

# Expert group joint opinion

Evaluation Procedure: Assessment of Study Field

Higher Education Institution: Rēzekne Academy of Technologies

Study field: Law

Experts:

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## Summary Assessment of the Study Field

### Summary Assessment of the Study Field

RTA implements 3 study programs in the study direction "Science of Law":

The study programme - Law Science, code of the study programme according to the Classification of the Latvian Education - 41380, type and level of the study program - 1st level professional higher education study program, qualification level to be achieved (NQF/EQF) - 5.

The study programme - Law Science, code of the study programme according to the Classification of the Latvian Education - 43380, type and level of the study program - academic bachelor study programme, qualification level to be achieved (NQF/EQF) - 6.

The study programme - Law Science, code of the study programme according to the Classification of the Latvian Education - 47380, type and level of the study program - professional master's study programme, qualification level to be achieved (NQF / EQF) - 7.

After getting acquainted with the self-evaluation report and supplemented documents, as well as the materials and the information obtained during the on-site visit, the experts have concluded that the study direction is partially compliant with the requirements since insignificant shortcomings and deficiencies have been identified and they can be eliminated within the accreditation term of the study direction. The majority of shortcomings refer to the modest level of internationalization, research and digitalization. However, these deficiencies do not affect the quality of the study direction which was admitted by the experts and also emphasized by all stakeholders during the on-site meetings. The study programmes have been evaluated with minor deficiencies mostly related to the above-mentioned areas.

Positive aspects:

1. Aims of the study direction "Law Science" are clearly defined and attainable. They comply with the general strategic development of the RTA.
2. Decision taking process at RTA is oriented towards developing the study direction.
3. RTA's Quality system is created and planned.
4. Legal regulation of processes in study direction and RTA at all are publicly available.
5. The content of the study courses within the study direction is relevant and compliant with the needs of the labour market, aims of the study programme, internship, ensures the achievement of the learning outcomes and scientific trends in the science branch "Law"; supplemented study courses descriptions developed.
6. Efficient and high-motivated teaching staff contributes to the achievement of aims of the study direction.;
7. Use of the rich palette of modern methods of teaching and learning (e.g., case studies) is positively admitted by students and graduates.
8. RTA has established certain academic integrity principles and mechanisms and uses the necessary technical tools to ensure it.
9. Good opportunity for students and academic staff to be published on "Administrative and Criminal Justice" without any publication expenses.
10. Excellent internship for law students in the law enforcement institutions of Latvia and excellent cooperation with Latvian enforcement institutions – courts, prosecutor's offices, State Police, State Border Guard, State Probation Service, etc.
11. Representatives of employers, graduates and students are satisfied with the learning outcomes, study process, and curriculum of the study programmes and are involved in the development of the study direction.
12. The indicators of the study programme are interconnected and appropriate to the Law Science

as the science sub-branch.

13. Related study programmes are developed and regularly amended considering the needs of the labour market; recommendations of previous assessment were partially implemented (e.g., improved library resources; restructured planning of study courses (balance between part A, B and C in the study programmes)).

14. High rate of employability of graduates at the local labour market confirms the consideration of labour market needs and adequate quality of educational activity within the study direction.

Negative aspects:

1. Only one person is responsible for the quality system. Lack of the special RTA regulation on the internal quality assurance system;

2. Lack of efficient cooperation with foreign organisations, international publications and participation in international research programs, weak academic mobility.

3. Information on the study direction "Law Science" is not available on RTA's website in English.

4. Lack of special research strategy for the study direction "Law Science".

5. Academic staff is overworked and lack balance between academic, scientific and administrative workloads, which influences their availability and motivation to partake in activities for their further professional development, academic mobility and international scientific projects.

6. Weak digitalization of all study programmes; lack of necessary training and assistance to feel comfortable using E-studies and other electronic platforms for the teaching staff.

7. Provisions and support mechanisms to aid study accessibility for students (dormitories, internship mentors, online help desk, psychological aid) is commendable, however, information about its availability should be provided publicly and the abilities to extend this support via different means should be explored.

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

### **Analysis**

Rezekne Academy of Technologies (hereinafter – RTA) is a state-founded higher education institution (hereinafter - HEI) in the Republic of Latvia. RTA implements study direction "Law Science" which is comprised by the following three study programs:

1. First level professional higher education study program.

The aim of the study program is to prepare legal assistants with theoretical and practical knowledge in accordance with the legal assistant standard (<https://visc.gov.lv/profizglitiba/docs/standards/ps0215.pdf>). Legal assistant provides practical assistance to lawyers, sworn notaries, sworn advocates, judges and other members of the legal profession, as well as performs other tasks in accordance with the job description. Legal assistant aids and assists a lawyer in the preparation of legal documents and reports, provides legal advice, verifies that the particular documents comply with the applicable laws.

2. Academic bachelor study program.

The aim of the study program is to prepare students for further studies in law in the professional masters program and equip them with research skills and theoretical knowledge in law.

3. Professional master study program.

The aim of the study program is to provide students with specific, in-depth knowledge and professional skills, to prepare lawyers with the ability to handle complex legal issues, complicated theoretical and practical law issues. To give its graduates the opportunity to obtain the practical work experience specified in regulatory enactments and passing relevant qualification tests, to work in specialized legal professions such as sworn attorney, prosecutor, judge, sworn notary, sworn bailiff, etc.

RTA as an academy aims to become internationally recognizable and competitive in social sciences as well, to answer the demand of graduates in the labor market.

RTA's vision, mission and strategic goals are stipulated by the Development Strategy 2016-2023 of the

RTA [https://www.rta.lv/uploads/source/content\\_EN/Studies/SQMS/1/RTA%20Strat%C4%93%C4%A3ija%20ang%C4%BCu%20valod%C4%81%202.pdf](https://www.rta.lv/uploads/source/content_EN/Studies/SQMS/1/RTA%20Strat%C4%93%C4%A3ija%20ang%C4%BCu%20valod%C4%81%202.pdf).

RTA's Strategy is to offer high quality study programmes, attractive study process, which prepares highly competent legal professionals for the region of Latgale, Latvia and international labour market. (Rezekne Academy of Technologies "Strategy of Scientific Activity 2019 - 2023", short version, approved at the meeting of Senate of the Rezekne Academy of Technologies on 07.05.2019, viewed: on-site visit at 05.03.2020) ([https://www.rta.lv/uploads/source/content\\_LV/zinatne/RTA\\_scientific\\_strategy.pdf](https://www.rta.lv/uploads/source/content_LV/zinatne/RTA_scientific_strategy.pdf)).

Aims of the study direction "Law Science" are clearly defined and attainable. They comply with the general strategic development directions of the RTA.

RTA aims to prepare lawyers for the law enforcement institutions of Latvia – courts, prosecutors' offices, State Police, State Border Guard, State Probation Service, etc. This information was also confirmed on-site visit (06.03.2020) by representatives from Latgale district court, Rēzeknes city court, Police of Rēzekne, Rēzekne city council.

They also confirmed that:

a. their institutions demand RTA to provide lawyers with higher legal education, which is based on the needs of the national economy of Latvia and Latgale region;

b. programs are aligned with the requirements set by professional standards and focuses on cooperation with employers and other institutions of higher legal education in Latvia and abroad.

During the on-site visit RTA provided sufficient justification of the creation of the law study direction and the study programs included in it. The competitiveness of the study direction and study programmes with other institutions of higher education is assured by the geopolitical aspect - studies are provided in Rezekne, Latgale. These circumstances ensure the availability and accessibility of studies as well as ensure participation in the regional matters of law and the development in the field of law in Latgale. The study direction has been developed in accordance with previously defined strategy and goals, while taking into account previous experience.

Study programmes are oriented towards the development of the study direction because of the thoughtful structure of the management of RTA. There is a system of RTA's management (Constitutional Assembly-Senate-Study Council-Science Council-Faculty Council-Study Direction Council) which helps to develop study direction and all programmes. RTA pays attention to employers and the needs of the regional labour market.

During the visit experts made sure that decision-taking is oriented towards the development of the study direction. All processes for the development of the study direction are regulated by the local RTA's documents according to the state regulations. Documents are publicly available on RTA's internet site or in the faculty (Annex 1).

Admission of students and enrollment criteria, as well as recognition of previous formal/non-formal experience are listed in RTA's regulations: Regulation on Matriculation and Exmatriculation at Rezekne Academy Of Technologies (Approved in 2018, available from: [https://www.rta.lv/uploads/source/content\\_EN/Studies/SQMS/3/Nolik%20par%20imatrikulaciju%20un%20eksmatrikulaciju%20EN%2020181127.pdf](https://www.rta.lv/uploads/source/content_EN/Studies/SQMS/3/Nolik%20par%20imatrikulaciju%20un%20eksmatrikulaciju%20EN%2020181127.pdf), last accessed on 06.03.20) and Regulation on Recognition of Competences Acquired Outside the Formal Education or Through Professional Experience and Learning Outcomes Acquired in Prior Education by the Rezekne Academy of Technology (Approved in 2018, available from:

[https://www.rta.lv/uploads/source/content\\_EN/Studies/SQMS/5/Nolik%20par%20ieprieksejas%20izgl%20studiju%20rezultatu%20atzisanu%20EN.docx](https://www.rta.lv/uploads/source/content_EN/Studies/SQMS/5/Nolik%20par%20ieprieksejas%20izgl%20studiju%20rezultatu%20atzisanu%20EN.docx) Last accessed on 06.03.20). These procedures are clear and transparent that was also stressed by the students and graduates during the onsite visit.

RTA recognizes previous formal education so long as the courses previously acquired match in the CP value and study results. Previous professional experience is recognized, if it was acquired for “at least one week (40 academic hours) through education or professional activity” (ibid.) For example, only one case with negative experience was mentioned during the on-site visit. A student had completed the previous education in English, yet had not taken a course on the topic of English with a specific purpose, therefore the student could not fully recognize the credit point in the semester, which included a language-learning course.

RTA has established the certain academic integrity principles and mechanisms, and uses the necessary technical tools, including special electronic tools and in particular, google.com. Thus, the RTA has approved the Senate’s Regulations on Plagiarism Control and Prevention at Rezekne Academy of Technologies ([https://www.rta.lv/uploads/source/content\\_EN/Studies/SQMS/4/REGULATIONS%20ON%20PLAGIARISM%20CONTROL%20AND%20PREVENTION.pdf](https://www.rta.lv/uploads/source/content_EN/Studies/SQMS/4/REGULATIONS%20ON%20PLAGIARISM%20CONTROL%20AND%20PREVENTION.pdf)). The measures for control and prevention of plagiarism at RTA related to the study process and the academic and scientific activities of the academic staff. The anti-plagiarism procedures related to study and graduate research papers are regulated by the Guidelines for developing and defending study and graduate research papers and the Rezekne Academy of Technologies approved at the meeting of the Science Council on 20.05.2014, Minutes No.13.10/14 (amendments at the meeting of the Science Council on 18.12.2018, No. 16. 1/4). Since 2014, the final study research work at RTA is tested in the unified computerized plagiarism control system of the universities of Latvia. During the on-site visit all stakeholders demonstrated awareness about the RTA anti-plagiarism procedures. Management of the study direction and related study programmes stressed the implementation of anti-plagiarism procedures at all levels, both for student papers (interim and final) and academic staff works, in particular those published in the scientific journal “Administrative and Criminal Justice” jointly published by the RTA and Baltic International Academy. According to RTA SER in 2017 there were considered 4 cases of plagiarism in the professional master’s study programme “Law Science” and 1 case of plagiarism in the academic bachelor’s study programme “Law Science”. In all cases, signs of plagiarism were recognized and students were exmatriculated with the right to resume their studies with writing a final research paper on another topic. During the onsite visit, the students shown the awareness of these cases.

The RTA has established a computer system concerning the self evaluation of the academic staff. They need to adopt a computer information system concerning the HR management (academic leaves, maternity leave ect). They have to pass to a completely electronic system of HR management. Experts have to admit that there exists a computer information system concerning the quality evaluation of academic personnel which is very advanced.

