

# Expert group joint opinion

Evaluation Procedure: Assessment of Study Field

Higher Education Institution: University of Latvia

Study field: Sport

Experts:

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

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Founded in 1919, the University of Latvia (UL) is the country's only classical university and its largest higher education institution by student number. It integrates and advances Latvia's research and study potential across humanities, natural, technical, and social sciences. By engaging in global research and education, it fosters Latvia's growth and sustainability. According to the Self-Assessment Report (SAR) and UL Strategy the university contributes to global science, education, technology transfer, innovation, and supports Latvian democracy, culture, language development, and economic prosperity. Its vision emphasizes excellence, development, and responsibility, creating an interdisciplinary, open, and innovative environment that drives Latvia's sustainable development and economic transformation.

UL community, excellence, science-based development, openness, cooperation, and academic freedom. These values were evident in the SAR and approved during the assessment visit. The SAR is comprehensive, highlighting the institution's strengths and weaknesses, and serves as a foundation for future growth as a key national player in sports field. The assessment visit found no contradictions and largely supported the SAR's conclusions. Despite some concerns, still ongoing consolidation of the faculties, and study management changes, the assessment of the study field "Sport" showed a sustainable development process.

It is important to note students' confidence in their choice, expertise of the staff, alumni pride graduating UL, and employer satisfaction of collaboration. The well-organized studies and quality management system were confirmed to be effective during the assessment visit. However, challenges remain in internationalization and enhancing scientific capacity. Enrollment and retention are also issues, with interest in programmes and dropout rates suggesting a need for better motivation counseling, and alumni networking to help students make suitable choices.

During the assessment visit, it was noted that the long-term vision is to become a leading center for sport science and the preparation of sports specialists at the national level. Achieving this will require increased international activity, greater mobility for academic staff and students, and a strategic focus on international collaboration. Teaching staff face the ongoing challenge of balancing practical teaching with research activities and increasing the involvement of non-elected staff in scientific projects. Although no academic integrity issues were found during the visit or in the SAR, technological advancements pose challenges in supporting studies through e-platforms and simulations, as well as in areas like the use of AI for teaching and plagiarism detection.

According to the SAR and the expert assessment visits, the faculty has sufficient resources to develop and sustain the "Sport" study field. The primary income comes from study fees, calculated to cover costs with minimal profit, based on the minimum required number of students per programme. Additional UL funding could support further development of the study field. Current facilities and equipment are adequate for both theoretical and practical lessons, and new premises planned in the UL campus will support future programmes development. The regional branches have good facilities and equipment as well as the main faculty premises, the programme courses are run by the same teaching staff which ensure the same study quality for all students.

UL has effectively managed the study field and its challenges, setting ambitious goals and have identified their strengths and weaknesses that provides a solid foundation for continued development.

## **I - Assessment of the Study Field**

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## 1.1 Management of the Study Field

### Analysis

1.1.1. The objectives and tasks of the study field "Sports" (study field) are based on the alignment with the University of Latvia (UL) areas of operation, strategic development goals, societal and economic needs, and development trends specified in the UL strategy for 2021-2027 (decision No. 2-3/90, ratified at the LU Senate meeting on June 28, 2021). The Strategy of the UL sets strategic goals that emphasize a unique study offer and high competitiveness of graduates, a development and excellence-oriented personnel policy and an inclusive, collaborative and innovation-oriented culture, and defines the areas of activity of the UL in accordance with the Satversme of the UL (SAR, p.16).

According to SAR the aim of the study field is to provide excellence-oriented and interdisciplinary studies, research and professional competence in the field of sport (SAR, p.16). In order to achieve the set goal, specific work tasks have also been set:

to ensure excellence in research and to improve the quality of scientific work;

to foster an inclusive student-centered learning process;

to foster the professional development of the academic staff, including in an international environment, and to promote students' academic achievements in interdisciplinary research;

to maintain an independent link with society and alumni; promote student mobility and support talent development in a student-centered approach;

to ensure sustainable management of the learning environment, to highlight the integration of green thinking in the learning process;

to develop an inclusive and ethical academic environment.

The aim of the study field is clearly defined and is realized by two study programmes: First level (short-cycle) study programme "Sports Coach" (41813) and Academic bachelor study programme "Sports, Technology and Public Health" (43813) were licensed in April 2019 and are included in the 2013 accredited study field "Education, Pedagogy and Sport", which is currently divided into two study fields - "Education and Pedagogy" and "Sport" (SAR, p.17).

According to the decision of the Ministry of Education and Science (MES) Advisory Council for the New Development of Teacher Education in 2018, in order to reduce the fragmentation of study programmes and strengthen the use of resources, the study programme "Teacher of Sports and Health Education" was closed at UL. Modernized study programmes were licensed and accredited to ensure the continuity and quality of the study process. In 2019 the new study programmes were licensed and their implementation started in the field of study "Education, Pedagogy and Sport". During the assessment visit meetings with the UL management group it was clarified that benefits of consolidation are still to come. The main improvement of study field management is planned by developing of the support systems at all levels. The development of the structure of cooperation between faculties and scientific work is still in process and planned to be in place by September 2024. The consolidation foresees closer collaboration with other disciplines in the future, particularly biology and medicine, including research and joint project realization. A multi-level quality system will also be established. Overall objective: development of the discipline of sport and closer cooperation with other disciplines. Directors of the study field have high expectations that building a new "Sport House" in the UL campus will bring more collaborating possibilities between UL structures.

Public health and sustainability are closely linked concepts, emphasizing the importance of physical activities for overall well-being and quality of life. Sports science plays a crucial role making it a primary goal for the UL to enhance its capacity in this field, aiming to improve public welfare. The Academic bachelor study programme "Sports, Technology and Public Health" (43813) and First level (short-cycle) study programme "Sports Coach" (41813) directed to updating, researching, and

enhancing the understanding of sports, thereby contributing significantly to society's overall health and socio-economic development.

According to SAR the strategy of the study field "Sport" lists a number of development directions that actualizes green thinking, which is connected with raising public awareness of both physical activity in general and active transportation (SAR, p.18). As examples are mentioned study courses "Recreation and Forms of Terrain Sports", "Environmental Protection". Green thinking is emphasized in SAR and mentioned as one of UL Strategic Goals but during the assessment visit it was quite challenging to get approvals that it could be implemented in other study courses or managing the branch work.

According to SAR (p.18) there are statistical data of shortage of about 150 coaches and 200 sports staff in Latvia ([www.vestnesis.lv](http://www.vestnesis.lv) (available in Latvian), [www.cv.lv](http://www.cv.lv) (available in Latvian), etc.). During the assessment visit with employers and partners they confirmed this deficiency mostly of coaches as many of experienced coaches are retiring although emphasizing that physical education teachers are needed as well. The study field administration indicated plans to re-establish a bachelor's programme for physical education teachers in the foreseeable future. So renewing the Bachelor's degree programme "Sport Teacher" meets the demands of the labour market and it is stated as further plans of developing a First level (short-cycle) study programme "Sports Coach" (41813) (SAR, p.124).

The Academic bachelor study programme "Sports, Technology and Public Health" (43813) is realized only in Riga but lack of sports staff could be applicable also for other Latvia regions. This is the place for deeper analysis of the potential labour market and offering this programme in UL branches as well.

The study field encounters various interdisciplines courses that provide a broad knowledge base to choose the most suitable career path for students in the sports field. One of the preferences of the First level (short-cycle) study programme "Sports Coach" (41813) is the opportunity to continue studies in the Academic bachelor study programme "Sports, Technology and Public Health" (43813) as it has harmonized list of courses and vice versa bachelor's graduates have the opportunity to obtain a coach qualification in a shorter period. There is some evidence from graduates who continue their studies in the other sports programme, thus saving both time and financial resources.

UL provides the opportunities for bachelor graduates to study in professional and academic Master's level sport study programmes, such as "Sport Science", "Educational Management". The interdisciplinary nature of the obtained education enables to study for a Master's degree in the social or health sciences at the UL or other universities in Latvia and abroad. Graduates of the short cycle (first level) professional higher education First level (short-cycle) study programme "Sports Coach" (41813) can continue their studies in other similar programmes in Latvia and abroad.

The study field "Sport" is overall in line with the UL strategy for 2021-2027, but there are challenges to achieve some specific aims at this reviewing period.

As is mentioned in SAR (p.18) the strategy is preparing specialists in the field of sport for innovation and sustainable development:

- research for excellence, raising the quality of scientific and professional work in the sector;
- an inclusive culture focused on collaboration and innovation;
- digital transformation of sport, focusing on technology-enriched learning;
- implementation of the competency approach in studies and lifelong learning;
- sport education as a contributor to public health;
- sport and quality of life and its acknowledgement in a national and international comparative context.

By reviewing SAR and during assessment visit meetings it could be concluded that there are still places to improve the research for excellence and internationalization framework, and it is quite challenging to prepare specialists in short course and first level bachelor programmes for

innovations in sport field.

1.1.2. Based on SAR, to ensure the quality of the study field the SWOT analysis has been carried out during the meetings of the working group and the representatives of the study field council discussing and evaluating the content, organization and implementation experience of the study programmes. The SWOT analysis is based on the proposals made by students, the academic staff, and employer recommendations.

