From the list of short-term recommendations, some were only partially addressed: the research productivity is still quite low, especially for some members of staff; the numbers of incoming mobility remain low, and the choice of invited guest lecturers could be further improved; the number of literature available in the English language is still very low.

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	Psychology (43313)	Not relevant	Partially compliant	Partially compliant	Partially compliant	Average
2	Psychology (47313)	Partially compliant	Partially compliant	Partially compliant	Partially compliant	Average

The Dissenting Opinions of the Experts

Comment from Aleksejs Ruža:

In my perception, the final evaluation for the BIA Bachelor's study programme "Psychology", which the experts group has marked as "average" looks too critical. In my opinion, in this case, more objectively would be "good". If we look at the table in p.2.5. Assessment of the Compliance of the Study Programme, we can conclude, that experts agreed, that 13 of 14 criterions (points) are marked as Fully compliant and only 9th point is marked as Partly compliant. The content of the study programme in general looks very much the same like other similar study programmes in Latvia. The quality of the students' bachelor's theses in general meets the national requirements for this study programme and provides a possibility for students to continue their education in master's level not only in BIA, but also in other Universities of Latvia. I do agree with other experts on short-term and long-term recommendations for the improvement and further development of the study programme - there is still a lot of possibilities to grow, and some things should be definitely altered (for example, internship or practice), but I consider, that experts group's decision on final evaluation is too strict and does not reflect the objective view.