RTA official website is available from: [www.rta.lv](http://www.rta.lv) (viewed: 07.03.2020) However, information available only in Latvian on the study direction “Law Science” includes the following: information about accreditation: [https://www.rta.lv/sv\\_tiesibu\\_zinatne](https://www.rta.lv/sv_tiesibu_zinatne), (viewed: 07.03.2020), and information about the study programmes [https://www.rta.lv/sv\\_tiesibu\\_zinatne](https://www.rta.lv/sv_tiesibu_zinatne) (last viewed: 07.03.2020), more specifically:

1. First level professional higher education study programme:

[https://www.rta.lv/rta\\_istenotas\\_studiju\\_programmas?sp\\_id=84](https://www.rta.lv/rta_istenotas_studiju_programmas?sp_id=84), (last viewed: 07.03.2020)

2. Academic bachelor study programme:

[https://www.rta.lv/rta\\_istenotas\\_studiju\\_programmas?sp\\_id=85](https://www.rta.lv/rta_istenotas_studiju_programmas?sp_id=85), (last viewed: 07.03.2020)

3. Professional master study programme:

[https://www.rta.lv/rta\\_istenotas\\_studiju\\_programmas?sp\\_id=47](https://www.rta.lv/rta_istenotas_studiju_programmas?sp_id=47), (last viewed: 07.03.2020)

Regarding the accreditation, it is mentioned that the study direction “Law Science” is accredited until: 28 May, 2020. Meanwhile, information available about the accreditation of the study direction in official registers states that the due date is 28 May 2019 year:

- <http://svr.aic.lv/Forms/HEI.aspx?heid=8980c5f8-478b-41ed-962f-b8b2aaa236bc> , (viewed: 07.03.2020.);

- Academic information centre:  
<http://www.aic.lv/portal/aikna/akreditetie-studiju-virzieni-un-programmas>, (viewed: 07.03.2020);

In regard to the information on the study direction, the above-mentioned sources include the following details on the respective study programme: aim of the study programme, results of the study programme, contents of the programme, graduate opportunities, admission requirements, general information about the courses. The last source also offers further study opportunities. RTA website lacks general information on the each study courses within the study direction and division of courses according to the semesters.

There is no information available about the study direction in English.

Information available on the RTA website complies with the information published in the official registers (except for what was mentioned before):

- Academic information centre:  
<http://www.aic.lv/portal/aikna/akreditetie-studiju-virzieni-un-programmas> , viewed: 07.03.2020;
- <http://svr.aic.lv/Forms/HEI.aspx?heid=8980c5f8-478b-41ed-962f-b8b2aaa236bc> , viewed: 07.03.2020.

## Conclusions. Strengths and weaknesses

1.1. Aims of the study direction “Law Science” are clearly defined and attainable. They comply with the general strategic development directions of the RTA.

1.2. During the on-visit experts made sure that decision-taking is oriented towards the development of the study direction.

1.3. Admission of students and enrollment criteria, as well as recognition of previous formal/non-formal experience are listed in RTA regulations. However, the previous experience must match precisely in the learning outcomes and credit points received as indicated in the target course.

1.4. RTA has established the certain academic integrity principles and mechanisms and uses the necessary technical tools.

1.5. Information on the accreditation due dates does not match in the RTA’s website and the official registers. Otherwise, information available on the RTA official website complies with entries published in the official registers. However, information on study programmes is very generic and lacks more details. There is no information on the study direction provided in English.

Strengths:

1. close collaboration with the labour market; documents are publicly available;

2. study direction “Law Science” at the RTA provides first level, bachelor's and master's degree study cycle;

3. the aims of the study direction “Law Science” are clearly defined and attainable. They comply with the general strategic development directions of the RTA;

4. representatives of employers, graduates and students are satisfied with the high quality of studies and curriculum of the study programme;
5. programs are aligned with the requirements set by professional and academic standards;
6. process of admission and previous experience recognition procedures are strictly regulated;
7. RTA has established the certain academic integrity principles and mechanisms and uses the necessary technical tools.

Weaknesses:

1. information on the study direction “Law Science” is not available on RTA’s website in English;
2. strict regulations on recognition procedure of previous experience might not recognize some valuable experience which does not abide by the already written indications;
3. RTA website lacks general information on the each study courses within the study direction and division of courses according to the semesters.
4. RTA need to adopt a computer information system for HR management.

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

### **Analysis**

RTA has established an internal study quality assessment and control system (Quality System), including the following areas: RTA development policy, quality of academic staff, quality of study programmes, quality of students, quality of the study process, quality of infrastructure and quality of financing and economic activity. This Quality System has been working since 2005 and is based on ISO9000:2015. The external quality is provided by accreditation evaluation. Most of the mentioned elements of Quality System are publicly available on RTA’s web page.

There is a plan concerning the relevant events for establishing quality assurance and management in RTA for the academic year 2019/2020. The plan in general covers the aims and learning outcomes of the study direction of Law Science. For many activities the deadline is overdue, yet there is no mention of that within the available documents. RTA has only one person who is responsible for the Quality System. The experts’ team had no possibility to communicate with this responsible person during the on-visit.

In general, a quality system ensures continuous improvement, development, and efficient performance of the study direction and the relevant study programmes.

According to Provisions on Development of Study Course Programs in RTA (PDSCP) study programmes are reviewed and developed once a year. Recommendations from all involved stakeholders are considered.

During the on-site visit, representatives from the administration explained that student feedback is involved in quality assurance and programme development in 3 levels: through HEI prepared, student prepared, and academic staff prepared questionnaires. However, in the PDSCP the only revision mentioned is according to the changes in the respective science branch or study course literature. SER mentions that HEI prepared feedback mechanisms are in the form of centralized and targeted surveys (page 70). Graduates are surveyed after their graduation via extensive online surveys. Feedback from employers is gathered through surveys distributed by email at the end of every study year. Participation in the survey is not mandatory, however administrative staff members assured that the response rate is satisfactory.

The changes proposed are implemented quickly, for example, as RTA management explained in the on-site visit, as a change in the state legislation was proposed, they developed and included a study programme regarding this sub-field of law to react to the demand of the market. Academic staff members highlighted that as soon as there are any changes they try to bring them to students and implement it into the programme, take a more hands-on approach.

RTA's procedures for the development and review of this study programme are structured and logical, however the programme could benefit from a more diverse and reliable (ensuring complete anonymity) feedback collection system.

RTA collects and analyzes information on the statistics relevant to this field of study (information - reviews, viewed at onsite visit on 05.03.2020 and 06.03.2020):

- on the implementation of the study courses;
- if students were informed about the requirements of the study course, the learning outcomes to be achieved and the assessment criteria;
- graduates are asked to evaluate each course and study process as a whole;
- on specific problems of students with studies;
- on the availability of study materials;
- on the attitude of lecturers towards students;
- about employers and graduates;
- number of students, graduates and dropouts;
- and other similar topics.

Usually, the surveys are collected at the end of a semester, but if there are any pressing issues, they can be sent out during the semester. The number of surveys to be completed range from 5 to 15 surveys per year depending on the number of lecturers involved in teaching. Most surveys are organized to get feedback from students on their study experience and aspects of student life, their expectations and how they were met.

Results of the surveys are discussed at the study council meeting and taken into account, as far as possible, when reviewing the content of the study programme or the implementation procedures. Students are encouraged to submit their proposals for improvement of the study process.

According to the RTA's Quality Management Handbook 2019 Quality Management System (QMS) of the RTA has been developed in accordance with the EFQM (European Foundation for Quality Management) also taking into account the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) and recommendations and suggestions of the ISO9000: 2015 Standard. Procedures necessary to implement the ESG-2015 standards are stipulated by the set of Regulations (e.g., on admissions, evaluation of work quality of academic staff, on academic positions etc). However, there is no separate RTA's regulation on the internal quality assurance system. The RTA has briefly mentioned in the SER the procedures introduced in order to implement the ESG-2015. Some aims and goals are defined in the Development plan of the study direction "Law" for 2019-2026 (Annex 3 to the SER). However, this action plan lacks necessary specification (deadlines, responsible persons, etc.). Such criteria as connection of the studies and the research, as well as internationalization require special attention. There is no information about the approval of this Development Plan analysis.

## **Conclusions. Strengths and weaknesses**

2.1. There is a quality system in RTA and it is based on ISO9000:2015 and has been working since 2005. There is a quality system plan as well for the 2019/2020 academic year, but there are no indications of the achieved results so far.

2.2. Study programmes are reviewed and developed once a year. Recommendations from all involved stakeholders are considered. The changes proposed are implemented quickly to react to the demands of the market and students of RTA.

2.3. Study process is surveyed and the surveys are collected at the end of a semester, but if there are any pressing issues, they can be sent out during the semester. The number of surveys to be



completed range from 5 to 15 surveys per year, depending on the number of lecturers involved in teaching. Results are discussed at the study council meeting.

2.4. Set of RTA's regulations related to the implementation of ESG-2015 have been approved. However, there is no special regulation on the internal Quality Assurance System. The specified QA Plan for the Study Direction in Law is needed.

2.5. RTA collects and analyzes information on the statistics relevant to this field of study program. The quality policy is publicly available.

Strengths:

1. There are QA and control systems, the Quality System has been in place since 2005 and there was a plan concerning the relevant events for establishing quality assurance and management in RTA for the academic year 2019/2020;
2. The study process is evaluated regularly, changes introduced quickly, as far as it is possible from RTA side;
3. Student feedback is received in 3 levels (from peer level, from HEI, from the particular academic staff member) which ensures a wider platform for feedback collection.

Weaknesses:

1. Lack of the special RTA regulation on the internal quality assurance system;
2. QM Development Plan for the Study direction requires more specification, and, in particular, special attention to the research and internationalization;
3. One sole person is responsible for the whole Quality System and processes of quality assurance in RTA;
4. Not all students are obliged to participate in a survey. In the event of a student being afraid of the consequences of delivering criticism, the feedback might not reach the HEI management.

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

#### **Analysis**

According to the SER the implementation of the study direction under evaluation is funded from the state budget and RTA own revenue. Funding of science base and research funding is not divided by study directions. In order to attract additional sources of funding the Fundraising strategy is needed. The development of the Internationalization strategy may also support the attracting the additional sources of funding, in particular, via participation in the international projects.

During the on-site visit experts made sure that RTA has the infrastructure, resources and the material and technical provision required for the implementation of the study direction. The students and the teaching staff have access to the necessary basic resources. RTA owns a land of 4,2 hectares at 115 Atbrīvošanas aleja. RTA main building has the infrastructure needed for studies.

At the moment there are 19 classrooms with a total area of 2059.4 m<sup>2</sup> in the main building. Students and lecturers can use the library for studies and scientific research. There are a few computer-equipped auditories (around 61 computer in total, all with internet connection). All buildings are accessible to people with disabilities, both the main building and the Faculty of Engineering (with library in it) have indoor lifts. All buildings and auditories are relatively recently improved, equipped with air conditioners, new chairs, desks, blackboards, projectors, interactive screens and so on. However, there could be more electrical outlets for students and lecturers to charge their electronic devices regardless of their location in the classroom (often outlets are mostly in the front or in the back of the class). RTA has set up video and audio equipment to enable studies in foreign languages and hosting small conferences or seminars.

RTA has a dormitory at 22 Maskavas street. At the moment RTA is renovating a dormitory building at 115 Atbrivosanas aleja (near the main RTA building).

RTA identify and determine the financial resources required for the implementation of the study direction and the relevant study programmes. There is a unified and regulated system and procedure for the purchase of material, technical, methodological, and informative provisions, etc. in place (Noteikumi par iepirkumu veikšanas kārtību Rēzeknes Tehnoloģiju Akadēmijā, viewed: 06.03.2020 at onsite visit).

RTA has approve a set of internal rules and regulations aimed at the attracting the well-qualified academic staff and their further professional development, in particular, Regulation of academic positions in RTA, Regulation for lecturers of the RTA, Procedure for Evaluation of Work Quality of Academic Staff, RTA academic staff development plan 2018-2023 etc.

As the expert team observed during the visit, the study direction “Law Science” has a very motivated teaching staff. The teaching staff has relevant education and/or qualifications to be involved in the study process. There are 30 lecturers for this study direction; 20 were elected in the RTA positions and 10 are visiting lecturers. Visiting lecturers have a good practical experience. 16 persons of teaching staff were elected in RTA academic and scientific positions at the same time. During the interviews with the academic staff there were no efficient arguments why a person has to be a member of the teaching staff and scientific staff at the same time.

Moreover, the teaching staff emphasized that sometimes the academic workload is taking the larger part of the workload and there is no time for the scientific activity.

RTA provides didactic support and other supporting courses for teaching staff, to improve a teaching staff`s pedagogical skills and abilities, but these courses are not always widely attended or attended at all. Mostly there is a problem to balance teaching staff's workload with attendance of courses and to attract visiting lecturers to learn didactic courses. Still, during the on-site visit the representatives of the teaching staff demonstrated the awareness about this opportunity and informed that some of them attended such courses.

As it was mentioned in the SER of RTA, mobility is the weak point for “Law Science” study direction. This stance was supported and approved during the visit - academic staff have the possibility and financial support for mobility visits, but there is little interest, a very small number of abroad visits.

RTA has developed an electronic help-desk tool (<https://vis.rta.lv/service/helpdesk/>, accessed on 05.03.20), which is accessible to all who might need assistance with the following themes: IT hardware service, IT network and system access, Conferences and journals, Information system support, Study department, Studies for International students, Public relations, University asset management, Student hostel, Library. The link to the help desk is provided on the RTA website.

In the SER (page 40) RTA mentions that they provide their students with an opportunity to access individual visit or group classes with a psychologist or visit a certified career counselor, these services are free of charge. However, during the on-site visit most students were unaware of the existence of this possibility, it was mentioned that they do not know anyone who would have used this. There is no information provided on these services on the RTA website.