Based on the SWOT analysis, the Development Plan 2022–2027 has been elaborated to achieve the objectives of the field of study "Sport". (Annex SF-4. Goals and Development Plan 2022–2027 of the UL study field "Sport"). The development of the goals, the Development Plan and the SWOT for the study field "Sport" took place in several steps. Initially, the programme directors of the study field and the invited employers from Salaspils Sports School, Latvian Football Federation prepared the draft documents.

The Development Plan 2022–2027 was discussed and refined by the Development Plan Working Group, the SWOT Analysis Working Group, representatives of the Academic Department and the Board of Studies of the "Education, Pedagogy and Sport" study field. At each step, comments and suggestions were used to improve the documents. The final version of the Development Plan was approved by the "Education, Pedagogy and Sport" study field Council on 22.02.2023, and the FEPA (from 02.01.2024. FESP) Council on 24.02.2023. It was also approved by the Quality Assessment Commission of the University Study Programmes on 10.03.2023 (SAR, p.18).

After reviewing the Development Plan 2022–2027 (Annex SF-4) it could be concluded that the study field administration has analyzed the shortcomings and prepared a solid plan for their elimination.

According to SAR (p.21) UL emphasizes the harmonization of the first cycle (bachelor) study programme "Sport, Technology and Public Health" with short cycle (first level) professional higher education study programme "Sports Coach". The acquired education also provides the opportunity to study in the second cycle (second level) professional higher education programme "Teacher", subprogramme "Health and Physical Activity Teacher".

There are 12 strengths indicated in the study field SWOT analysis. As the main strengths can be mentioned professional staff, ensuring students receive diverse perspectives and expertise. Additionally, the institution's emphasis on inter-faculty cooperation, quality methodological support, and practical opportunities such as internships and the Dual Career. As one of the strengths, the attraction of foreign lecturers is mentioned.

Based on SAR (p.20), there are 6 weaknesses defined in the SWOT analysis of the study field. Insufficient scientific activity is mentioned as one of the main weaknesses resulting from the payment system of scientific publications and project applications. The insufficient resources for university lecturers to visit all student placement organizations; low international mobility of students; the small number of elected academic staff in sport; and the relatively small number of students in the regional branches are mentioned as weaknesses as well.

Based on SAR construction of the "Sports House" of the UL, which is planned to be built by 2027 could increase the number of scientific publications and create a modern environment for sport science, which will attract academic staff, researchers and contribute to the development of sport science. The project "Innovative Technologies – Materials for Modern Study Environment for New Study Programmes in Education, Pedagogy and Sports" is mentioned as a possibility to improve the relevant material and technical base.

According to SAR (p.21), there are 11 opportunities defined in the SWOT analysis of the study field. As the main could be mentioned: attracting funding for international and national projects; to pursue studies in higher-level study programmes, consolidation of the faculties of the University; to supplement the short cycle (first level) professional higher education study programme "Sports Coach" with sport modules, organization of further education courses in the field of sport, to renew the Bachelor's degree programme "Sport Teacher", the rapid economic development of the sports

sector.

Based on SAR (p.21), there are 7 threats defined in the SWOT analysis of the study field. The main are the following: Ministry of Education and Science reforms related to the consolidation of higher education institutions; insufficient funding for higher education and science at national level; low prestige of scientific work, low interest in research; few lecturers with PhDs specifically in sport; outflow of capable, talented specialists with academic potential to other universities, countries and fields of activity; ability to compete with salaries in the sector; insufficient finance for the acquisition of modern technologies.

Six further education programmes for coaches were approved by the FEPA Council (from 02.01.2024. FESP) and should be implemented from the 2023/2024 academic year.

The UL is one of the first universities in the Baltics to offer high-performing athletes a dual career opportunity, combining higher education with a career as an athlete.

The weaknesses of the field of study include the relatively low number of students in the regional branches. According to SAR (p.120) the first level (short-cycle) study programme "Sports Coach" was licensed in five branches (Cesis, Kuldīga, Madona, Tukums, Alūksne). Just before the assessment visit UL closed the branch in Alūksne. During the assessment the experts visited all four branches but programme was implemented only in Kuldīga in 2023/2024. The latest implementation in other branches were in Madona and Tukums in 2020/2021 (SAR Table 3.1.4.1 p.128). Other branches the programme did not meet the minimum admission criteria and are not implemented at this moment. The specialization courses of the study programme in the methodology of each sport are organized centrally in Riga. Each branch can plan variable demand, which allows flexibility to adapt by not announcing admission opportunities in each branch each year, but only where there is demand at the time.

1.1.3. SAR provides a detailed description of the structure of the management of the study field (p.22-26). Collegiate responsibility for the administration of the study field lies with the UL decision-making bodies - the Senate, the UL Study Programme Quality Assessment Commission (hereinafter - SP QAC) (headed by vice rectors), respective faculty councils and study field councils, which evaluate study quality and decide on study quality assurance measures.

The governance of the UL is responsible for the study quality assurance, delegating responsibility for the development and functioning of the study quality assurance system to the Academic Department. The responsibility for the development of the study field "Sport" and quality of implemented study programmes lies with the head of the study field and dean, study programme directors, and sub programme directors.

For the governance scheme of the UL Study Area and its programmes, see Annex SF-5. Scheme of the management of the study field "Sport" and its study programmes. Regulations on the University of Latvia Study Field Management (the UL Senate Decision No. 70 of 27.01.2020) determine the procedure for the management, quality assurance and development of study fields.

Heads of study fields organize the work of study field councils, as well as regularly organize the development of annual study field reports and their promotion for review and approval to the respective Study Field Council and respective Faculty Council.

The Study Field Council is a collegial study field management body, which supervises academic, professional (including residency) and doctoral study programmes of all levels within one study field. The participants of the respective Study Field Council are: the head of the study field and its deputy, if there is one, the study programme directors and sub programme directors relevant to the study field, the representatives of the students in respective programmes (not less than 20% of the composition of the Study Field Council, promoting the representation of all levels of study programmes, as well as the largest possible number of study programmes, nominated by the students self-government).

Starting the implementation of the UL Strategy 2021-2027, based on the efficiency audit of the

administrative structural units performed in 2021, the UL administration was significantly reorganized in November of 2021, thus strengthening the strategic and quality management functions in the structural units of the administrative structural units. One of the most significant changes is the integration of the Study Department of the University of Latvia and the Department of Science of the University of Latvia, forming the Academic Department, thus strengthening the unity of higher education and science.

Teaching staff are motivated to continue their work in the development of the field of study. As a potential problem, some of the lecturers stress the heavy workload and relatively low remuneration, which may have a negative impact on the quality of teaching and research. Students are motivated to have open discussions with programme directors in order to resolve any misunderstanding or problem as soon as possible.

One of the most important tasks of the directors of study programmes of the study field "Sport" is to promote the understanding of all teaching staff of the concept of sport in all courses of study, the actualization of green thinking in everyday life.

1.1.4. SAR (p.26-30) offers a comprehensive overview of the rules governing student admissions at all levels, the recognition of study periods, professional experience, prior formal and non-formal education, as well as the evaluation of students' achievements and studying outcomes.

The admission requirements for the study field align closely with the UL general criteria. Applicants must have completed secondary education, and their Centralised Examination (CE) results in mathematics, Latvian language, and a foreign language are considered. The admission rules are well-considered and objective. During the expertise visit, it was found out that the insufficient results of the mathematics exams are one of the reasons for the candidates' inability to qualify for studies. The rating in Mathematics CE calculated as the average value of all Mathematics CE rating sections and must be at least 10% ([www.lu.lv](http://www.lu.lv)).

All the requirements are clearly explained, logical, and effective, ensuring the admission of suitable students to the study programs. These rules are publicly accessible to all interested parties. Requirements and criteria for study programmes are reviewed and updated annually, and according to the Article 46 of the Law on Higher Education Institutions, they are published on the UL website by November 1st (SAR, p.27).

As it is stated in SAR (p.27) the admission criteria for the study field "Sports" do not include any incentives that would allow students to take up automatically state funded places. However, in UL website there are additional information that citizens who voluntarily applied to the national defense service and completed it and who meet the study program admission rules are provided with study places financed from the state budget without competition, applying no later than two years after the end of the term of service and in the retirement reserve and year mark in sports or sports and health, not mandatory, but gives extra points (<https://www.lu.lv/en/gribustudet/normativie-dokumenti/uznemsanas-prasibas-un-kriteriji-pamatstudiju-programmas-2022-/2023-akademiskaja-gada/>). There are also the possibility for high-achieving athletes to apply for the dual career support programme, offered by the UL Sport Centre (SAR, p.27). There are relatively small number of state funded places for admission in the 2024/2025 fall semester. There are 5 state funded places for the program "Sports, technology and public health" and 2 for "Sports Coach". During the assessment visit it was stated that there is no competition for candidate places, and all those who want to are admitted. That could be one of the reasons for the high drop-out rate.

The UL has concluded an agreement with Latvian Academy of Sport Pedagogy (LSPA) if for some reason the programmes of the field of study "Sports" discontinued in UL. It should clarify the status of this agreement due to consolidation of LSPA with Riga Stradins University.

Recognition of previously acquired formal and non-formal education at UL is carried out following by UL Procedure for the Recognition of Study Courses and Knowledge, Skills and Competencies

Acquired in Study Courses and Outside Formal Education or Through Professional Experience and Learning Outcomes Achieved in Previous Education (the UL Order No. 1-4/ 543 of 04.11.2021) (SAR, p.28).