What regards financial support, information on state-guaranteed loans (<https://www.rta.lv/kreditu>, accessed on 05.03.20), state-funded monthly and one-time stipends (<https://www.rta.lv/stipendijas>, accessed on 05.03.20) is provided on RTA website and the application procedure is explained during

the introductory events.

Students coming to study in RTA from further geographical regions, are offered a place in RTA's dormitories. Information on the expenses, application procedure, the contact person and document on the internal rules and regulations are provided on the RTA website ([https://www.rta.lv/en\\_student\\_hostel](https://www.rta.lv/en_student_hostel), accessed on 05.03.20). The rent, however, is 15 EUR/month higher for foreign students, there is no additional explanation - why. During the on-site visit members of administration revealed that the old dormitories do not satisfy the need of students, therefore, there is almost finished project, which will soon host more students in newly renovated, more modern rooms.

Taking into consideration the low rate of students' academic mobility, more support shall be provided in this direction. In particular, the academic mobility unit can contribute to the improvement of the internationalization of the Study direction under evaluation.

## **Conclusions. Strengths and weaknesses**

3.1. The study direction under evaluation is funded from the state budget and RTA own revenue. Funding of science base and research funding is not divided by study directions. It is clear that RTA has to diversify his Fundraising sources. State budget is not enough nowadays. The system for financing the scientific research needs to be improved. In order to attract additional sources of funding the Fundraising strategy is needed.

3.2. Buildings and infrastructure is well-maintained, equipment is relatively new, accessible for all in need. However the resources needed for the implementation of this programme are not specified, the whole sortiment that can be available is provided. There are regulations on the procedure of purchase of any new material, technical, methodological or informative provision.

3.3. Teaching staff has a good practical experience and the necessary qualification. Elected personnel for "Law Science" study direction is sufficient. No clear aims of dividing the workload between academic and scientific work, lecturers do all at the same time. If academic workload is high, there is no possibility or incentive to engage in scientific research. Mobility of the academic staff has to be improved, it is inadequate.

3.4. RTA has multiple support mechanisms employed (electronic help-desk, psychological help, career advice, dormitories for national and international students), as well as information on financial support students could receive. However, they could be improved and the awareness of their existence should be increased, so the students would be able to seek help, when needed. More developments could be made on the preventive support mechanisms, for example, work with less advantaged students, study of student study result dynamics, analysis on the reasons for exmatriculation or academic leave, etc.

### **Strengths:**

1. efficient and motivated teaching staff;
2. some of the student support mechanisms are directly available online, information about others is provided on the RTA webpage.

### **Weaknesses:**

1. Fundraising strategy based on the diversification of fundraising tools is needed;
2. no balanced workload for academic and scientific work;
3. weak academic staff and student mobility;
4. potential for taking didactic and another courses for teaching staff;

5. barely any preventive support mechanisms for students from less advantaged backgrounds.

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

##### **Analysis**

The mission of RTA is to participate in the development of the society and economy through education, research, science and innovation by providing new products and technologies. RTA's scientific strategy is based on law (Higher Education Institutions, Law on Scientific Activity, Scientist's Code of Ethics, the Constitution of the RTA and etc.).

Basic principles of scientific activity of RTA are the following: excellence in research, ethics of scientific activity, implementation of the principles of open access policy, synergies between research and pedagogical work, collaboration and interdisciplinarity of research, transfer of innovation for implementation of research results in production or service provision in business, ensuring societal needs and economic development, effective administrative and financial management of science at all levels.

The strategy of scientific activity of RTA is the bases of development for the annual research plans of RTA and its scientific structural units. It determines the topical tasks, sources of required funding, planning of research-based studies and their academic staff, and attracting funding for research and innovation projects. (RTA "Strategy of Scientific Activity 2019 - 2023", short version, approved at the meeting of Senate of the Rezekne Academy of Technologies on 07.05.2019, viewed: on-site visit at 05.03.2020).

Scientific research in the direction of law is carried out by the academic staff. This scientific research provides more opportunities to explore international avenues of collaborative research and publications. Therefore, to fully comply with the development goal of the RTA - to become an internationally competitive academy of technologies in engineering, social sciences and humanities integrated in the European Higher Education and Science Area with motivated and creative students demanded in the labour market and an open, dynamic academic and scientific environment for sustainable development of society - RTA is encouraged to systematically engage in multidisciplinary research and international law research projects.

There was a project where half of the staff participated in English lessons for 2 years. Many lecturers can participate in internships in different Latvian companies. Academic staff often come from RTA's own graduates, they have possibilities to engage in research, continue their research in post-doctoral projects in law. 4 of the RTA academic staff members are involved in the research institute, as the leading researchers, also there is 1 person who participated in an international research project. At RTA you need 4 publications to become a lecturer. To participate in projects, there is also the requirement of publications. RTA supports their staff - they can publish in RTA journals for free. The research institute also financially supports RTA staff going to conferences (institution receives budget funding from the RTA).

Moreover, RTA has Lawyers days - all level students have the opportunity to get some practice, they create improvised court trial cases, academic staff prepare case studies, students prepare in teams, analyze cases and compete in defending the case. Professionals evaluate the success of students.

RTA also have the orator competition, where a theme is announced, students prepare an essay and the commission evaluates the defenses and selects the best one. It has become international. Last year was the first in which, after students' proposition, practical lectures by a lawyer were held.

They told how they have graduated RTA, found the job and how they are doing there. This year there will be practicing judged, sworn barrister, representatives from police and bodyguards.

In 2013, RTA was entered in the Register of Latvian Scientific Institutions (reg. No. 1172165) as a scientific institution. (<https://www.izm.gov.lv/en/research-institutions> , viewed: 07.03.2020).

RTA, in cooperation with the Baltic International Academy, publishes the scientific journal "Administrative and Criminal Justice", which has been available since December 2017 in free access: <http://journals.rta.lv/> (viewed: 07.03.2020). Lecturers and students of the study programmes of all levels (at the recommendation of supervisors) have the opportunity to publish the results of their research.

RTA has 16 (out of 30) lecturers employed in the study direction (53%) "Law science". Lecturers have been elected in both pedagogical and scientific positions. RTA plans scientific research in the study direction "Law science". There are three scholars working on theoretical and practical jurisprudential issues at RTA Research Institute for Business and Social Processes.

The directions of scientific research in the study direction "Law science" comply with the development aims of the RTA and study direction. However, there is a need for the Research strategy for the study direction under evaluation in order to consider the peculiarities of law science.

The relation between scientific research and the study process is regulated in the Strategy for Scientific work 2019-2023 (based on RTA Strategy). The goal of RTA's scientific work is to develop the knowledge-based economic development potential by providing technological excellence and transfer to the development of entrepreneurship and economy.

As the expert's team made sure during the on-site visit, a defined workload for simultaneous academic and scientific work for study direction's teaching staff does not allow sufficient amount of time of research work. The efficiency of scientific research is inadequate. At the same time, RTA provides annual conferences, scientific journals and scientific events (Scientists' Night and Lawyers' Days, Research Institute for Business and Social Processes) but due to the lack of time (and unbalanced workload) scientific research is not always done and/or integrated in the study process.

According to SER international cooperation in scientific research in the study direction takes place in two directions: by cooperating with foreign scientists in publishing scientific journals and in carrying out research projects. As to the first direction, the journal "Administrative and Criminal Justice" jointly published by the RTA and Baltic International Academy should be mentioned and publications of the academic staff abroad. At the same time, the participation of the academic staff in international research projects needs to be enhanced.

RTA supports academic staff for scientific research with 400,00 EUR for a person per year (which is not effective and sufficient). It can be used to cover expenses of issuing publications and attending conferences. All staff have possibilities to participate in different courses, lectures on QA, cooperation between studies and science, they are paid extra for the extra certified skills they have acquired. Although, this is a good practice, members of academic staff reported to be too occupied with their everyday workload to make use of this and to expand their professional capacities beyond what is mandatory. Additional mechanisms are needed in order to enhance the participation of the academic staff in international research projects.

One of RTA mechanisms of student involvement in scientific research is a mandatory participation in

the annual RTA conference for students in the Master level study programme. Master students are encouraged to present their final research in the conference as if they were presenting the defence for their thesis. This is one of the opportunities RTA provides students to be published in journals.

RTA participates in the Europe Science Night event through the Horizon 2020 project, distributes information on international projects (conferences, competitions, etc.) to students. All students and members of the academic staff have the opportunity to submit their research work to be published in the journal "Administrative and Criminal Justice" for free.

Overall, students of all study levels to some degree are familiarized with the process of conducting research, however, for 1st level professional and bachelor level students more engaging mechanisms could be introduced.

During the on-site visit (05.03.2020) RTA teaching staff explained their way of implementing innovative methods in their work. They use classic seminars, workshops and group work, discussions in small groups. Students are asked to make presentations, while other students evaluate and discuss it. Students are 'explaining' the content to the lecturer and there is also the use of case studies. For example, in labor law, where the practice is very broad, they use practical lectures where they study cases of daily situations between an employer and an employee. The final evaluation is composed of independent work and the practical classes. Linked with the practice of the court. In other projects teaching staff use problem-based learning, it is sort of implemented in law studies as well.

Teaching staff explained that some courses are very specific, for example, you cannot learn how to speak in front of an audience from lectures. Teaching staff shows them examples, but they are the ones going to the court, analyzing, what they have seen, how they feel about it. Same with the course in ethics, teaching staff asks them why this ethical norm is necessary and important.

RTA has Lawyers days - all level students have the opportunity to get some practice, they create improvised court trial cases, academic staff prepare case studies, students prepare in teams, analyze cases and compete in defending the case. Professionals evaluate the success of students. Moot courts strengthen the already acquired theoretical knowledge in different legal issues, as well as the practical skills and ability to communicate in different environments. Students investigate, analyze, describe and offer solutions on the issues that are relevant to the particular law case.

## **Conclusions. Strengths and weaknesses**

4.1. RTA has a research strategy, however, most of scientific research is carried out by the academic staff, who are already with a dense workload. The special research strategy for study direction under evaluation is needed in order to consider the peculiarities of law science. There are research support mechanisms, additional courses for professional development, bonus remuneration system linked with the increase in professional skill set.

4.2. The relation between scientific research and the study process is defined but not fully ensured. There is a room for efficiency. If academic workload is high there is no time for research. If there is no sufficient research there no integration in the study process.

4.3. The journal "Administrative and Criminal Justice" jointly published by the RTA and Baltic International Academy should be mentioned (an opportunity for RTA to publish the results of their student/staff research) and publications of the academic staff abroad. At the same time, the participation of the academic staff in international research projects needs to be enhanced.

4.4. There are financial incentives for the academic staff (e.g., for publications), but the amount of

them (400 euros per person and per year) is not sufficient. Additional mechanisms are needed in order to enhance the participation of the academic staff in international research projects.

4.5. Master study level students have mandatory participation at the annual conference, where they defend they prepare a presentation and defend their thesis. Students have the opportunity to be published in the RTA's collaborative journal "Administrative and Criminal Justice". From Horizon 2020, there is the project European Science Night, in which RTA takes part. RTA ensures that students learn of possible research projects and international conferences and competitions.

4.6. In most courses methods used in the implementation of the course are innovative and varied according to the demand of the audience (practical approach is appreciated by both the academic staff and student representatives).

#### Strengths:

1. well defined aim of balancing the academic and scientific work;
2. Lawyers days - all level students have the opportunity to get some practice;
3. the directions of scientific research in the study direction "Law science" comply with the development aims of the RTA and study direction;
4. good opportunity for students and academic staff to be published on "Administrative and Criminal Justice" without any publication expenses;
5. Study implementation methods are innovative, if there is an initiative coming from the academic staff member.

#### Weaknesses:

1. no time for scientific research based on high workload of academic work;
2. research results not always integrated in the study process;
3. lack of special research strategy for the study direction "Law Science";
4. could engage more in multidisciplinary research and international law research projects;
5. not all study courses implement innovative teaching methods.

## 5. Cooperation and Internationalisation

### Analysis

RTA prepares lawyers for the law enforcement institutions of Latvia – courts, prosecutor's offices, State Police, State Border Guard, State Probation Service, etc. This information was also confirmed on the on-site visit (05.03.2020) by the representatives of employers (in particular, from Latgales district court, Rēzeknes city court, Police of Rēzekne, attorneys, Rēzeknes city council).

During the on-site visit (05.03.2020) the expert team got a confirmation that there are 17 RTA graduates (7 judges have obtained master degree in RTA, 7 legal assistants with master in Legal Science, 3 judge secretaries) working in Latgales district court. Throughout the job process the professional knowledge is added, there are many employees who are competent enough to be promoted, however, there is a set number of job-places, so people sometimes have to remain in 'assistant'-like roles. One of their employees (RTA graduated) left to continue working in Europe.

On the on-site visit experts team got approval that in Rēzekne city court 18 judge sets, almost all of them have studied in RTA at some part during their studies. 2 new judges are already active in work in Rēzekne court, 1 is practicing and soon becoming a judge. As well as that 7 of RTA graduates are filling their duties in Police departments currently, all with masters, have completed the job-requirements, 6 are investigators and 1 is the head of the invention department. They are all local citizens. They are very intellectual, before the job in police they obtained a 6-month course (sport,

health state, skills) and prepared for the positions.

During the on-site visit the expert team got approval that 9 lawyers (RTA graduates) working in City council, all have master degrees, the working experience is 5 years and up. As it was revealed, RTA has joint programmes in another direction, which is similar to the direction of law. Plans for the future - in a consortium of 8 universities RTA is applying for the international European Universities network, this is the 2nd time they are applying, but there is hope for internationalization in law direction. RTA already has international cooperation with other universities (law direction): Bulgari, Italy, Lithuania, Austria and Poland.

There is lack of cooperation agreements with non-governmental organizations, in particular, specialized in the human rights defending.

It was also established that RTA has institutional mobility agreements with foreign HEI Bulgaria, Estonia, Lithuania and Poland. It is used regularly but not in every semester. Also, recent graduates use it. There are 2-3 law students who did mobility as recent graduates, internships in their countries. Info is published on the website, for traineeships there are more opportunities than there are agreements. RTA has an international relations coordinator, who informs about opportunities for the people in the faculty. There is also a cooperation with Russia, they are more interested in RTA.

During the on-site visit RTA explained to the experts team that work is very complicated with foreign students. The teaching language cannot be English, the state requires lawyers to have a qualification exam, which covers 5 fields. There are offers from abroad to cooperate and make joint programmes, but it is not a possibility right now. RTA students go on Erasmus programmes, but it is difficult to adjust the courses. A student went and studied international law and EU law just because RTA agreed to adjust the CPs, so the student would graduate and have a possibility to pass the state exam.

On the on-site visit experts team obtained the proof that RTA has concluded:

- Erasmus+Programme contract with Mykolas Romeris University (Key Action 1-Mobility for learners and Staff - Higher Education Student and Staff Mobility. Inter-institutional agreement 2014 – 2021 between programme countries) (copy viewed: 06.03.2020);
- Cooperation agreement with “Angel Kanchev” University of Ruse, Bulgaria (copy viewed: 06.03.2020.);
- Contract with Rezeknes council (copy viewed: 06.03.2020);
- Contracts about internship with Rezeknes council, Courts administration, State Probation Service of Latvia, Riebinu council (copy viewed: 06.03.2020).

There is a lack of efficient procedures for the attraction of the teaching staff and students from abroad. The Internationalization strategy is needed. During the onsite-visit the management and the academic staff expressed the willingness to implement more course in English. Therefore, there is capacity for the incorporation of the “mobility windows” into the curricula. No information about RTA’s participation in the international education exhibitions provided. The cooperation agreements with foreign higher institutions were provided, however, the cooperation on their base shall be intensified. RTA shall use international projects opportunities (e.g., Erasmus, DAAD, Fulbright etc.) in order to attract more international scholars as visiting professors.

RTA has set internship agreements with 7, mostly local, institutions (Annex 14), however, students are encouraged to pick their place for internship on their own, according to their own interests and motivation in regard to further continuation and development of a career in the specific field. If the



chosen place is not among the 6 above mentioned, HEI, the student and the internship place enter into three-sided internship agreement. According to both SER (page 40) and information acquired during the on-site visit, they are supervised by an internship mentor.

Employees who were invited to meet with the expert group on the on-site visit expressed gratitude and satisfaction in the students they have taken in for an internship or employed within the company. However they admitted that there might not be enough capacity to employ all graduates and provide internship places for all students of this study direction.

Overall, the traineeship opportunities are available for all students of all levels, there is a competition for the places which require higher set of skills and motivation, however, both representatives of students and employers displayed satisfaction with the current organization of internships.

Notably, representatives of students the same as employers and academic staff mentioned that to some extent internship should be provided for academic bachelor study level students, too.

## **Conclusions. Strengths and weaknesses**

5.1. There is a number of cooperation agreements with Latvian institutions and some - with foreign institutions.

5.2. There is lack of efficient procedures for the attraction of the teaching staff and students from abroad. The Internationalization strategy is absent. There is capacity for the incorporation of the "mobility windows" into the curricula. The cooperation agreements with foreign higher institutions were provided, however, the cooperation on their base shall be intensified. RTA shall use international projects opportunity (e.g., Erasmus, DAAD, Fulbright etc.) in order to attract more international scholars as visiting professors.

5.3. There is the parallel system of ensuring places for internship on RTA's and students' demand. A couple of internship agreements are long-term and provide students with a 'safe' option. In the meantime, students are allowed to pick place for their internship that would be willing to enter into 3-sided agreement and go through the obligations. Both representatives of students (master study programme and first level professional study programme) and employers displayed satisfaction with the current organization of internships.

### **Strengths:**

1. excellent internship for law students in the law enforcement institutions of Latvia and excellent cooperation with Latvian enforcement institutions – courts, prosecutor's offices, State Police, State Border Guard, State Probation Service, etc.

### **Weaknesses:**

1. lack of efficient cooperation with foreign organisations;
2. lack of international publications, lack of participation in international research programs;
3. lack of the Internationalization strategy;
4. lack of foreign students;
5. insufficient number of visiting scholars from abroad.

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

### **Analysis**

The previous procedures for assessment of study programmes were licensed in 2018. According to recommendations mentioned in 2018, the study direction partially implemented these recommendations. RTA has analysed the recommendations and created a plan of implementation but not all recommendations are fully implemented.

The Study Direction Council was created and library resources were improved; plan of study courses were restructured (balance between part A, B and C in the study programmes); study courses descriptions were supplemented; agreements with other higher education institutions were signed.

The plan created for the study direction teaching staff further education and scientific plan does not provide a realistic improvement on teaching staff's didactic skills and scientific research.

Recommendations for improving the use of moodle is done partly: experts' team had the possibility to observe the moodle platform and talk with students and teaching staff of using moodle. The use of moodle depends on the lecturer - there are some very good examples and some courses are empty and do not have any materials on the platform (English for Lawyers; International Private Law).

Recommendations of including into the study courses scientific methods are done partly. Some courses have just only two mentioned activities - students' independent work and exam. Partly done is a recommendation about quality of scientific works improvement: there are created amendments in the Procedure for Evaluation of Work Quality of Academic Staff at RTA but there is no practical evidence, for example, that scientific methodology of articles in the journal Criminal and Administrative Justice has been improved. During the onsite visit, the expert team had the possibility to observe master's and bachelor's thesis; no thesis contained completely scientific methodology. The most mistakes are: incomplete description of scientific and legal methods; incorrect object and subject of the research etc.

## **Conclusions. Strengths and weaknesses**

Recommendations from the previous assessment of the study direction (licensing in 2018) are partially implemented.

Strengths:

1. RTA Senate and Constitutional Assembly changed a couple of the policy documents and included "Law Science" in the RTA strategy and created The Study Direction Council.

Weaknesses:

1. lack of consistent use of the moodle platform and the scientific methodology of students' scientific thesis and journal articles.

## **7. Assessment of the Requirements for the Study Field**

1 Pursuant to Section 5, Paragraph 21 of the Law on Institutions of Higher Education, the higher education institution/ college shall ensure continuous improvement, development, and efficient performance of the study direction whilst implementing their internal quality assurance systems:

**Assessment of compliance:** Partially compliant

**Justification:** Quality system is created and planned but there is no practical evidence that it is efficient. See Joint Report's Section 2.1.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Partially compliant

**Justification:** Study management system – internal system organised by one person. And SER (annually). RTA Quality Management Handbook was developed in 2019 (Annex 1, entry 4)  
No special Senate's regulation on the internal quality assurance system.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** There is a legal regulation. Provisions on development of study direction programs in RTA (Approved on the 11.12.2019. at the RTA Study Council Meeting)

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Partially compliant

**Justification:** All students' examinations, works and assessments are evaluated in scale 1-10 (from very, very unsatisfactory to outstanding), providing a record within this scale, to which extent the learning outcomes have been reached. Regulations for the procedure of examination and test session in RTA were approved by vice-rector in 2018. However, the procedure of oral exams is not recorded, the assessment carries a high risk of subjectivity. The result of this evaluation is difficult to challenge with so little evidence and lack of the second opinion.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** Created Study Direction Council, legal regulation.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** RTA collects and analyses all necessary data.

- 7 1.6. The higher education institution/ college shall ensure continuous improvement, development, and efficient performance of the study direction whilst implementing their quality assurance systems.

**Assessment of compliance:** Partially compliant

**Justification:** See point 1.1.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Partially compliant

**Justification:** Excellent cooperation with Latvian organisations.  
Need to improve cooperation with foreign organisations.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Partially compliant

**Justification:** There is no clear research strategy. need to improve it. The RTA faculty of law has to strength his participation to rechearch programs financed by EU or other sources.  
lack of special research strategy for the study direction in law science; report part 3 and 4.

- 10 R4 - Elimination of the shortcomings and deficiencies identified during the previous assessment of the study direction, if it has been conducted, or the implementation of the provided recommendations.

**Assessment of compliance:** Partially compliant

**Justification:** Some recommendations are not fully implemented. See Report`s part 6.

## 8. Recommendations for the Study Field

### Short-term recommendations

- to improve a quality system - to create an inner control mechanism for planned activities;
- to balance workload for academic and scientific work;
- to improve mobility of teaching staff and students;
- to encourage teaching staff to improve didactic and scientific skills;
- to control teachers staff moodle platforma using in the study process;
- to participate in international education exhibitions;
- to intensify the cooperation with foreign partners;
- to encourage more recent publications and international journals in Law science are available in the library;
- to increase the awareness of students about the student support services.

### Long-term recommendations

- to provide research results` implementation in the study process;
- to develop the special Research strategy for the study direction in Law Science;
- to elaborate the research network with foreign scholars;
- to encourage the publications of academic staff with foreign scholars;
- to provide specific training for Law Science researchers (methodology);
- to establish the QA unit;
- to develop the Internationalization strategy of the RTA;
- to establish the academic mobility unit;
- to implement more courses in English and establish the "mobility windows";
- to attract more international visiting scholars via international projects (e.g., Erasmus, DAAD, Fulbright etc.);
- to intensify the participation in international educational projects;
- to improve the electronic management system;
- to develop the RTA Fundraising strategy;
- to develop the regulations on preventing the discrimination, bullying and harassment;
- to introduce internship for academic bachelor programme.

## II. ASSESSMENT OF THE STUDY PROGRAMME "Law Science"

### II. ASSESSMENT OF THE STUDY PROGRAMME "Law Science"

#### 1. Indicators Describing the Study Programme

##### Analysis

The study programme - Law Science, code of the study programme according to the Classification of the Latvian Education - 41380, type and level of the study program - 1st level professional higher education study program, qualification level to be achieved (NQF/EQF) - 5, amount of credits (CP, also recommending ECTS) 80 CP/120 ECTS. The 1st level professional higher education study program of qualification to be obtained is compliant to regulations (<https://visc.gov.lv/profizglitiba/dokumenti/standarti/ps0215.pdf> and <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/6397-noteikumi-par-pirma-limena-profesionalas-augstakas-izglitibas-valsts-standartu>).

Admission requirements - Three centralized exams (or the final mark in the secondary education document if the CE has not been taken):

- mathematics;
- foreign languages;
- Latvian language and literature.

Degree, professional qualification or degree and professional qualification awarded - 4th level professional qualification "Legal Assistant". The aim of the study program is to prepare legal assistants with theoretical and practical knowledge in accordance with the legal assistant standard (<https://visc.gov.lv/profizglitiba/docs/standards/ps0215.pdf>). The legal assistant provides practical assistance to a lawyer, a sworn notary, a sworn advocate, a judge and other members of the legal profession, as well as perform other work in accordance with the job description. The legal assistant assists a lawyer in the preparation of legal documents and reports, provides legal advice, verifies compliance of documents with applicable law.

Objective and goal of the study programme - to prepare legal assistants for the labour market with the theoretical and practical knowledge in law science with the NQF/EQF qualification level 5.

Tasks of the study programme is to prepare students for the profession of legal assistant with theoretical and practical knowledge in law science and create a motivation for further studies.

Legal assistants must know theoretical and practical issues and knowledgeable in legal science and legislation: - ability to understand legal issues, ability to check legal documents, ability to maintain records and document properly, legislation on record keeping and drafting of documents, ability to find, collect and classify legal information, under the guidance of a lawyer, conduct an analysis of the relevance of the facts to the law and to draw a legal opinion, to argue the legal conclusions, find the applicable law, draw up documents and check the conformity of documents, use legal information resources, use professional terminology and so on. The RTA provides students with the opportunity to obtain all of the above mentioned.

The final examination foreseen at the end of the study programme - Qualification paper defence.

Aims and objectives of the study direction are clearly defined and achievable, they comply with the general strategic development directions of the RTA. The study direction complies with needs of the market and development trends in the society and strategy of the RTA. Study programmes implemented by the RTA ensure that students have an understanding of the whole law system, its components, and interactions between sub-sectors.