Learning outcomes gained through professional experience can be recognized only in the portion of the respective study programme that includes an internship, or as intended learning outcomes in the study course or study module, validating the acquired practical knowledge.

The recognition of study courses from other higher education institutions and study courses acquired in non-formal education is examined by a separate commission – the Commission for Evaluation and Recognition of Competences and Study Results Achieved in Previous Education and acquired in Non-Formal Education or Professional Experience in Teacher Education and Education Science, Art and Social Human Sciences (SAR, p.29). Based on SAR Latvian version (p.26), there were 28 students out of all active students, who have study courses recognised; and since the previous accreditation period the recognition was made for 57 students (mistake in English version 5, p.28).

An opportunity may be considered as an advantage of the field of study that students who graduate from one or the other study programme and continue their studies in the other study programme are recognised for the common credit points and analogous courses. Similar cases apply to students who transfer to the University from other Latvian universities from similar study programmes.

To date, only one student from programmes of the study field "Sport" has participated in the Erasmus+ mobility programme. This raises the question of the need to look for other solutions to motivate students to gain international experience.

1.1.5. According to the UL internal regulation the Procedure for the Development and Actualisation of Study Courses at the University of Latvia (the UL Order No. 1/277 of 10.08.2018) the information on the conditions, aim, tasks, requirements for obtaining credit points, study course content, organization of study process through contact classes, organization and tasks of the students independent work, intended learning outcomes and their assessment methods and criteria, are included in all study course descriptions, which are available to students in the ULIS and the UL e-study environment (SAR, p.30).

During the assessment visit it was possible to become acquainted with UL e-study platform that is a clear structured and user friendly environment.

With the aim of structuring knowledge, skills, competence during the studies the mapping of the planned learning outcomes at the level of the study programme and courses has been carried out in the study programmes "Sport, Technology and Public Health" and "Sports Coach" (Annex PSP-7 and Annex PSP-6). The prepared mapping meets the requirements that are necessary for graduates in the labour market.

At the beginning of their studies, students are briefed on the organization and implementation of their specific study program. For each individual study course, the academic staff provides detailed information about the organization, content, requirements, intended learning outcomes, final examinations, and assessment criteria. They also explain how the course contributes to achieving the overall learning outcomes of the study program. At the start of each course, during the first class, lecturers introduce students to the course structure, outline the requirements for interim assessments and final examinations, and explain the grading criteria and assessment procedures. These requirements and criteria remain consistent throughout the semester.

Studies in the field of sports also include various practical lessons, and the final assessment of specific courses is different. The process of conducting and assessing practical study courses follows the plan and methods set by the individual lecturer. Typically, to earn credit points, students must complete a theoretical assignment and fulfill specific practical course requirements, such as leading a training session or a part of it. A crucial aspect is the student's ability to demonstrate creativity and pedagogical knowledge in the field, including self-reflection, mistake correction, explanation,

and analysis (SAR, p.31).

Each study course includes two types of assessment: the interim assessment, which accounts for at least 50% of the total grade, and the final examination, which constitutes at least 10% of the final grade. The responsible structural unit sets the procedures and criteria for interim assessments. According to the specifics of the study course, the requirements for attendance of classes may also be set. The study course grades are calculated in the UL Centralised Recording System based on the algorithm outlined in the course description, taking into account the grades from both interim assessments and the final examination, and are then recorded in the examination report (SAR, p.31-32).

During the assessment visit, the experts did not get enough evidence about the student-centered approach during the evaluation process by offering self or peer assessment and self evaluation of progress. The student-centred approach aims to motivate and engage learners to self-regulate their learning. This should not only take the form of assessment and feedback, but should also be expressed through student reflection and self-awareness. Hence, oil students reflect more on their own learning and contributions.

In surveys, students acknowledge the significance of clearly defined learning outcomes, assessment criteria, and regular feedback on their progress. The academic staff consistently review their experiences, collaborate with colleagues, analyze student performance, and enhance course descriptions and the e-learning environment. They develop assessment criteria aligned with the intended learning outcomes, forming a solid basis for evaluation (SAR, p.33).

The final exam in the Academic bachelor study programme "Sports, Technology and Public Health" (43813) is the successful defense of the bachelor's thesis and a qualification paper for study programme "Sports Coach". The qualification paper for the First level (short-cycle) study programme "Sports Coach" (41813) is commonly linked to their practice activities in specific sports. Some of the bachelor's thesis were mentioned as examples of good collaboration with the sport field employer representatives.

During the assessment visit meetings with graduates, the experts got the evidence that students are free in the choice of the thesis topic and get enough support from supervisors and technician staff.

The defense of the final papers are evaluated by a committee composed of the faculty of the UL and not less than 50% of employers.

1.1.6. UL has well-defined principles of academic integrity and mechanisms for their abidance, up to date anti-plagiarism tools promote the development of the academic culture of the university. The main principles, regulations and tools are applied, and all stakeholders are involved and informed about them. The main background of academic integrity is the Academic Ethics Code of the University of Latvia (the UL Senate Decision No. 2-3/46 of 26.04.2021) and the Regulations on Academic Integrity at the University of Latvia (the UL Senate Decision No. 2-3/48 of 26.04.2021). These regulations are publicly available to the staff of the UL and its students (SAR, p.35).

To ensure full and transparent adherence to academic integrity UL developed a procedure for verifying the originality of text using similarity detection tools, such as the Turnitin and the Unified Computerised Plagiarism Control System. In accordance with the Regulations on the Use of Text Originality Verification Tools and Procedure for Plagiarism Detection in the UL (approved on 09.01.2024 with the Order No. 1-4/12) verification of text originality is conducted in students' study papers, and final theses, as well as in scientific articles and research developed by the personnel of the UL (SAR, p.35).

UL constantly follows the latest development of anti-plagiarism platforms and in 2022 signed an agreement with the company Turnitin LLC for the implementation and use of a plagiarism prevention tool "Turnitin Similarity" for LU needs. The tool compares the uploaded papers with study papers of previous years (starting from 2005) from UL and other HEI, and in the case of a certain percentage

match, the authorized persons from faculties are sent an overview of these test results. Delegated persons pass this information for initial evaluation to the director of the relevant study programme, the supervisor of the final thesis and the reviewer, and in case there is a suspicion of a violation of academic integrity, the results of this analysis are then forwarded to the final examination commission for review and final decision (SAR p.36). The students are informed about the general conditions of the internal regulations of the University and the basic conditions of the study process in order to prevent the violation of the principles of academic integrity in the final works of the University (Regulations No.1./125/22.04.2014).

The faculty has a collegial Ethics Commission on research with human involvement. The Commission is a consultative body whose purpose is to provide recommendations and evaluate the compliance of research in the fields of education, psychology, art and sports with the ethical principles of research with human involvement.

During the assessment visit, the experts gain evidence that academic staff are convinced of respecting the principles of integrity in students' works and the ability to cope with the challenges of artificial intelligence influence. The students are well instructed about scientific integrity and have access to an anti-plagiarism system for self-check.

According to SAR (p.37) no cases of plagiarism have been detected in the study programmes of the study field "Sport".

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

Conclusions:

The aim and tasks of the study field "Sports" are justified and in accordance with the scope of the UL activities, strategic development directions, the needs of society and the economy and development trends, which are determined by the UL strategy for 2021-2027. Academic bachelor study programme "Sports, Technology and Public Health" (43813) and First level (short-cycle) study programme "Sports Coach" (41813) were licensed in April 2019 and are included in the 2013 accredited study field "Education, Pedagogy and Sport", which is currently divided into two study fields - "Education and Pedagogy" and "Sport". Two levels are implemented in the study field "Sport": First level (short-cycle) study programme "Sports Coach" (41813) and Academic bachelor study programme "Sports, Technology and Public Health" (43813).

There is a close cooperation of the study field administration and staff with the sport field. Students highly appreciate the opportunity to gain knowledge from engaged professionals, although there are still opportunities for growth by engaging foreign lecturers.

The study field administration foresees becoming the national level player in the Sport sciences. To achieve this goal, it is necessary to improve the scientific research base and supplement the offer of bachelor's level programmes.

The management structure of the study field and its programmes aligns with regulations, is well-defined, and focused on the field's development. Decision-making processes are efficient, and the administrative and technical staff provide adequate support to meet the needs of the study field and its programmes. UL has implemented a clear and effective system with detailed procedures for student admissions, recognition of study periods, professional experience, prior formal and non-formal education, and assessment of student achievements and learning outcomes. The methods, principles, and procedures for assessing student achievements are well-developed, clearly defined, and accessible to all stakeholders.

UL has established clear principles of academic integrity and mechanisms to ensure their observance, including effective anti-plagiarism tools that foster the university's internal culture. These principles, regulations, and tools are applied consistently, with all stakeholders being informed and involved. UL uses an up to dated plagiarism control tool "Turnitin Similarity". The culture of academic integrity is introduced and strongly supported at UL.

Strengths:

1. The study field corresponds to all the related law regulations.
2. The study field corresponds to the strategy of the University of Latvia 2021-2027 and growing demand of the labour market.
3. Academic bachelor study programme "Sports, Technology and Public Health" (43813) and First level (short-cycle) study programme "Sports Coach" (41813) are mutually coordinated programmes, which allow graduates to continue their studies in one or the other programme.
4. Awareness of strengths and weaknesses, which allows for the development of a study field.
5. The First level (short-cycle) study programme "Sports Coach" (41813) is available in regional branches.
6. The possibility for high-perform athletes to apply for dual carrier programmes.
7. The graduates of the study programmes are highly rated by employers.