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

1. Aims and objectives of the study direction are clearly defined and achievable, they comply with the general strategic development directions of the RTA.
2. The study direction complies with needs of the market and development trends in the society and strategy of the RTA.
3. Study programmes implemented by the RTA ensure that students have an understanding of the whole law system, its components, and interactions between sub-sectors.

Strengths:

1. the indicators and the aim of the study program are relevant;
2. RTA ensure that students have an understanding of the whole law system;
3. the study direction complies with needs of the market;
4. study direction "Law Science" at the RTA provides first level, bachelor's and master's degree study cycle.

There are no weaknesses.

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

### **Analysis**

The content of the study courses is relevant and compliant with the needs of the labour market, aims of the study programme, internship, ensures the achievement of the learning outcomes and scientific trends in the science branch “Law”, even more:

- the course outcomes in course descriptions demonstrate that in all courses all the knowledge components of the program are acquired;
- all courses have to provide, and the student has to gain basic knowledge in the relevant direction, including the ability to think critically, which can be gained by working with legal sources;
- study courses form an integrated curriculum and help to achieve the determined study results of the study program. The layout of the study courses in the curriculum is logical and consecutive;
- descriptions of the study courses are detailed and qualitative and do comply with the provisions set forth in the regulatory enactments;
- RTA has at general study courses, part A a course “Information and communication technologies”, according to Regulations regarding the State Standard for First Level Professional Higher Education;
- RTA has at general study courses, part A a course “Introduction to human sciences”, according to Regulations regarding the State Standard for First Level Professional Higher Education;
- RTA has at general study courses, part A a course “Environmental and civil protection”;
- RTA has at general study courses, part A a course “Commencement of entrepreneurship”, according to

Regulations regarding the State Standard for First Level Professional Higher Education.

Taking into account that the first students of the programme will develop their qualification papers in the academic year 2020/2021, the recommended topics of qualification papers are still in the process of preparation. Students will be offered such topics of final papers (qualification papers) that are relevant to the law science and current issues in the labour market. The topics of the qualification papers offered cover current areas of administrative law, civil law and civil procedure, as well as criminal law and criminal procedure.

According to the statements given during the on-site visit by both students and the academic staff, at the beginning of the course the first lecture is dedicated to explanation of the course description, clarifying the study course outcomes, objectives and the study plan, including the criteria for assessment and compilation of the final mark. Evaluation methods vary from written to oral form, there are progress-check tests, essays, practical assessment reports, individual and group-work presentations, traineeship report and its defense, the final course exam (in form which is determined by the lecturer), the final qualification work and its defense.

Methods used in the implementation of the study programme include both lectures and practical classes, case-solving, gamification via use of electronic student collaboration and competition platforms. During the on-site visit students mentioned that there are courses with a lot of good practices. Their courses involve tasks, which require minutes and analysis of processes observed during a visit to an institution (court, police station, etc.) relevant to the topic covered in the course. Students are asked to provide their own opinion on the matter, discussions are encouraged, participate actively in group work both during class and outside the classroom. Most materials are available electronically on the common E-study system or are sent to a student-made group email. Therefore, evidently some of the courses employ student-centered learning, however, some other courses are still very traditional in their methods.

Admittedly, not all members of the academic staff employ these methods, however, part-time students claimed purely theoretical lectures to be well-structured and easy to understand due to everything being written on a MS PowerPoint slide.

The aims of these study programmes involve students being both acquired with the theoretical

knowledge and being equipped with research and practical skills legal science in the particular sub-field demands. Methods used to achieve these aims must be balanced between the theoretical and practical approach. As both employers and academic staff members emphasize, one cannot be useful without the other, yet the practical approach might be more multifunctional.

Students mostly express their good to moderate satisfaction in all aspects of studies. According to the information provided in the on-site visit, to the extent of HEI's capacity, student and graduate recommendations on available resources, topics to be covered within the course, and other suggestions are taken into account and implemented within a year. Suggestions from the employers are considered in the development of study courses and in the process of internship organization.

This programme is relatively new and recently developed. Overall, students seem to be satisfied with the opportunities they are offered, however the exchange programmes have not been used often within the SER period. As one of the reasons for hesitation students on the on-site visit mention the doubt if they will be able to find courses that later will be recognized by the home HEI. Incoming mobility is nearly impossible due to the program being offered in Latvian only.

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

The content of the study courses is relevant and compliant with the needs of the labour market, aims of the study programme, internship, ensures the achievement of the learning outcomes and scientific trends in the science branch "Law".

Strengths:

1. the content of the study courses is relevant and compliant with the regulation;
2. descriptions of the study courses are detailed and qualitative and do comply with the provisions set forth in the regulatory enactments;
3. the layout of the study courses in the curriculum is logical and consecutive;
4. descriptions of the study courses are detailed and qualitative and do comply with the provisions set forth in the regulatory enactments;
5. feedback from students, graduates and employers is collected, results are mostly positive, the issues that are detected, are approached and solutions are found, where possible;
6. enthusiastic members of the academic staff are commendable, the study process they provide is varied in teaching methods and approach is designed to fit the needs of the students.

Weaknesses:

1. study implementation methods do not promote active engagement in research;
2. not all members of the academic staff practice an agile approach to the teaching process, student-centered learning, or customize the materials by the needs of the students. Same goes for material availability on the electronic platforms;
3. students are discouraged to participate in outgoing mobility due to flaws in the process of recognition of study results achieved in HEI abroad.

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

#### **Analysis**

On-site visit experts made sure that RTA has infrastructure resources and the material and technical provision, informative provision, technical provision, financial provision and library required for the implementation of the study direction. The students and the teaching staff have access to the necessary resources.

Students and lecturers for the studies and scientific research can use the library and few computer auditories. All buildings are accessible to people with special needs and have indoor lifts. All buildings and auditories are updated and improved - air conditioners, new chairs, desks, blackboards, projectors, screens and so on. RTA has set up video and audio equipment to study foreign languages and small conferences or seminars.

State budget financing and student tuition fee are the source of financing the study programme "Law science". Each year RTA Senate approve tuition fee. RTA accounting calculate all expenses per student. The expenses for contact hours are EUR 6202,82 per year (at least 5 students) but examination per student are EUR 263,17.

RTA supports academic staff for scientific research or for conferences abroad with 400,00 EUR per year. The amount of money is available for each research lecturer, which can be used to pay for publications and attend conferences. All staff have possibilities to participate in different courses, lectures on quality, cooperation between studies and science, they are paid extra for the extra certified skills they have acquired.

The RTA Library is located at 115 Atbrivosanas aleja in the k-4 block. In 2016, the RTA Library was re-accredited as a local library. The library collection corresponds to RTA study programs and directions. Lists of book requests are regularly submitted to the library in accordance with the "Literature provision rules". To facilitate this process, a Book request form was created, which is also available electronically on the Library's website. RTA Library has necessary literature in the study direction, however experts team suggest to add more international journals relevant to law to library stock.

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

1. RTA has necessary resources required for the implementation of the study direction;
2. All buildings and auditories are updated and improved;
3. State budget financing and student tuition fee are the source of financing the study program;
4. RTA supports academic staff for scientific research or conferences abroad with 400,00 EUR per year.

Strengths:

1. RTA has infrastructure resources and the material and technical provision, informative provision, library, financial provision required for the implementation of the study direction;
2. the students and the teaching staff have access to the necessary resources;
3. the library collection corresponds to RTA study programs and directions.

Weaknesses:

1. RTA needs to add more international journals relevant to law to library stock.

## **4. Teaching Staff**

### **Analysis**

27 lecturers are involved in the implementation of the study programme. 18 of them are elected by RTA, 9 are visiting lecturers. Since the start of this programme (2018) there has been an increased percentage of elected lecturers (10%). The employment policy of visiting lecturers at RTA considers with the strategic principles of development of RTA's academic staff – professionals with good professional work experience are invited to teach profile courses.



The academic staff involved in the study programme mainly perform their academic and professional skills. Their scientific and academic work experience helps formation and development of students' abilities to demonstrate general and specialized knowledge and understanding about facts, theories, regularities and technologies typical of the professional field of lawyer's assistant at the end of their studies.

The academic staff is involved in scientific research mostly by publications in research journals. The list of publications by the academic staff is provided. The possibility to publish papers in the journal "Administrative and Criminal Justice" is an advantage. Some academic staff are involved in international level research but there is a room for improvement. However, more attention shall be paid to research activity of the teaching staff, involvement of students in research, and use of research outcomes in the study process. The RTA has to increase the participation in the international research programs, to encourage the publications of academic staff in international law reviews.

The collaboration between the teaching staff and support staff is important to emphasize that collaboration between the teaching staff and specialists in record management. It is important for collaboration with elected lecturers and visiting lecturers who need additional technical and methodological support in documentary, organizational and procedural issues of the study process. In cases where this cooperation is lacking or inadequate, faculty management seeks solutions by strengthening administrative support or replacing record management professionals. The expert's team during the visit made sure that all groups of interviewees underline the benefit of direct communication between lecturers, administrative personnel and students. In general it helps to improve the quality of the study process. Experts did not have information for lecturer - lecturer collaboration.

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

4.1. RTA and management of study direction follow the policy of development of the academic staff - to balance electing lecturers and practitioners from labour market. The academic core of lecturers is strong, created on clear criteria (inner legal regulation of RTA). There are the same lecturers teaching in all programmes in this study direction and study courses overlap. It could be a risk to separate different level programme study courses' content (for example, there are the same themes in similar courses in different levels study programmes - Legal Analysis and Introduction on research work [1st level programme] and Introductions into Research [2nd level programme]).

4.2. The qualifications of lecturers are regulated in legal acts (RTA's inner and based on laws and regulations of Cabinet). The qualifications of lecturers cover all sub-branches of Law Science which are trained in the 1st level programme.

4.3. The teaching staff is involved in the research projects. Most of them are local and have a very low number of international projects. Not always projects' results are implemented into the study process.

4.5. Teaching staff collaborates with administrative staff and has direct communication with students. There was no clear information for lecturer - lecturer collaboration. During the visit it was mentioned as existing collaboration but without evidence.

4.6. The resource of teaching staff is sufficient and effective.

### **Strengths:**

1. raised percentage of elected staff;
2. direct collaboration between students and lecturers, visiting lecturers and administration;
3. the qualifications of lecturers are based on RTA's inner regulations and on laws and regulation of

Cabinet.

Weaknesses:

1. in the same cases the content of study courses overlaps where the same lecturer teaches the same course in a different level programme;
2. there are unclear collaboration tools or procedures for lecturer-lecturer collaboration;
3. there is a room for improvement of the teaching staff research projects and results implementation in the study process.

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

### Requirements

1. The sample of the diploma to be issued for the acquisition of the study programme complies with the procedure by which state-recognised documents of higher education are issued.  
**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant  
**Justification:** Annex 22.
2. Documents confirming that the higher education institution/ college will provide the students with the options to continue the acquisition of education in another study programme or at another higher education institution/ college (a contract with another accredited higher education institution/ college), in case the implementation of the study programme is discontinued.  
**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant  
**Justification:** Annex 23.
3. Document confirming that the higher education institution/ college guarantees to the students a compensation for losses if the study programme is not accredited or the licence of the study programme is revoked due to the actions of the higher education institution/ college (actions or failure to act) and the student does not wish to continue the studies in another study programme.  
**Assessment of compliance:** Partially compliant  
**Justification:** No document available. Contract generally guarantees compensation for students (annex 24 and 29, point 6.2.).
4. The teaching staff members involved in the implementation of the study programme are proficient in the official language in accordance with the regulations on the level of the official language knowledge and the procedures for testing official language proficiency for performing professional duties and office duties.  
**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant  
**Justification:** Annex 27.
5. The teaching staff members to be involved in the implementation of the study programme have at least B2-level knowledge of a related foreign language, if the study programme or any part thereof is to be implemented in a foreign language.  
**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant  
**Justification:** N/A
6. At least five teaching staff members with a doctoral degree are among the academic staff of an academic doctoral study programme, at least three of which are experts approved by the Latvian Science Council in the respective field of science. At least five teaching staff members with a doctoral degree are among the academic staff of a professional doctoral study programme in arts.  
**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant  
**Justification:** N/A
7. The academic staff of the academic study programme complies with the requirements set forth in Section 55, Paragraph one, Clause 3 of the Law on Institutions of Higher Education.

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** N/A

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** Annex 24 and 29.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** SER, Annex 21

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** Annex 21

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** N/A

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:**

<https://likumi.lv/ta/id/6397-noteikumi-par-pirma-limena-profesionalas-augstakas-izglitibas-valsts-standartu>

- 13 13. The joint study programmes comply with the requirements prescribed in Section 551, Paragraphs one, two, and seven of the Law on Institutions of Higher Education (if applicable).

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** N/A

- 14 14. Each member of the academic staff has either publications published in reviewed editions within the last six years, including international editions (if they have worked for a shorter period of time, the number of publications shall be in proportion to the work period), or artistic creation achievements (for instance, exhibitions, films, theatre performances, and concert activity), or a five-year practical work experience (except for the experience in the implementation of the study programme) in accordance with the Law on Institutions of Higher Education.

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** Annex 5 and teaching staff CV's

- 15 P5 - Overall rating

**Assessment of compliance:** Partially compliant

**Justification:** The most requirements for the study program are done.

All identified deficiencies are able to be eliminated in two-year accreditation term.

## Requirements (R6-R8)

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** RTA has infrastructure resources and the material and technical provision, informative provision, technical provision, financial provision required for the implementation of the study direction.

- 2 R7 - The compliance of the qualification of the academic staff members, visiting professors, visiting associate professors, visiting docents, visiting lecturers, and visiting assistants with the conditions for the implementation of the study programme and the provisions set out in the respective regulatory enactments.

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** Annex 8

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** N/A

## Conclusions by specifying the strengths and weaknesses

The most requirements for the study programme is done.

Only minor deficiencies have been identified

## Evaluation of the study programme "Law Science"

Evaluation of the study programme:

Good

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

### Short-term recommendations

- To review study courses` content of the programme and to ensure that courses do not overlap (Study Directions Council);
- To publish all necessary information related to the Study direction "Law Science" in English;
- To publish the information about the courses' division per semester, as well as general information about each course on the RTA website.

### Long-term recommendations

- to arrange the exchange with experienced elected lecturers and visiting lecturers;.
- to add more international journals relevant to law to the library's stock;
- to improve the cooperation with foreign organisations.

## II. ASSESSMENT OF THE STUDY PROGRAMME "Law Science"

### II. ASSESSMENT OF THE STUDY PROGRAMME "Law Science"

#### 1. Indicators Describing the Study Programme

## **Analysis**

Study programme's title is "Law Science" and it is based on the subject group of "Law Science" and the thematic field of education allotted in the Classification of Fields of Education and Training (ISCED-F 2013).

The obtained degree is Bachelor of Social Sciences in Law Science which provides students with the acquisition of theoretical knowledge and research skills in the field of law.

The aim, tasks and learning outcomes of the bachelor's study programme are defined in accordance with the descriptions of knowledge, skills and competencies relevant to LQF level 6, and the study course outcomes that are closely connected with them.

The title of the programme, obtained grade and the aim, tasks and learning outcomes are based on the state legal regulation and to RTA's inner regulation. The admission rules of RTA stipulate that applicants in the bachelor's programme in Law may be chosen on the basis of competition taking into account the results of three centralized exams (Mathematics, Foreign Languages, Latvian). The choice of these centralized exams was determined by the required skills in the legal field, with special emphasis on the ability to find, compile and classify information, as well as the ability to master the official language and at least two foreign languages. In order to promote competition in the admission process and to select applicants who have already demonstrated a high level of competence in the profession of legal assistant, RTA has determined the possibility of earning extra points for grades above 8 in subjects such as Politics, Law, Latvian and/ or World History, Informatics, Latvian, Foreign Language, or a Certificate of Honor in the Olympiads and Scientific Contests in the field of Law and Political science.

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

The indicators of the study programme are interconnected and appropriate to the Law Science as the science sub-branch.

Strengths:

1. clear aims and achieved results of the programme.

Weaknesses:

There are no weaknesses.

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

### **Analysis**

The content and structure of the academic bachelor's study programme have been developed, firstly, by comparing the content of the study programme with the bachelor's study programmes implemented in other higher education institutions. Secondly, according to Cabinet of Ministers regulation No. 240 "Regulations on the State Academic Education Standard" of 13.05.2014 the basic principles, structure and methodology of law, history of development of law and current problems, as well as characterization and problems of law in the interdisciplinary aspect are incorporated into the content of the study programme. Thirdly, taking into account the possible model of further education of the graduates of the academic bachelor's programme, choosing to continue their studies in the master's programme, the content of the bachelor's programme is basically aligned with the requirements of the standard of the legal profession, providing for the acquisition of competences of disciplines at the basic knowledge level that will be further developed in the

master's degree study programme.

The final examination's part is defence of bachelor's thesis (according with Provisions for the State and Final Tests by the Bachelor Examination Commission. The methodological guidelines for the elaboration and defence of research work in the study direction "Law").

To provide a final thesis writing and doing research in Law Science there are insufficient methodological topics. For example, there is one study course "Introduction into Research" which gives 1 CP. If compared with a 1st level programme there is a course "Legal Analyse and Introduction into Research" – this course is reasonable for a professional 1st level programme but for academic bachelor programme "introduction" of amount 1 CP is not enough.

In general, the descriptions of the study courses are qualitative and comply with the provisions set forth in the regulatory enactments. The quality of the final thesis will be able to be assessed when the first thesis will be defended.

According to the statements given during the on-site visit by both students and the academic staff, at the beginning of the course the first lecture is dedicated to explanation of the course description, clarifying the study course outcomes, objectives and the study plan, including the criteria for assessment and compilation of the final mark.

Evaluation methods vary from written to oral form, there are progress-check tests, essays, practical assessment reports, individual and group-work presentations, traineeship report and its defense, the final course exam (in form which is determined by the lecturer), the final qualification work and its defense.

Methods used in the implementation of the study programme include both lectures and practical classes, case-solving, gamification via use of electronic student collaboration and competition platforms. During the on-site visit students mentioned that there are courses with a lot of good practices, which suggests that some members of academic staff employ student-centered learning methods. Their courses involve tasks, which require minutes and analysis of processes observed during a visit to an institution (court, police station, etc.) relevant to the topic covered in the course. Students are asked to provide their own opinion on the matter, discussions are encouraged, participate actively in group work both during class and outside the classroom.

Most materials are available electronically on the common E-study system or are sent to a student-made group email. Evidently, academic staff members lack training to feel comfortable using the common electronic E-study platform or other electronic study platforms.

Admittedly, not all members of the academic staff employ these methods, however, part-time students claimed purely theoretical lectures to be well-structured and easy to understand due to everything being written on a MS PowerPoint slide.

The aims of this study programmes center more on providing students with the theoretical knowledge and research skills. Methods used to achieve these aims must be balanced between the theoretical and practical approach. As both employers and academic staff members emphasize, one cannot be useful without the other, yet the practical approach might be more multifunctional.

Students mostly express their good to moderate satisfaction in all aspects of studies. There are a couple of marginal cases, expressing discontent with the academic staff, however, the academic staff member during the on-site visit explained that there was a case, in which the lecturer was replaced with another one due to an arising conflict between the person and the respective students. According to the information provided in the on-site visit, to the extent of HEI's capacity, student and graduate recommendations on available resources, topics to be covered within the

course, other suggestions are taken into account and implemented within a year. Suggestions from the employers are considered in the development of study courses and in the process of internship organization.

This programme is relatively new and recently developed as an academic programme. Overall, students seem to be satisfied with the opportunities they are offered, however the exchange programmes have not been used often within the SER period. As one of the reasons of hesitation student on the on-site visit mention the doubt if they will be able to find courses that will be later on be recognized in the home HEI. Incoming mobility is nearly impossible due to the program being offered in Latvian only.

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

The collaboration with the market reflects on the content of study courses. teaching staff uses different kinds of didactic methods but not all study materials are placed on the E-study platform. Students are provided with the possibility to receive an explanation of the mark. The opportunity for students` and teaching staff`s mobility is not used fully. Students and employers ask for the possibility to provide some training during the implementation of the study programme but it is against the current legal framework.

#### **Strengths:**

1. the study courses are created based on the aim and achieved results and fully correspond to the needs of the market;
2. most study course implementation methods are varied, students are introduced to the composition of their final mark, some study materials are available electronically on E-Study platform;
3. feedback is taken into account when developing the programme and when providing upgrades on resources and provisions.

#### **Weaknesses:**

1. student mobility is barely used, students do not trust that their credit points will be recognized due to the recognition system being very specific and strict;
2. more attention has to be paid to scientific and methodological training because academic programme underlines research and scientific work;
3. not all academic staff members actively use E-study moodle platform, even still. Personal emails are used to send over materials and information. Academic staff members lack training to feel comfortable using the platform or other electronic study platforms;
4. students lack practical experience and understanding of every-day cases within the field of law, they lack a chance to participate in internship opportunity;
5. study programme needs internationalization, so it is possible to attract incoming mobility students.

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

#### **Analysis**

Onsite visit experts made sure that RTA has infrastructure resources and the material and technical provision, informative provision, financial provision and library required for the implementation of the study direction. The students and the teaching staff have access to the necessary resources.

Students and lecturers for the studies and scientific research can use the library and few computer

auditories.

All buildings are accessible to people with special needs and have indoor lifts. All buildings and auditories are updated and improved - air conditioners, new chairs, desks, blackboards, projectors, screens and so on. RTA has set up video and audio equipment to study foreign languages and small conferences or seminars.

State budget financing and student tuition fee are the source of financing the study program "Law science". Each year RTA Senate approve tuition fee. RTA accounting calculates all expenses per student. The planned tuition fee for 2019/2020 for full-time studies is EUR 1520 and EUR 1300 for part-time studies.

RTA supports academic staff for scientific research or for conferences abroad with 400,00 EUR per year. The amount of money is available for each research lecturer, which can be used to pay for publications and attend conferences. All staff have possibilities to participate in different courses, lectures on quality, cooperation between studies and science, they are paid extra for the extra certified skills they have acquired.

The RTA Library is located at 115 Atbrivosanas aleja in the k-4 block. In 2016, the RTA Library was re-accredited as a local library. The library collection corresponds to RTA study programmes and directions. Lists of book requests are regularly submitted to the library in accordance with the "Literature provision rules". To facilitate this process, a Book request form was created, which is also available electronically on the Library's website. RTA Library has necessary literature in the study direction, however experts team suggest to add more international journals relevant to law to library stock.

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

1. RTA has necessary resources required for the implementation of the study direction.
2. All buildings and auditories are updated and improved.
3. State budget financing and student tuition fee are the source of financing the study program.
4. RTA supports academic staff for scientific research or for conferences abroad with 400,00 EUR per year.

Strengths:

1. RTA has infrastructure resources and the material and technical provision, informative provision, library, financial provision required for the implementation of the study direction;
2. the students and the teaching staff have access to the necessary resources;
3. the library collection corresponds to RTA study programs and directions.

Weaknesses:

1. RTA need to add more international journals relevant to law to library stock.

## **4. Teaching Staff**

### **Analysis**

RTA and management of study direction following the policy of development of the academic staff - to balance electing lecturers and practitioners from labour market. The academic core of lecturers is strong, created on clear criteria (inner legal regulation of RTA). There are the same lecturers teaching in all programmes in this study direction. It could be a risk to separate different level



programme study courses` content (for example, there are the same themes in similar courses in different levels study programmes - Legal Analysis and Introduction on research work [1st level programme] and Introduction into Research [2nd level programme]).

The changes in teaching staff are mostly related to the aging of teachers but those changes have not left a negative impact on the study programme. RTA attracts teaching staff from the labour market.

The qualifications of lecturers are regulated in legal acts (RTA`s inner and based on laws and regulations of Cabinet). The qualifications of lecturers cover all sub-branches of Law Science which are trained in the bachelor's programme. There are 25 lecturers involved in implementation of the study programme: 16 elected and 9 visiting lecturers. 14 have a doctoral degree and 9 master`s degree. The qualification of teaching staff enables the achievement of the aims and learning outcomes of the study programme and the relevant study courses.

The academic staff is involved in scientific research mostly by publications in research journals. The list of publications by the academic staff is provided. The possibility to publish papers in the journal "Administrative and Criminal Justice" is an advantage. Some members of academic staff of RTA are the members of the Editorial Office of the scientific journal "Administrative and Criminal Justice". Some representatives of the teaching staff participated in research projects (e.g., ERDF project "Security of the EU External Borders, Internal Security of Latvia" No.1.1.1.2./VIAA/1/16/127 ". However, more attention shall be paid to research activity of the teaching staff, involvement of students in research, and use of research outcomes in the study process and more international publications for the academic staff. The research activity of the teaching staff needs to be improved, firstly, via broader participation in international conferences, more international mobilisation, more publications in domestic and foreign peer-reviewed journals. Secondly, participation in research programs financed by EU or national funds should be encouraged.

Teaching staff collaborates with administrative staff and has direct communication with students. There was no clear information for lecturer - lecturer collaboration. During the visit it was mentioned as existing collaboration, but without evidence.

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

In general teaching staff meets the requirements defined by the legal acts and inner RTA`s regulations and they are able to implement the study programme.

Strengths:

1. teaching staff has academic qualifications and practical activities in the labour market for implementation of the study programme;
2. teaching and administrative staff have excellent communication with students.

Weaknesses:

1. the risk of not being able to separate different levels of study programmes;
2. the research activity of the teaching staff is not sufficient;
3. students are not involved in research activities;
4. the research outcomes are not always implemented in the study process.