Weaknesses:

1. Low number of students in regional branches.

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

### **Analysis**

1.2.1. The UL has formulated the Quality Policy ([https://www.lu.lv/fileadmin/user\\_upload/LU.LV/www.lu.lv/Dokumenti/Dokumenti\\_EN/2/Kvalitates\\_poli\\_tika\\_majas\\_lapai\\_ENG.pdf](https://www.lu.lv/fileadmin/user_upload/LU.LV/www.lu.lv/Dokumenti/Dokumenti_EN/2/Kvalitates_poli_tika_majas_lapai_ENG.pdf)), which is detailed in the Quality Action Policy ([https://www.lu.lv/fileadmin/user\\_upload/LU.LV/www.lu.lv/Dokumenti/Dokumenti\\_EN/2/Kvalitates\\_ri\\_cbpolitika\\_majas\\_lapai\\_ENG\\_new.pdf](https://www.lu.lv/fileadmin/user_upload/LU.LV/www.lu.lv/Dokumenti/Dokumenti_EN/2/Kvalitates_ri_cbpolitika_majas_lapai_ENG_new.pdf)) in directors of study line with its strategic core values. The UL Studies Quality assurance System has been implemented and integrated into the UL Quality Management System (in compliance with EFQM). The development and internal approval of study programmes are stipulated in the Regulations of UL on Study Programmes and Continuing Education Programmes (the UL Senate Decision No 102 of 24.04.2017). Periodic quality review of study programmes is stipulated in the Procedure for Preparation of Annual Reports on UL Study Fields.

According to SAR (chapter 2.2.), the provision of management levels involved in the quality assurance of the study programme allows implementing the programmes in a predefined form according to predefined procedures, reacting promptly to changes in situation, with quality-related decisions being taken collectively or according to the division of competence. An important methodological tool for quality assurance is the Quality Management Handbook of the UL, which identifies in detail the practice of the UL in ESG implementation.

The functioning of a sustainable curriculum that meets the objectives of UL's field of study "Sport" and curricula is ensured through the systematic definition and implementation of quality assurance procedures, including continuous monitoring and analysis of curriculum implementation, the use of measurements for rapid implementation of preventive and improvement measures. It is to be acknowledged that equal supervision and quality are ensured in all places of implementation of the Sports Coaching Programme in Riga and in the regional branches. This is evidenced by the fact that the composition of the teaching staff in Riga and in regional branches is mostly the same, thus ensuring equal opportunities for students to acquire knowledge.

According to the SAR (p.37), the study process for the first level (short-cycle) study programme "Sports Coach" (41813) is common (in Riga), so the infrastructure used is the same for all student groups. It should be noted that the infrastructure in terms of sports facilities was also very modern and of a high standard in all the regional branches, despite the relatively small population of the region. Therefore, the presence of active coaches contributing to the development of the community is essential to ensure sustainability and attract new residents to the area. UL contribution to the training of professionals in the branches is therefore recognized. However, it remains unclear to

what extent continuing education and training opportunities will be provided for professionals already in employment.

The desired ethical and fair conduct and justice is ensured at UL by regulating internally the issues of academic freedom and academic integrity, by selecting and ensuring academic arbitration, by ensuring the functioning of the Academic Ethics Committee and by regulating the principles of protection of intellectual property rights. During the evaluation visits, faculty and research staff highlighted the abundance and diversity of training courses, including in the area of academic integrity.

The conclusion could be made that the quality system ensures continuous improvement, development, and efficient performance of the study field and the relevant study programmes.

1.2.2. According to SAR (p.39), the development of the study field and the interconnection of study programmes, the results of each existing programme are planned, monitored, evaluated, and reviewed, ensuring the involvement of all levels of the study field management in the quality assurance of studies, as well as representatives of key stakeholders. The review of study programmes is regulated by the procedure established in The UL Procedure for Preparation of Annual Study Field Reports (approved by the UL Order No. 1/255 of 13.07.2018).

According to SAR (chapter 2.2.2.), the development of the programme will take place in several phases. The UL Heads of Study Areas, in collaboration with the Curriculum Directors, prepare an annual self-evaluation report, which is approved by the relevant Study Area Council and the Faculty Council and submitted to the Academic Department. The Academic Department assesses the compliance of the self-evaluation report and refers it to the SP Quality Council, which includes all Vice-Chancellors, the Chairperson of the Academic Committee of the UL Senate, a representative of the UL Student Council, a representative of the UL Alumni Club, a representative of the UL Library, the Quality Manager, the Internal Auditor, and representatives of the Academic Department and Learning Services, for evaluation.

The evaluation visit showed that the main parties involved in UL (Director of Studies and Programmes, Directors of Regional Branches, Lecturers, Research Staff) understand their role in the quality system. For example, there was clear evidence of collaboration between faculty in curriculum development and research, but there could be more collaboration between branch directors, e.g. to develop and implement a joint strategy to attract potential students to ensure greater competition and quality.

There is also a lack of clear and visible cooperation between regional branch employers and UL. Employers have contributed to the development of curricula and the provision of internships for students and, where possible, financial support for tuition fees, but their role in curriculum development is currently unclear. For example, meetings with regional employers and stakeholders revealed a clear need for coaches with a bachelor's degree who could also teach in general education schools and for people with disabilities. However, there is no system or strategy for communicating these needs to UL.

Feedback from students and alumni is also an important part of the internal quality assurance system. A wide range of data is collected from students on an ongoing basis, as well as various types of feedback (SAR, chapters 2.1.5., 2.2.1, 2.2.4., 3.2.3., 2.4.5.). However, at the meeting with students and alumni, experts could not clearly identify examples of what UL has improved based on this feedback. It is possible that this information is available to them, but that students are not sufficiently directed to access it. The student-centred approach also raises questions about collecting feedback from students on the quality of lecturers and their lectures. More attention should be paid to the analysis of students as learners.

There is no doubt that LU appreciates the feedback from different parties. However, there is a lack of information on the strategy for gathering feedback from employers and apprenticeship supervisors and on the developments that have been made based on feedback from students,

alumni and employers. This information should be available to all stakeholders.

1.2.3. The UL ensures democratic participation of applicants and students in evaluating the study process, from admissions to final examinations, adhering to its Quality Assurance Policy. Applicants can lodge complaints about the admission process with the Admission Board Chairman, as governed by the UL Terms of Admission (Senate decision No. 2-3/68 of 31.05.2021).

Students can also submit proposals and complaints regarding the study process, material quality, employee conduct, and unethical actions. In 2022, UL updated its procedure for handling such submissions (Order No. 1-4/501 of 28.09.2022), which can be directed to faculty deans or vice rectors. Responses must comply with deadlines set by the Law on Submissions, and an annual report is submitted to the UL Quality Manager.

The Procedure for the Organisation of Study Course Examinations (Senate Decision No. 211 of 29.06.2015) allows students to complain about assessment procedures within five working days. Graduation examination regulations (Senate Decision No. 183 of 27.12.2011) also allow appeals against dean decisions or examination procedures. The Academic Court of Arbitration handles various study-related issues, including assessment principles.

Students can appeal exmatriculation orders, tuition fee relief decisions, academic leave denials, and decisions regarding study progression. UL's dormitory regulations provide for complaint submissions about housing issues. The Academic Ethics Codex (Senate Decision No. 2-3/46 of 26.04.2021) allows students to report ethical violations and suggest improvements. The UL complaint and proposal system applies to all aspects of student life, from enrolment to final examinations. In the "Sport" study field, students are encouraged to communicate issues promptly, with course representatives elected to liaise with programme directors.

According to SAR (chapters 2.2.3., 3.2.3.), over the past few years, there have been few complaints and appeals related to the "Sport" programmes, all resolved through investigation and discussion. It should be noted, however, that during the meeting with students and alumni it appeared that they were very grateful for the opportunity to provide feedback and complaints but were not sure what improvements had been made as a result.

It is certain that the process put in place demonstrates a cyclical monitoring of the internal control mechanism and complaints, decision making, respect for students' rights and interests, which is essential to ensure that this system functions acceptably and can be improved. However, attention needs to be paid to communicating improvement actions based on student feedback, and this information needs to be available to students.

1.2.4. The UL has developed an efficient mechanism for collecting and analyzing statistical data on study programmes (chapter 2.2.4.). This system captures comprehensive data on applicants, matriculated students, and their profiles, including education background, exam scores, and demographic details. Additionally, it tracks student numbers across various categories such as faculty, programme, study level, and financing source.

To monitor student progress and programme implementation, the college collects data on assessments, programme completion, academic debts, and tuition fee compliance each semester. This ensures that the college can make informed decisions about student support and programme adjustments. For resource planning and usage, the college gathers data on study place financing and the number of scholarship recipients and student loans. This data supports efficient allocation and utilization of resources.

Feedback mechanisms include regular surveys targeting study courses, teaching staff, new and graduating students, those discontinuing studies, graduates, and employers. These surveys provide valuable insights into the quality of education and areas for improvement. It should be mentioned, however, that during the assessment visit it became apparent on several occasions that there is no possibility to involve more guest lecturers from abroad in the teaching due to low salaries. The

survey results are summarized and made accessible to students and staff, ensuring transparency and continuous enhancement of study programmes.

Overall, this comprehensive and systematic approach to data collection and feedback ensures that the college can effectively monitor and improve its study programmes, aligning them with student needs and labour market demands.