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

## Requirements

- 1 1. The sample of the diploma to be issued for the acquisition of the study programme complies with the procedure by which state-recognised documents of higher education are issued.  
**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant  
**Justification:** Annex 22
- 2 2. Documents confirming that the higher education institution/ college will provide the students with the options to continue the acquisition of education in another study programme or at another higher education institution/ college (a contract with another accredited higher education institution/ college), in case the implementation of the study programme is discontinued.  
**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant  
**Justification:** Annex 23
- 3 3. Document confirming that the higher education institution/ college guarantees to the students a compensation for losses if the study programme is not accredited or the licence of the study programme is revoked due to the actions of the higher education institution/ college (actions or failure to act) and the student does not wish to continue the studies in another study programme.  
**Assessment of compliance:** Partially compliant  
**Justification:** No document available. Generally, the contract guarantees compensation for students (annex 24 and 29, 6.2.)
- 4 4. The teaching staff members involved in the implementation of the study programme are proficient in the official language in accordance with the regulations on the level of the official language knowledge and the procedures for testing official language proficiency for performing professional duties and office duties.  
**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant  
**Justification:** Annex 27
- 5 5. The teaching staff members to be involved in the implementation of the study programme have at least B2-level knowledge of a related foreign language, if the study programme or any part thereof is to be implemented in a foreign language.  
**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant  
**Justification:** N/A
- 6 6. At least five teaching staff members with a doctoral degree are among the academic staff of an academic doctoral study programme, at least three of which are experts approved by the Latvian Science Council in the respective field of science. At least five teaching staff members with a doctoral degree are among the academic staff of a professional doctoral study programme in arts.  
**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant  
**Justification:** N/A
- 7 7. The academic staff of the academic study programme complies with the requirements set forth in Section 55, Paragraph one, Clause 3 of the Law on Institutions of Higher Education.  
**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant  
**Justification:** Annex 28
- 8 8. The sample of the study agreement complies with the mandatory provisions to be included in the study agreement.  
**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant  
**Justification:** Annex 24 and 29
- 9 9. The descriptions of the study courses and the study materials have been prepared in all languages in which the study programme is implemented, and they comply with the requirements set forth in Section 56.1, Paragraph two and Section 56.2, Paragraph two of the Law on Institutions of Higher Education.

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** N/A

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** Annex 21

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** Annex 30

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** Annex 21

- 13 13. The joint study programmes comply with the requirements prescribed in Section 551, Paragraphs one, two, and seven of the Law on Institutions of Higher Education (if applicable).

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** N/A

- 14 14. Each member of the academic staff has either publications published in reviewed editions within the last six years, including international editions (if they have worked for a shorter period of time, the number of publications shall be in proportion to the work period), or artistic creation achievements (for instance, exhibitions, films, theatre performances, and concert activity), or a five-year practical work experience (except for the experience in the implementation of the study programme) in accordance with the Law on Institutions of Higher Education.

**Assessment of compliance:** Partially compliant

**Justification:** Need more publications in international law reviews. Annex 8

- 15 P5 - Overall rating

**Assessment of compliance:** Partially compliant

**Justification:** The most requirements for the study program are done.

All identified deficiencies are able to be eliminated in two-year accreditation term.

## Requirements (R6-R8)

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** RTA has infrastructure resources and the material and technical provision, informative provision, library, financial provision required for the implementation of the study direction.

- 2 R7 - The compliance of the qualification of the academic staff members, visiting professors, visiting associate professors, visiting docents, visiting lecturers, and visiting assistants with the conditions for the implementation of the study programme and the provisions set out in the respective regulatory enactments.

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** According to RTA inner and State regulation, and Self-evaluation Report.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** N/A

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

The most requirements for the study programme are met.

Only minor deficiencies have been identified

Strengths:

1. the curriculum of the programme is well-balanced. The electives provide an opportunity to develop student's own educational and professional pathway;
2. most study course implementation methods are varied, students are introduced to the composition of their final mark, some study materials are available electronically on E-Study platform;
3. feedback is taken into account when developing the programme and when providing upgrades on resources and provisions;
4. students know where to look for information on mobility opportunities;
5. teaching staff has practical qualifications and practical activities in the labour market for implementation of the study programme;
6. teaching staff and administrative staff have excellent communication with students.

Weaknesses:

1. student mobility is barely used, students do not trust that their credit points will be recognized due to the recognition system being very specific and strict;
2. not all academic staff members actively use the E-study moodle platform, even still. Personal emails are used to send over materials and information. Academic staff members lack training to feel comfortable using the platform or other electronic study platforms;
3. study programme needs internationalization, so it is possible to attract incoming mobility students;
4. the risk of not being able to separate different levels of study programmes;
5. the research activity of the teaching staff is not sufficient;
6. students are not involved in research activities;
7. the research outcomes are not always implemented in the study process.

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

Evaluation of the study programme:

Good

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

### **Short-term recommendations**

- to review study courses` content of the programme and to ensure that courses do not overlap (Study Directions Council); - to evaluate the increasing the amount of CP for methodology and scientific research in the study course "Introduction into Research"; - to encourage students to seek opportunities for outgoing mobility, ensure the appropriate language skills, support from academic staff and revise the process of study process planning for a time abroad and recognition of CP's obtained abroad; - to encourage all academic staff members to practice use of moodle, ensure more elaborate and systematic training and assistance in e-tools; - to encourage the academic staff to intensify the research activity of the academic staff via participation in national and international conferences, publications in domestic and foreign peer-reviewed journals, participation in the international research projects, etc; - to elaborate the mechanisms for the attraction of students to research activity.

### **Long-term recommendations**

- to provide exchange with experience elected lecturers and visiting lecturers; to find solutions for the introduction internship to the students (e.g., to reconsider adding internship as a possible course in the study programme for students to have the possibility to obtain some practical hands-on experience in the field of law); - to elaborate internationalization strategy, develop a detailed task-driven plan for attracting incoming mobility students, ensure possibility for students of the programme to switch between Latvian and English taught classes to a reasonable extent.

## **II. ASSESSMENT OF THE STUDY PROGRAMME "Law Science"**

### **II. ASSESSMENT OF THE STUDY PROGRAMME "Law Science"**

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

##### **Analysis**

Professional master's study programme " Law science" . Qualification level to be achieved (NQF / EQF) - 7. Professional master's degree in Law and professional qualification "Lawyer" to be acquired.

The aim, tasks and learning outcomes of the master's study programme are defined in accordance with the descriptions of knowledge, skills and competencies relevant to LQF level 7, and the study course outcomes that are closely connected with them. Requirements for the standard of lawyers profession of the fifth professional qualification level, ensuring that the content of the study programme corresponding to the professional standard correlates with the goals, tasks and study results defined for the study programme.

The title of the programme, obtained grade and the aim, tasks and learning outcomes are based on the state legal regulation (e.g., Cabinet Regulation No. 512 "Regulations regarding the state standard in the second-level professional higher education") and to RTA`s inner regulation .

The indicators of the study programme are interconnected and appropriate to the Law Science as the science sub-branch.

The study programme aims at providing practically applicable and competitive professional studies based on theoretical knowledge of legal science that is in line with national economics and social needs and Lawyer profession standards; providing in-depth academic knowledge and professional skills appropriate to the legal science sector as a whole and to its sub-branch, which provides the

opportunity to perform highly qualified functions in the legal profession, as well as gives the opportunity to work in specialized legal professions such as sworn attorney, prosecutor, judge, sworn notary, sworn bailiff and others, having obtained the practical work experience specified in regulatory enactments and passing relevant qualification tests.

Providing students with in-depth academic knowledge and professional skills to enable graduates to work creatively in their chosen legal specialty, as well as to deal with complex theoretical and practical issues in the legal profession, including where law is connected with other related disciplines, thus promoting their competitiveness in the international and European Union labor markets,

developing in-depth knowledge of the latest developments in legal science and developments in legal practice, and facilitating their continued learning and research, which enhances the quality of the professionals to be trained and their capacity to adapt to changing socio-economic and societal paradigms in the long term perspective, developing an analytical approach in students, which gives the ability to analyze and develop drafts of legal acts in law, thus carrying out further development of law, organizing and carrying out research with scientific value in the fields of law, as well as promoting students' self-education and motivate them for further education and systematic improvement of their professional competence are among key objectives of the study programme.

Programme learning outcomes are precisely formulated in accordance with the requirements in force.

The final examination at the end of the study programme includes master thesis defence, and RTA State Exam (until the spring semester of 2020/2021) / Joint Exam in Law (from the spring semester of 2020/2021)

Admission by competition is based on the average grade in the supplementary diploma of the second year of higher education in law. RTA provides the opportunity to earn additional points in the competition for the activities as follows: publication in a legal or scientific editions in the field of law, participation in a conference with a report or a board report on the subject of law, participation in the international conference with a report or a board report on the subject of law. Admission procedures are clear, transparent and publicly available that were stressed by the stakeholders during the on-site visit.

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

The study programme developed according to legal regulations in force, and internal rules of the RTA, name of the study programme, the degree, the professional qualification or the degree and the professional qualification to be acquired, the aims, objectives, learning outcomes, and admission requirements are interrelated.

Strengths:

1. clear aims, objectives and learning outcomes of the programme developed on the basis of legislative requirements and internal regulations of RTA.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses detected.

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

### **Analysis**

The curriculum of the programme is well-balanced. Mandatory study disciplines cover all fields of law necessary for the future lawyers (e.g., Current Issues of Law Theory and Philosophy of Law, International Public and Private Law Theory and Practice, Civil Rights Theory and Regulation of Civil Right Relations, Current Issues of Commercial Law and its Application, Current Issues of Constitutional Law. Proceedings in the Constitutional Court etc.).

The curriculum of the master programme is clearly differentiated from the curriculum for the bachelor studies.

The electives provide an opportunity to develop student's own educational and professional pathway (e.g., Territory Planning and Construction Law Problems, Technologies in Medical Law, Legal Problems of Environmental Protection, International Jurisdiction and Cooperation in Criminal Cases, Schengen Law, Problems of the Sociology of Law).

The curriculum complies with the aims of the study programme, ensures the achievement of the learning outcomes, and meets the needs of the relevant industry and the scientific trends.

There are regulations and methodological recommendations regarding the traineeship and master thesis. Students can choose the topic for their master thesis from the list of suggested topics (in particular, suggested by law enforcement institutions) or independently. Topics of master theses devoted to the topical issues of jurisprudence (mostly in the field of Criminal Law, but also in other fields, in particular, Healthcare Law). During the onsite visit expert team had the possibility to observe master's thesis; no one master's thesis contained a completely scientific methodology. The most mistakes are: incomplete description of scientific and legal methods; incorrect object and subject of the research etc. However, master thesis methodology needs to be improved.

During the onsite visit, students, graduates, and employers expressed the full satisfaction regarding the content of the master programme.

According to the statements given during the on-site visit by both students and the academic staff, at the beginning of the course the first lecture is dedicated to explanation of the course description, clarifying the study course outcomes, objectives and the study plan, including the criteria for assessment and compilation of the final mark.

Evaluation methods vary from written to oral form, there are progress-check tests, essays, practical assessment reports, individual and group-work presentations, traineeship report and its defense, the final course exam (in form which is determined by the lecturer), the final qualification work and its defense.

Teaching and learning methods are elaborated on the basis of student-centred approach and assure the high quality of educational process.

Methods used in the implementation of the study programme include both lectures and practical classes, case-solving, gamification via use of electronic student collaboration and competition platforms. During the on-site visit students mentioned that there are courses with a lot of good practices. Their courses involve tasks, which require minutes and analysis of processes observed during a visit to an institution (court, police station, etc.) relevant to the topic covered in the course. Students are asked to provide their own opinion on the matter, discussions are encouraged, participate actively in group work both during class and outside the classroom. Most materials are available electronically on the common E-study system or are sent to a student-made group email. Evidently, academic staff members lack training to feel comfortable using the common electronic E-

study platform or other electronic study platforms.

Admittedly, not all members of the academic staff employ these methods, however, part-time students claimed purely theoretical lectures to be well-structured and easy to understand due to everything being written on a MS PowerPoint slide.

The aims of these study programmes involve students being both acquired with theoretical knowledge and being equipped with the skills legal science in the particular sub-field demands. Methods used to achieve these aims must be balanced between the theoretical and practical approach. As both employers and academic staff members emphasize, one cannot be useful without the other, yet the practical approach might be more multifunctional.

Students mostly express their good to moderate satisfaction in all aspects of studies. There are a couple of marginal cases, expressing discontent with the academic staff, however, the academic staff member during the on-site visit explained that there was a case, in which the lecturer was replaced with another one due to an arising conflict between the person and the respective students. According to the information provided in the on-site visit, to the extent of HEI's capacity, student and graduate recommendations on available resources, topics to be covered within the course, are taken into account and implemented within a year. Suggestions from the employers are considered in the development of study courses and in the process of internship organization.

Overall, students seem to be satisfied with the opportunities they are offered, however the exchange programmes have not been used often within the SER period. As one of the reasons of hesitation student on the on-site visit mention the doubt if they will be able to find courses that will be later on be recognized in the home HEI. Incoming mobility is nearly impossible due to the program being offered in Latvian only.