1.2.5. The target audience of the UL website (<https://www.lu.lv/en/>) includes prospective and current students, employees, partners, scientists, and the public. The website provides access to public information about UL's activities and consists of various sections:

Rotating News: highlights essential UL information, strengthening the university's digital identity.

News and Events: current affairs and planned events, prepared by the Department of Communication.

Discover UL: information about studies, extracurricular activities, and science.

Studies: detailed information on study programmes (college, bachelor's, master's, doctoral) and relevant study processes, prepared by the Department of Communication in cooperation with the Academic and Study Service Departments.

Admission: information for prospective students about programmes, admission requirements, loans, scholarships, and frequently asked questions.

Other Sections: include Science, Cooperation, About Us, offering more details about research, projects, conferences, and UL strategy.

The website also links to self-assessment reports, faculty-specific sites, and additional information about research institutes and projects. Faculty websites, such as the Faculty of Education Sciences and Psychology, provide detailed information on their specific programmes and activities. Content is managed by department heads and content administrators, ensuring accuracy and regular updates. Information submitted in other languages must include an English or Latvian translation.

During the assessment visit, students rated both the website and the online learning environment highly. They found it quick and convenient to find and access information (including study materials, grades, timetable changes etc.).

In conclusion, the published information on the website of the UL provides applicants, students and other stakeholders with the most important information.

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

Conclusions:

UL has a high-level quality policy that ensures quality teaching, including in regional branches, by valuing feedback from different stakeholders and student complaints, and by taking into account the situation in a country with a shortage of adequately qualified coaches and a high average age of existing coaches. However, despite UL's very well thought-out strategies to ensure quality and collect feedback, more attention should be paid than in the past to gathering feedback from employers and sharing information with students, which has been improved on the basis of their feedback. The study field is characterized by highly motivated students and dedicated teaching staff who maintain a strong collaborative relationship. The assessment visit to the regional branches revealed an extremely high level of motivation among their directors, which makes it difficult to identify weaknesses and suggest improvements. However, more attention could be paid to developing cooperation between the directors of the regional branches. The information published on the website of the HEI about the study programmes corresponding to the study field corresponds to the information available in the official registers (VIIS and E-platform).

Strengths:

1. UL will be able to ensure consistent quality (both in terms of teaching and equipment) equally

across all regional branches.

2. Comprehensive and systematic approach to data collection ensures that the UL can effectively monitor and improve its study programmes.

Weaknesses:

1. UL collects a variety of feedback from students, but students are not aware of the improvements made based on their feedback.

2. UL cooperates closely with employers on the provision of traineeships for students, but lacks a clear strategy for gathering feedback and suggestions from employers.

### **Assessment of the requirement [1]**

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

UL ensures continuous improvement, development, and efficient performance of the study field by implementing its internal quality assurance system. However, it needs to take a closer look at employer feedback and establish a process to inform students about the implemented improvements based on their input. It is important to note that these adjustments do not affect the overall assessment of this requirement.

One criterion is partially compliant, but this does not affect the evaluation of the requirement, as UL still collects feedback from different parties, but more attention should be paid to feedback from employers and feedback to students on improvements made based on feedback. These shortcomings can be quickly remedied by UL.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The quality of higher education is assured.

- 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

A mechanism for the development and internal approval of the study programmes of UL is developed.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

Student progress and compliance with learning outcomes are ensured.

- 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

The quality of academic staff is guaranteed.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Partially compliant

UL collects feedback from a variety of parties, but more attention should be paid to feedback from employers and a strategy should be developed to communicate to students what has been improved based on their feedback.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

UL ensures continuous improvement, development, and efficient performance of the study field whilst implementing its quality assurance systems.

### 1.3. Resources and Provision of the Study Field

#### Analysis

1.3.1. According to the SAR (p.51) UL has sufficient resources to implement the study programmes and ensure its further development. The main costs of the implementation of the study process are the wage of the teaching staff. According to the SAR (p.51-52) full time programme 62% and part time according 51%. Part-time extramural students study the sport modules together with Riga part-time extramural and full-time students, and specific modular courses are organised jointly for both forms of study as well. This allows saving financial resources. The wage norms of academic staff are based on the Rector's Order, determined in the Planning and Accounting Regulations for Academic Personnel's Workload (the UL Order No. 1/469 of 07.12.2016) (SAR, p.49). The main income for the study field is obtained from study fees but according to SAR (p.50) there are additional financing available from lifelong learning or other services, as well as accumulated unit funds and UL Study Quality Improvement Fund for programmes development.

There is no direct data in SAR about the availability of financing for scientific work but is mentioned general information of research funding sources for academic staff for research activities, participation in international projects, publication of scientific articles, preparation of international project applications, and organisation of scientific events. During the assessment visit meeting with the field and programmes directors experts gain evidence that a procedure for receiving research funding within the faculty and scientific projects has been developed but there is still room for improvement especially considering the consolidation process of the UL faculties.

According to SAR (p.52) all income received from the state budget and tuition fees, and other sources are used for financing the study process, after deduction of indirect expenses, the UL allocates for use by the faculties. The faculty is independent to manage received funding and the dean and the executive director of the respective faculty are responsible for the rational use of financial resources and performing of operational financial management.

During the assessment visit of the regional branches as one of the advantages, it was mentioned the possibility to pay the tuition fee in several installments that is more convenient for students with lower incomes.

1.3.2. Most of the practical and theoretical courses of full time studies are held at the Faculty of Education, Psychology and Art building at Imantas 7.līnija in Riga. Some specific courses related to physiology, anatomy etc. are held in UL campus new building Dabas Māja. During the assessment

visit it was possible to gain evidence that there are modern and well equipped facilities for study and research work. Although the laboratory for extreme conditions physiology course is quite small, it is well equipped and sufficient for study purposes. The UL administration expects that in the foreseeable future the Sporta Māja will be built (planned in 2027) to allow it to move from its current FESP location to modern and fully equipped facilities with up-to-date laboratories and auditorium rooms. Although during the assessment visit the expert could not gain sufficient assurances that it will be on time and there could be significant delay. According to SAR (p. 53-54) and assessment visit the current FESP building there is good infrastructure, IT and technical support for the implementation of study programmes of the study field "Sports". There are spacious rooms for studies, well-equipped computer room, 3D printing facilities, and a sports hall that is fully accessible to students and staff only.

The courses of the first level (short-cycle) study programme "Sports Coach" (41813) are held at the Olympic Centre Rimi that is very well equipped and appropriate for programme modules. This facility is used also for regional branches students when they come to Riga for practical courses. The Latvian Tennis Federation (LTF), based on a contract between UL and LTS, provides the infrastructure and equipment for tennis at the Enri Tennis Club (SAR, p.54).

As an advantage, it can be mentioned that lectures are planned for students so that they do not have to move to other premises during the day. As a non-essential drawback, it can be mentioned that there is no outdoor field available for football specialization.

During the assessment visit in regional branches (Tukums, Kuldīga, Cēsis and Madona) the experts gain evidence that premises are well equipped as well. The experts saw very good sports facilities that are provided by local municipalities based on bilateral agreements. But there is uncertainty about their use, since the specialized courses are mainly organized in Riga and just some practical courses are held in branches.

1.3.3. The main UL Library is included in the Library Register of the Ministry of Culture and accredited until 2027 in the status of national library. New acquisitions for the collection are conducted in accordance with the UL centralised funding according to the orders of the academic staff, the proposal of the student self-government which are entered into ULIS and have been approved by the dean of the faculty or the executive director. In 2022, the Library makes available two million information resources (SAR, p.56).

During the assessment visit, experts had the opportunity to visit the FESP library that is well stocked with the possibility to order books from the central repository. Regional branches cooperate with the UL sectoral libraries, order the necessary literature on the e-sites and have the possibility to send to the branch as well. The necessary books and sources can also be ordered from abroad too. The library staff provide the full information about library possibilities and work with scientific databases. At the beginning of each semester, by mutual agreement with the head of the FESP library, practical seminars are organised for each group of students on the use of library resources in the study process (SAR, p.58). The library has 36 workstations, including 19 computer workstations. The library premises are quite comfortable with space for students for reading and preparing the studies. There are 57 titles of printed information resources available in the library for the implementation of the study field "Sport" (SAR, p.56). As the priority in replenishing the collection is the purchase of e-resources, this number is sufficient for studies. One of the main goals of the studies is the ability to find and analyze the necessary information in scientific databases and repositories. UL library provides wide access to digital platforms. In 2022, the UL provides access to 42 e-resource platforms (e-books platforms, e-journals databases and individual subscribed e-journals, reference resources and tools, mixed-format databases). In total there are 17 477 full-text e-journals (including the individual subscribed e-journal titles), 205 306 e-books, almost 5 million full texts and abstracts of doctoral and master's theses from around the world available through subscriptions. The UL also provides links to 174 credible open-access databases with multi-format materials (SAR, p.56). As the

main data accessible databases could be mentioned Web of Science, Taylor & Francis Social Science & Humanities Library, ScienceDirect, SAGE Journals Online etc.

It can be confirmed that all students and academic staff receive the necessary literature and resources for studies and scientific work.

1.3.4. The Department of Information Technology of the UL provides the UL students and staff with an application package Microsoft Office 365 and software for data analysis such as SPSS. In addition to the common MS Teams programme for the online study process, the UL offers its students and the teaching staff a web video conferencing system BigBlueButton (hereinafter – BBB system), which is an open-source web online videoconferencing system. BBB ensures the organisation of the University's online events for the UL personnel, including students and event attendees. The open-source e-study environment Moodle is used for study process and management. It is a commonly used platform as it is methodologically and economically the most effective e-study solution.

During the assessment visit, experts had the opportunity to overview the courses that have been developed in the Moodle e-study environment, where the study materials and activities for students are available, and the assessment criteria are well structured. During the assessment visit meeting with administrative staff it was stated that based on the Moodle inquiry results, regular measures are taken to improve study programmes and the study process. There is room for discussion about course evaluation by students as it is available during the whole course with no specific time frame, and the extent to which it is objective or formal.

For data transfer, the UL offers its students and employees a specific large-scale file transfer system that allows sending files that cannot be sent over an e-mail due to the size.

During the assessment visit it could be confirmed that the infrastructure resources, material, and technical support of the UL premises and regional branches fully allow providing the necessary conditions for the theoretical and practical study of the study courses. The study rooms have access to high-quality visual equipment - whiteboards, interactive boards, document cameras, screens, multimedia projectors, laptops, audio and video equipment.

1.3.5. The UL's internal policies and procedures offer a solid basis for attracting qualified educators. These procedures are meant to be transparent and inclusive, involving multiple stakeholders to ensure top-notch employment procedures.

At the UL, a comprehensive and clearly defined system of policies governs the hiring of new teachers. These are based on the strategic vision of the university, but they also work towards long-term institutional goals that improve the standard of instruction and research. These policies, which are described in detail in the SAR and the mentioned normative acts, establish a precise framework and match recruiting procedures with more general academic goals. Postings for academic positions are distributed via a variety of platforms. The official internet site of the institution, in conjunction with esteemed academic and professional networks, guarantees that every job opening reaches a broad audience. This approach not only increases the number of applicants, but it also demonstrates the university's dedication to diversity and inclusivity in the formation of its academic community (SAR, p.61).

UL's hiring procedure is notable for its diversity. Academic departments and faculty committees are essential in ensuring that a variety of perspectives and viewpoints are considered when making hiring decisions. This process, which is explained in detail in the SAR, encourages transparency and collaboration and democratises the recruiting process. It is also extremely comprehensive. Prospective academics have to endure a rigorous selection process. This involves assessing not only their unique demand of delivering an open lecture, but also their academic background and teaching talents. This lecture acts as a real-time evaluation of the candidates' capacity for engagement and education, with colleagues and occasionally students providing feedback to ensure that only the most qualified candidates are selected (SAR, p.61).

The hiring process is continuously evaluated, with the use of an extensive feedback system that takes into account the opinions of department heads, new hires, and outside audits. In order to keep recruitment tactics in line with the highest standards of academic achievement, it is imperative that this iterative approach be used (SAR, p.62).

The institution welcomes newly hired faculty members with a carefully designed induction programme. This programme, which aims to accelerate their professional growth, provides them with pedagogical training, mentorship, and in-depth briefings on the strategic goals of the university. In order to successfully integrate new personnel into the institutional culture, such measures are essential (SAR, p.63-65).

All hiring procedures are well documented in accordance with the university's strict Quality Assurance guidelines. In addition to being evidence of the process's transparency, these documents are essential for assessments by accrediting agencies and other interested parties, guaranteeing responsibility and honesty in hiring procedures (SAR, p.62).

These meticulous hiring practices help the UL attract and retain outstanding academics and instructors. In addition to achieving the university's goal of fostering academic excellence, this ensures that the faculty body is in accordance with the strategic and developmental objectives of the academic community as a whole.

1.3.6. The UL is excellent in methodically determining the needs of its faculty members in terms of didactic and professional growth. The identification process is intricately linked with the performance review systems of the university, guaranteeing that the developmental needs correspond with both the strategic educational objectives of the university and the career aspirations of the individual. As per the SAR (p.16, 25, 45) and expert interviews, the complete assessment is greatly influenced by the feedback obtained from peer reviews, student evaluations, and annual performance appraisals.

Once the needs for development have been determined, the university takes specific steps to improve. Their purpose is to improve areas that require improvement, such as pedagogical skills and research capacities. Regularly scheduled sabbaticals, seminars, and workshops help academics gain new skills and broaden their expertise. Furthermore, participation in international conferences and collaborations with other educational institutions are encouraged, fostering a dynamic learning environment that keeps up with the global advancements in education (SAR, p.63-65). A comprehensive assessment of the effectiveness of these professional development activities is carried out in order to ascertain the impact they have on teaching quality and academic output. This evaluation method combines peer reviews, student comments, and self-evaluations to give a comprehensive picture of the effectiveness of the development initiatives.

Every professional development activity is well documented, with results added to the university's strategic data collection. All improvement measures are traceable and their long-term efficacy may be evaluated thanks to this documentation method. Changes are implemented in response to the new information, guaranteeing that the development programmes stay current and successfully advance the university's teaching standards (SAR, p.52).

The UL's systematic method for determining, carrying out, and assessing professional development needs greatly improves the competence of the teaching staff. As a result, learning outcomes for students are enhanced, and this supports the institution's objective of attaining excellence in research and teaching.

1.3.7. At the UL, the distribution of workload – covering academic, research, and administrative responsibilities – is thought to be managed (as per expert interviews) to ensure fairness and effectiveness. There are no detailed policies that stipulate clear guidelines for workload allocation, aligning with both the university's academic objectives and the personal well-being of the faculty.

The interview with the University of Latvia's administrative staff indicated the possibility of a balanced workload. However, conversations with the teaching staff highlighted some concerns about

balancing teaching duties and research activities. It's important to note that these were isolated cases and do not represent the overall view of the teaching staff, which seemed to be positive during the interviews.

Understanding the importance of research in academic careers, as per interviews with the UL representatives, the UL offers specific support to ensure research activities do not overshadow teaching responsibilities. Initiatives include sabbaticals, grant support, and access to research assistants. Such support is crucial for enabling faculty to engage in research without undue pressure from other duties, as noted in the SAR.

1.3.8. The UL has carefully determined a variety of essential support services that are customised to meet the various demands of its student body. This covers particular accommodations for students with special needs, part-time students, overseas students, and remote learners. Every student group gains from specific support strategies that are described in-depth in the university's self-assessment records, guaranteeing that every student gets the help they require to thrive both academically and socially (SAR, chapter 2.3.8.).

The UL provides a thorough orientation programme for international students that covers academic coaching, language support, and help with cultural adjustment. Flexible scheduling and specialised advising services that meet their individual needs help part-time students manage their education with their duties to their families, jobs, and other commitments. These services have extensive documentation, and their effectiveness and responsiveness are continuously evaluated. The UL provides its remote learners with a wealth of digital resources, such as online libraries, technical support desks, and virtual tutoring. The institution has also made great progress in meeting the needs of students with special needs; customised learning accommodations are offered as requested, and newly constructed buildings are completely accessible. These efforts are coordinated by a dedicated office that oversees the integration and support of these students, ensuring their full participation in academic life.

The UL collects and analyses student input, retention rates, and performance indicators to assess the effectiveness of these support services on a regular basis. The institution is able to adjust to new opportunities and problems as they present themselves by continuously improving and refining its support services thanks to this continuing evaluation.

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

Conclusions:

The faculty has sufficient resources to implement the study field "Sport" and ensure its further development. The main income for the study field is obtained from study fees with a minimal profit. The tuition fees are based on reasonable calculations that provide for the minimum required number of students in each programme to cover the costs. There are additional UL funding resources which provide additional financing for the development of the study field. The faculty administration is independent to manage received financing ensuring the study process and scientific work.

The currently used premises and equipment are adequate to ensure a qualitative study process for both theoretical and practical lessons. The planned new premises in UL campus territory will ensure the development of the study programme in the future. The regional branches facilities and IT support are good as well as the main FESP building that ensure the same study quality for all students.

The literature and e-resource for studies and research are in the appropriate amount and freely available. The premises of the library are tailored to the needs of students.

The Moodle e-study environment ensures a high-quality study process and a transparent assessment system. Additional IT solutions ensure convenient and safe exchange of information between students and lecturers.

The UL makes a concerted effort to attract a diverse and outstanding faculty through extensive international recruitment and rigorous selection processes. It is great that there is a commitment to ongoing professional development, offering a variety of opportunities that support employees' lifelong learning and inventiveness. More specific policies in job distribution management could improve teacher satisfaction and ensure fairness. Furthermore, the university excels in providing comprehensive support to a diverse student body, significantly increasing student satisfaction, and fostering an inclusive learning environment.

#### Strengths:

1. To make sure that only the most qualified applicants are selected, the university uses a rigorous selection procedure that includes peer reviews, in-depth interviews, and teaching demonstrations.
2. Faculty members are encouraged to continue being innovative and lifelong learners when they get significant support for their research efforts, such as cash possibilities and research leaves.
3. To provide an inclusive learning environment, the University of Latvia has set up comprehensive support services for all students, including international students, part-time students, remote learners, and students with special needs.
4. The continual assessment of student support services and the proactive adjustment of these services in response to student feedback ensure that the support systems remain efficient and responsive to the needs of students.
5. The tuition fees are in accordance with students' financial capabilities and the need to cover the costs.
6. Well organized collaboration with local municipalities in regional branches and sport facilities in Riga.