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

1. The curriculum of the programme is well-balanced. Mandatory study disciplines cover all fields of law necessary for the future lawyers. It complies with the aims of the study programme, ensures the achievement of the learning outcomes, and meets the needs of the relevant industry and the scientific trends.
2. Teaching and learning methods are elaborated on the basis of student-centred approach and assure the high quality of educational process. Methods used in the implementation of the study programme include both lectures and practical classes, case-solving, gamification via use of electronic student collaboration and competition platforms. However, more attention to the use of electronic platforms is needed.
3. Stakeholders (namely, students, graduates and employers)' recommendations on the development of the study programme are taken into consideration.
4. Students are provided with the information on academic mobility opportunities. However, there is a lack of both incoming and outgoing student mobility.

Strengths:

1. the curriculum of the programme is well-balanced. The electives provide an opportunity to develop student's own educational and professional pathway;
2. most study course implementation methods are varied, students are introduced to the composition of their final mark, some study materials are available electronically on E-Study



platform;

3. stakeholders' feedback is taken into account when developing the programme and when providing upgrades on resources and provisions;
4. students know where to look for information on mobility opportunities.

Weaknesses:

1. student mobility is barely used, students do not trust that their credit points will be recognized due to the recognition system being very specific and strict;
2. not all academic staff members actively use E-study moodle platform, even still. Personal emails are used to send over materials and information. Academic staff members lack training to feel comfortable using the platform or other electronic study platforms;
3. study programme needs internationalization, so it is possible to attract incoming mobility students.

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

#### **Analysis**

Onsite visit experts made sure that RTA has infrastructure resources and the material and technical provision, informative provision, financial provision and library required for the implementation of the study direction. The students and the teaching staff have access to the necessary resources.

Students and lecturers for the studies and scientific research can use the library and few computer auditories.

All buildings are accessible to people with special needs and have indoor lifts. All buildings and auditories are updated and improved - air conditioners, new chairs, desks, blackboards, projectors, screens and so on. RTA has set up video and audio equipment to study foreign languages and small conferences or seminars.

State budget financing and student tuition fees are the source of financing the study programme "Law science". Each year the RTA Senate approves tuition fee. RTA accounting calculates all expenses per student. The tuition fee during the reporting period has gradually increased from EUR 1350 in 2014 up to EUR 1690 in 2019 due to changes in the basic cost of the study place.

RTA supports academic staff for scientific research or for conferences abroad with 400,00 EUR per year. The amount of money is available for each research lecturer, which can be used to pay for publications and attend conferences. All staff have possibilities to participate in different courses, lectures on quality, cooperation between studies and science, they are paid extra for the extra certified skills they have acquired.

The RTA Library is located at 115 Atbrivosanas aleja in the k-4 block. In 2016, the RTA Library was re-accredited as a local library. The library collection corresponds to RTA study programs and directions. Lists of book requests are regularly submitted to the library in accordance with the "Literature provision rules". To facilitate this process, a Book request form was created, which is also available electronically on the Library's website. RTA Library has necessary literature in the study direction, however experts team suggest to add more international journals relevant to law to library stock.

Still, the state budget is the main source of funding. Therefore, RTA needs to consider the ways of diversification of its sources of funding. The internationalization via participation in the

internationally-funded research projects can be considered as one of the options.

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

1. RTA has necessary resources required for the implementation of the study direction.
2. All buildings and auditories are updated and improved.
3. State budget financing and student tuition fee are the source of financing the study program.
4. RTA supports academic staff for scientific research or for conferences abroad with 400,00 EUR per year.
5. State budget is the main source of funding. More funding diversification is needed.

#### **Strengths:**

1. RTA has infrastructure resources and the material and technical provision, informative provision, library, financial provision required for the implementation of the study direction;
2. the students and the teaching staff have access to the necessary resources;
3. the library collection corresponds to RTA study programs and directions.

#### **Weaknesses:**

1. RTA needs to add more international journals relevant to law to library stock;
2. RTA lacks fundings from international research projects.

## **4. Teaching Staff**

### **Analysis**

During the evaluating period there has been observed stabilisation of teaching staff. There is a relatively greater variability in the composition of visiting lecturers, but this change does not give the reason to believe that the qualification of the academic staff working in the study programme has decreased since the previous accreditation of the study direction. In the academic year 2019/2020 there are 3 associate professors (2 elected, 1 part-time employee), 5 professor's assistants (3 elected, 2 visiting lecturers) and 5 lecturers (2 elected, 3 visiting lecturers).

The FEM Academic Personnel Development Plan approved by the RTA Study Council envisages that by 2024 there will be 2 elected professors, two elected associate professors and 2 elected assistant professors. The plan is designed taking into account the growing potential of the existing academic staff as well as the recruitment of additional academic staff (including from abroad).

There are 13 academic personnel. 9 elected and 4 visiting lecturers. 8 lecturers from 13 have doctoral degree and 5 – master`s degree.

The research and professional specialization of the teaching staff covers all major fields of law: criminal law and criminal procedure law , civil law, civil procedure law and commercial law , Constitutional Law, Administrative Law and Administrative Procedure Law , International and European Union Law , theory of law, philosophy of law and history of Latvian law.

There was mentioned in the SER, that “in order to strengthen the field of international and EU law, foreign visiting lecturers regularly conduct lectures to students of master's programme”, but during the visit expert`s team was not approved with evidence that there are regularly visiting lecturers form mobility or exchange visits.

The academic staff is involved in scientific research mostly by publications in research journals. The list of publications by the academic staff is provided. The possibility to publish papers in the journal

"Administrative and Criminal Justice" is an advantage. The academic staff of RTA are the members of The Editorial Office and one guest lecturer is the editor-in-chief of the scientific journal "Administrative and Criminal Justice". Some representatives of the teaching staff participated in research projects (e.g., ERDF project "Security of the EU External Borders, Internal Security of Latvia" No.1.1.1.2./VIAA/1/16/127 ". However, more attention shall be paid to research activity of the teaching staff, involvement of students in research, and use of research outcomes in the study process.

There was mentioned in the SER that there is a cooperation in different levels: administrative and teaching staff; between teaching staff; teaching staff in research etc. During the visit the expert's team made sure that students highly evaluate direct communication between administrative and teaching staff.

There is an established teaching staff with sufficient qualification. 9 lecturers are elected from 13 which are involved in study programme implementation. Study programme is planned to be improved with strengthening academic staff with elected personnel – 2 professors, 2 associate professors and 2 professor's assistants until 2024.

There is created a mechanism for mutual collaboration between staff members but in practice it should be strengthened with collaboration of teaching staff's mobility and exchanging with experience to improve the study courses in the master's programme.

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

In general, there is sufficient number of teaching staff involved in the implementation of the study programme, with qualification in accordance with legal regulation. RTA has created a plan on how to strengthen personnel. There is a mechanism for collaboration at different levels, and students positively evaluate the direct communication between RTA and students. The teaching staff's evaluation in scientific research has to be developed and the results of research must be used in the study process.

Strengths:

1. there are planned measures on how to strengthen the personnel;
2. teaching staff qualification considers the legal regulation;
3. the teaching staff personnel are stable, have appropriate practical and academic experience;
4. students` direct communication between administrative and teaching staff.

Weaknesses:

1. low mobility and engagement in scientific research of teaching staff;
2. the results of scientific researches are not always used in the study process;
3. there is a mechanism for mutual collaboration between staff members, but in practice it should be strengthened with collaboration of teaching staff's mobility and exchanging with experience to improve the study courses in the master's programme.

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

### **Requirements**

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** Annex 22.

- 2 2. Documents confirming that the higher education institution/ college will provide the students with the options to continue the acquisition of education in another study programme or at another higher education institution/ college (a contract with another accredited higher education institution/ college), in case the implementation of the study programme is discontinued.

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** Annex 23.

- 3 3. Document confirming that the higher education institution/ college guarantees to the students a compensation for losses if the study programme is not accredited or the licence of the study programme is revoked due to the actions of the higher education institution/ college (actions or failure to act) and the student does not wish to continue the studies in another study programme.

**Assessment of compliance:** Partially compliant

**Justification:** No document available. Generally contract guarantees compensation for students (annex 24 and 29, 6.2.).

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** Annex 27.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** N/A

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** N/A

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** N/A

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** Annex 24 and 29.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** N/A

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** Annex 21.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** N/A

12 12. The study programme complies with the State Academic Education Standard or the Professional Higher Education Standard.

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** Annex 21

13 13. The joint study programmes comply with the requirements prescribed in Section 551, Paragraphs one, two, and seven of the Law on Institutions of Higher Education (if applicable).

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** N/A

14 14. Each member of the academic staff has either publications published in reviewed editions within the last six years, including international editions (if they have worked for a shorter period of time, the number of publications shall be in proportion to the work period), or artistic creation achievements (for instance, exhibitions, films, theatre performances, and concert activity), or a five-year practical work experience (except for the experience in the implementation of the study programme) in accordance with the Law on Institutions of Higher Education.

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** Annex 8

15 P5 - Overall rating

**Assessment of compliance:** Partially compliant

**Justification:** The most requirements for the study program are fully compliant.

All identified deficiencies are able to be eliminated in two-year accreditation term.

## Requirements (R6-R8)

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** RTA has infrastructure resources and the material and technical provision, informative provision, library, financial provision required for the implementation of the study direction.

2 R7 - The compliance of the qualification of the academic staff members, visiting professors, visiting associate professors, visiting docents, visiting lecturers, and visiting assistants with the conditions for the implementation of the study programme and the provisions set out in the respective regulatory enactments.

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

**Justification:** According to RTA inner and State regulation, and Self-evaluation Report.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Partially compliant

**Justification:** More attention to the research activity is needed.

## Conclusions by specifying the strengths and weaknesses

Only minor deficiencies have been identified

Strengths:

- stable personnel with sufficient academic and practical experience;
- personnel development procedures are in place;
- well-balanced curriculum that meets the needs of the labor market and is delivered to students via a diverse set of methods;
- stakeholders' feedback is taken into account when developing the programme;
- RTA has resources sufficient for the implementation of the study programme;
- students' direct communication with administrative and teaching staff.

Weaknesses:

- low academic mobility and exchanging experience between lecturers;
- inadequate methodology in masters' theses.
- lack of student mobility.
- academic staff lack support for feeling comfortable to work in E-study platform.
- study programme needs internationalization, so it is possible to attract incoming mobility students.
- the results of scientific researches are not always used in the study process.

## Evaluation of the study programme "Law Science"

Evaluation of the study programme:

Good

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

### Short-term recommendations

- to improve methodology for students' scientific thesis; - to encourage all academic staff members to practice use of moodle, ensure more elaborate and systematic training and assistance in e-tools; - to encourage students to seek opportunities for outgoing mobility, ensure the appropriate language skills, support from academic staff and revise the process of study process planning for a time abroad and recognition of CP's obtained abroad.

### Long-term recommendations

- to reach the RTA goals on the election of 2 professors, 2 associate professors and 2 professor's assistants until 2024; - to improve the incoming and outgoing student and teaching staff mobility; - to encourage the academic staff to participate more actively in the international research projects, publish joint papers with foreign scholars.

### III. Assessment of the Requirements for the Study Field and the Relevant Study Programmes

#### III. Assessment of the Requirements for the Study Field and the Relevant Study Programmes

##### Assessment of the Requirements for the Study Field

Requirements	Requirement Evaluation		Comment
Pursuant to Section 5, Paragraph 21 of the Law on Institutions of Higher Education, the higher education institution/ college shall ensure continuous improvement, development, and efficient performance of the study direction whilst implementing their internal quality assurance systems:		Partially compliant	Quality system is created and planned but there is no practical evidence that it is efficient. See Joint Report`s Section 2.1.
R2 - The cooperation with different organisations from Latvia and abroad implemented within the study direction ensures the achievement of the aims of the study direction.		Partially compliant	Excellent cooperation with Latvian organisations. Need to improve cooperation with foreign organisations.
R3 - Compliance of scientific research and artistic creation with the development level thereof (if applicable).		Partially compliant	There is no clear research strategy. need to improve it. The RTA faculty of law has to strength his participation to rechearch programs financed by EU or other sources. lack of special research strategy for the study direction in law science; report part 3 and 4.
R4 - Elimination of the shortcomings and deficiencies identified during the previous assessment of the study direction, if it has been conducted, or the implementation of the provided recommendations.		Partially compliant	Some recommendations are not fully implemented. See Report`s part 6.

##### Assessment of the Requirements for the Relevant Study Programmes of the Study Field

<b>No.</b>	<b>Study programme</b>	<b>R5</b>	<b>R6</b>	<b>R7</b>	<b>R8</b>	<b>Evaluation of the study programme (excellent, good, average, poor)</b>
1	Law Science	Partially compliant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Good
2	Law Science	Partially compliant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Good
3	Law Science	Partially compliant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Partially compliant	Good

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

N/A