#### Weaknesses:

1. Needs Assessment Specificity: A lack of individualization in the process of evaluating the professional development requirements of teaching staff may result in a one-size-fits-all approach that ignores some areas for professional or personal growth.
2. Workload policies and/or guidelines: There are no detailed policies that stipulate clear guidelines for workload allocation.

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

#### **Analysis**

1.4.1. Fundamental and applied research in the study field "Sport" is in line with the goals of the UL, the field of study and the level of scientific development. There are some projects and publications carried out by the teaching staff and researchers involved in the study field, including publications indexed in Web of Science and Scopus (SAR, p.73). Research in the fields of sport, technology and public health is carried out in close cooperation with several research fields, developing scientific and applied research. Sport and public health research are mainly carried out at the Faculty of Education Sciences and Psychology and its research institutes and centres (the Education Research Institute and the Scientific Institute of Pedagogy), including research related to pedagogical activities. In the Faculty of Biology, research is mainly related to the physiology of physical exercise. In the Faculty of Medicine (Institute of Clinical and Preventive Medicine, Institute of Cardiology and Regenerative Medicine), the research is related to public health and environmental health, cardiac health of young people, athletes, and functional capacity. In the Faculty of Computer Science (Laboratory of Perceptual and Cognitive Systems) various cognitive abilities are studied in relation to athletic performance (SAR, p.74).

The UL focuses its efforts on providing quality studies and developing scientific research of good quality, namely creating structures open to interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary research and

studies (SAR, p.4, 73), which is very positive. Nevertheless, when analyzing in detail the list of the publications presented by the teaching staff, the most relevant ones are not totally related to "Sport" and there is a gap on the publications in the most significant and impactful journals in this study field. Moreover, there are some significant differences among academic staff members (including elected academic staff) in their research publications and projects. Therefore, at this consolidation phase of the LU it would be important to define a global strategy to overcome these concerns, namely, to decrease the differences in the scientific outputs among the elected academic staff and to focus the research scope on a more centered "Sport" approach.

1.4.2. There is a good connection between the scientific research and the study process, especially under the courses that support the "Sport" field. Study courses included in the study programmes are related to the research areas of the teaching staff, especially considering the interdisciplinary focus of the interventions. Teaching staff integrate their research experience and the involvement in specific research projects into their study courses, thus ensuring students acquire continuously up-to-date knowledge and skills. Moreover, LU libraries are very well equipped with access to databases of scientific publications allowing the development of study courses using the latest research findings, that can be used either by teachers or students.

For instance, the Academic bachelor study programme "Sports, Technology and Public Health" (43813) and the First level (short-cycle) study programme "Sports Coach" (41813) include courses that introduce students to the selection and analysis of specialised literature, the methods used in research, as well as the processing, discussion and presentation of research results, such as "Sports Research", "Sport Psychology", "Basics of Physical Activity and Load". In some courses, this is achieved by including writing of reports or performing individual research assignments in students' independent work. At the end of the studies, under the supervision of the teaching staff (supervisors), final theses are prepared, respectively a bachelor's paper and a qualification paper, within the framework of which students choose their own research topic. The paper is developed using the knowledge and skills acquired during the study process, as well as the latest scientific knowledge and methods, and the analysis of scientific articles. The final paper is presented and defended as an integral part of the study process.

1.4.3. There are some approaches highlighting international cooperation in the field of scientific research, namely the projects developed under Erasmus+ funding, where both teaching staff and students are involved in these activities. One can underline the Erasmus+ project "More than Gold" (01/08/2019-31/12/2020), under the aim to develop dual career guidelines for university students - athletes, which is an up-to-date concern especially at LU; and the project "Yong Ordinary and Disable Sports Athletes Mentors (YODA) (20/05/2019-31/12/2020) which was implemented with the participation of foreign partners (Spain, Lithuania, and Portugal). The project "Comprehensive assessment and support programme to reduce the screen time related health risks in adolescents" supported by the Latvian Council of Science (LZP) can be a good example of research projects reinforcing international cooperation.

Although these participations are very positive, UL should reinforce the international cooperation in the field of scientific research, namely in connection with the invited lecturers and staff that participate in the study programmes. For instance, one should be aware that the main aim of the Erasmus+ call is not to develop research projects, thus a broader strategy must be prepared by the UL board to increase international cooperation for research purposes.

1.4.4. The UL has developed effective mechanisms for the involvement of the teaching staff in scientific research and applied research. Researchers are supported in their work and international cooperation is possible with the support of UL. Moreover, an incentive system for researchers has been set up in relation to publishing and research, aiming to motivate research activities and the

development of scientific outputs, which during the assessment visit was positively valued by the UL board but also by the teaching staff. Support systems are being set up and personal research lines are being developed.

Several teachers of the study field "Sport" are experts of the Latvian Council of Science (LZP) in "Social Sciences - Economics and Business", "Medical and Health Sciences - Health and Sport Sciences" (SAR, p.76), which must be emphasized as a positive remark.

From May 2019 to May 2023, 121 Web of Science and 101 Scopus scientific publications have been indexed for the faculty members involved in the field of study (SAR, p.76). The data show that the average number of publications in the period under review is 28 publications indexed in the Web of Science database and 22.5 publications indexed in Scopus. The outputs are very positive, highlighting the effort of the teaching staff and the LU board to develop and improve the research activities.

Nevertheless, as above mentioned, there are still some gaps to fill as there are significant differences between the research outputs of the teaching staff (including the academic elected) and most of the relevant staff CVs are not directly associated with Sports. Furthermore, the strategy of the UL should position the direction of the UL to the standards that they are willing to achieve, namely publications as original research in the most prestigious journals in the field of "Sport". At the same time, there are few staff members with a PhD in this specific field, thus an effort should be made to support the development of PhD in "Sport", increasing the number of teaching staff with specific education and experience in this field.

1.4.5. UL has developed several strategies and procedures to promote the involvement of the students in scientific activities. In several study courses, the teaching staff introduce students to scientific articles relevant to the content of the course.

During the study process, students are encouraged to participate in scientific seminars and conferences. Moreover, students are motivated to participate in the LU annual conference, being able to present the results of their research at this conference (SAR, p.75).

Another important cooperation is related to the implementation of the programmes of the study field in several faculties, where several research centres are also located, which increases the opportunities for students to integrate into the academic and research environment of the University, greatly facilitates the conduct of interdisciplinary research, as well as the use of equipment and laboratory facilities necessary for research.

There are good examples of the participation of students from the study field "Sport" in some projects developed by the teaching staff, namely the Erasmus+ projects. By participating in these projects, students can apply the knowledge gained in theory on data processing, physical performance tests and assessment, as well as to develop the acquired competence in relation to the objectives of the study field.

1.4.6. Innovative solutions are applied in the study field, though this application is yet a minor focus in the global development of the "Sport" field at UL. During the assessment visit some specific cases of innovation were indicated by some staff members, namely the application of technology in sport and some new approaches for the development of contents and IT technologies to assist the sport and coaches' activities. Another interesting approach was the participation in the sports idea Hackathon "SportaLab2022" organized in April 2022, in cooperation with the Innovation Centre of the LU (SAR, p.77), where the main prize of the competition was attributed to the team of students from the First level (short-cycle) study programme "Sports Coach" (41813), who presented and justified the use of technology in training planning. Similar types of innovation and new developments are also being implemented in partnership with employers. For example, different types of applications are used at Salaspils Sports School for the training process, which are mainly developed in the study environment of the study field "Sport".

Although these approaches are very important and positive, there are some steps to be applied to highlight this innovation content, namely in deep cooperation with the scientific research activities.

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

Conclusions:

In conclusion, the study field "Sport" at UL aligns well with the university's goals and the broader scientific landscape, showcasing significant research and interdisciplinary collaboration. The integration of research into the educational process is commendable, fostering a dynamic learning environment where students are actively engaged in scientific activities and encouraged to participate in international projects. However, there are notable gaps in the alignment of research outputs directly with the "Sport" field and disparities among academic staff in research productivity. To address these challenges, UL should develop a cohesive strategy to enhance research focus on sports, promote publications in high-impact journals, and increase the number of staff with PhD degrees in the sports field. Strengthening international research cooperation and innovation initiatives will further enhance the quality and impact of UL contributions to sports science.

Strengths:

1. There are some good projects and publications carried out by the teaching staff and researchers involved in the study field, including publications indexed in Web of Science and Scopus.
2. The UL focuses its efforts on providing quality studies and developing scientific research of good quality, namely creating structures open to interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary research and studies.
3. The UL has developed effective mechanisms for the involvement of the teaching staff in scientific research and applied research. Researchers are supported in their work and international cooperation is possible with the support of UL.
4. UL has developed several strategies and procedures to promote the involvement of the students in scientific activities.

Weaknesses:

1. When analyzing in detail the list of the publications presented by the teaching staff, the most relevant ones are not totally related to "Sport" and there is a gap on the publications in the most significant and impactful journals in this study field.
2. There are some significant differences among academic staff members (including elected academic staff) in their research publications and projects.
3. There are few staff members with a PhD in the field of sports.
4. The international cooperation in the field of scientific research is not fully developed.

### **Assessment of the requirement [2]**

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Partially compliant

Although there are some good projects and publications carried out by the teaching staff and researchers involved in the study field, including publications indexed in Web of Science and Scopus, the most relevant ones are not totally related to "Sport" and there is a gap on the publications in the most significant and impactful journals in this study field. Moreover, there are some significant differences among academic staff members (including elected academic staff) in their research publications and projects.

## 1.5. Cooperation and Internationalisation

### Analysis

1.5.1. UL and the teaching staff cooperate with different institutions from Latvia within the framework of the study field "Sport" (study field), allowing to improve the activities and the learning outcomes of this study field and the study programmes.

The UL has established a Sports Council (SAR, p.78), which acts in an advisory capacity. This council is composed of representatives of the sports sector, participating in the development of the Sports Policy of the UL. Moreover, employers and representatives of professional organisations in the field were involved in the development and implementation stages of the Academic bachelor study programme "Sports, Technology and Public Health" (43813) and the First level (short-cycle) study programme "Sports Coach" (41813), indicating suggestions for the content and structure of the programme and offering practice opportunities (SAR, p.78). Students are also regularly taken on study tours and on-site visits to important sports institutions, as for instance the Latvian Council of Sports Federations, the Latvian Olympic Committee, and the Latvian Sports Museum (SAR, p.78-79). Most of the specialized or qualification study courses are taught by the academic staff who are permanently working in the field, in sports and health organisations, allowing an important connection between theory and practice (SAR, p.79, 113, 145). This situation is of great importance especially to facilitate the integration of the students in the labour market namely during the internships. Both staff members and students are very pleased with the opportunities to develop different projects and activities with sport and health institutions and to work in the field, applying the knowledge at the specific context of practice (information received during the assessment visit in the interviews with students and staff members).

Although the cooperation with the UL is very positive, there are some questions that can be better explored to help the institutions to improve their activities. For instance, during the assessment visit it was possible to notice that the education services for the staff of the institutions (adult education, lifelong education) from the UL facilities could be better explored. Moreover, the possibilities of having more cooperation on applied projects should be also developed. Concerning the internships, it would be important to support the coaches and other sport and health professionals who are tutoring the students with some specific education to better supervise these activities, namely some schooling support from the UL staff. This could be included in the protocol agreements in parallel with a deep supervision from the UL.

1.5.2. The internationalization of UL under this field is not fully developed, though there are some important aspects that should be underlined.

The UL regularly organises high-level international conferences, and faculty members are keen to participate. Furthermore, it is possible for lecturers to participate in international conferences, with some support of the UL (SAR, p. 80-81)..

According to SAR (p.79), lecturers from two foreign universities (F. Kobiela from The University of Physical Education in Krakow; L.E. Radu from the Alexandru Ioan Cuza University of Iași) participated in the development of the Academic bachelor study programme "Sports, Technology and Public Health" (43813). These universities implement similar sports programmes and lecturers have already established close scientific cooperation with the LU, which is very positive. Moreover, for the study programme "Sport, Technology and Public Health", two courses - "Sports Policy" (Philosophy of Sport), "Somatic and Functional Assessment of Movement" - are taught by faculty members from the University of Zagreb and the University of Iași, Romania (SAR, p.79-80). During the assessment visit, this participation was greatly validated by the UL teachers, foreign teachers (L.E. Radu) and the students.

The academic staff of the UL are offered the opportunity to go on Erasmus+ Mobility Programme exchange programmes to partner universities both as lecturers and as researchers. Within the

framework of the projects, there is an opportunity to establish cooperation contacts and develop joint projects. Programme directors organise meetings for the teaching staff and students with Erasmus+ coordinators of the UL with the most significant information (SAR, p.79-81).

The teaching staff have used the Erasmus+ Mobility and have visited foreign universities such as Coimbra University (Portugal), Alexandru Ioan Cuza University (Romania), Huelva University (Spain). LU has hosted teaching staff from Huelva University (Spain), Maltepe University (Turkey) and close cooperation has been established with partner universities involved in Erasmus+ projects, such as the Catolica San Antonio de Murcia University (Spain), the University of Rome Foro Italico (Italy), and the University of Lapland (Finland).

However, student mobility rates in the study field, as well as in the LU, are very low. Only one student from the SCSP "Sports Coach" participated in Erasmus+ mobility in Portugal (SAR, p.80). Therefore, UL must prepare a global plan to overcome this concern. For instance, online/remote mobility is possible to carry-out, intensive courses would also be a good option for students and teaching staff also.

1.5.3. Teaching staff regularly travel abroad to participate in scientific conferences and to promote international cooperation in the study fields and science (SAR, p.80-81). Such communication is an opportunity to promote the study field, to motivate foreign teaching staff and students to cooperate, and participate in the practical and scientific development of the study field "Sport", which is very positive.

Although some difficulties attract foreign specialists to the study programmes (difficulties to compete on salaries and the provision of on-site study), two foreign lecturers (F.Kobiela, from the University of Physical Education in Krakow; and L.E. Radu, from Alexandru Ioan Cuza University) participated in the development of the ASP "Sport, Technology and Public Health" and was involved in the implementation of two study courses. F. Kobiela has now ceased this collaboration, but on his recommendation, the Philosophy of Sport section of the "Sports Policy" course is taught by M.M. Škerbič, from the University of Zagreb. M.M. Škerbič is also the head of the European Association of Philosophers of Sport, an important association in the field of "Sport" (SAR, p.79-80).

According to SAR (p.81), there are also few teachers on incoming activities at UL, though the teaching staff from LU regularly participates in several international Erasmus+ mobilities (outgoing mobility). Regarding students' participation in outgoing and incoming mobility the values are very low. Until the assessment visit, there have been no foreign students in the study field of "Sports" and only one UL student from SCSP "Sports Coach" participated in Erasmus+ mobility (SAR, p.80-81). Hence, it could be recommended that UL prepare a strategy to improve internationalization outputs with specific aims, steps and milestones to be achieved.

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

Conclusions:

In conclusion, the UL study field "Sport" benefits from robust cooperation with various Latvian institutions, enhancing both activities and learning outcomes. The establishment of the Sports Council and active involvement of employers and professional organizations have significantly contributed to the development and implementation of the study programmes, facilitating valuable practical experiences for students. The collaboration with sports and health organizations ensures a vital connection between theory and practice, supporting students' integration into the labour market. However, there are opportunities for improvement, such as enhancing education services for staff and increasing cooperation on applied projects. Providing better support for coaches and sport professionals who supervise student internships is also recommended. Although UL organizes and participates in international conferences and Erasmus+ programmes, student mobility rates remain low. Thus, UL should develop a comprehensive strategy to boost internationalization

(including online mobility and intensive courses). Overall, UL has made significant strides in integrating practical experience with academic learning, but targeted efforts are needed to enhance international collaboration and mobility.

#### Strengths:

1. UL and the teaching staff cooperate with different institutions from Latvia within the framework of the study field, allowing to improve the activities and the learning outcomes of this study field and the study programmes.
2. Most of the specialized or qualification study courses are taught by the academic staff who are permanently working in the field, in sports and health organisations, allowing an important connection between theory and practice.
3. The academic staff of the UL are offered the opportunity to go on Erasmus+ Mobility Programme exchange programmes to partner universities both as lecturers and as researchers.
4. The presence of invited foreign teachers at the ASP "Sports Technology and Public Health" study programme.

#### Weaknesses:

1. Although the cooperation with the UL is very positive, there are some questions that can be better explored to help the Sports Latvian institutions to improve their activities (education services, project assistance, internships).
2. Student mobility rates in the study field are very low.

### Assessment of the requirement [3]

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Partially compliant

Although there are some good indicators (foreign teachers, outgoing mobility of teachers), the internationalization levels (especially from students) are very low.

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

#### Analysis

The study field "Education, Pedagogy and Sport" received accreditation on June 12th, 2013, according to the decisions by the Study Accreditation Commission. In SAR 2.6.1. it is written that at the time of licensing, both sports study programmes ( First level (short-cycle) study programme "Sports Coach" (41813) and Academic bachelor study programme "Sports, Technology and Public Health" (43813)) were included in the study field "Education, Pedagogy and Sport" and no recommendations were made in relation to the study field. Nevertheless, in the annex "SV-19-RECOMMENDATIONS.docx" there are 2 long-term recommendations presented (9 and 10):

1. "Short-term recommendation. Start enrolment of students in two new specializations (tennis and volleyball) from the academic year 2022/2023 (Recommendation from Approval of Changes in summer 2022/ No.2022/13-I)"

It is stated in the Report on implementation and recommendations that 7 new students have been enrolled in the specialization of volleyball (different section of SAR says 8), but no information is mentioned with regards to the number of enrolled students in the specialization of tennis, therefore this far the recommendation could be considered as partially completed.

2. "Long-term recommendation. To add physical fitness test elements to the admission criteria by

the time the programme is accredited (2023.12) (Recommendation from Approval of Changes in Summer 2022/ No.2022/13-I)”

In the Report on implementation and recommendations, first, it is stated that the recommendation is in progress, nevertheless later on it also stated that it was decided not to follow with this recommendation, but within admission criteria include annual average grade from highschool subject “Sport and Health” or an equal subject with different name. At the end it is not clear if the recommendation is completely dismissed (not completed) or partially completed when the constraining factors mentioned in the SAR (facilities, recording and assessment protocols etc.) would be sorted out...

As part of the current accreditation process, a new study field called "Sport" is being developed.

The Academic bachelor study programme “Sports, Technology and Public Health” (43813) was licensed on 20th of June, 2019, according to the decisions by the Study Accreditation Commission. At the time of licensing, there were 4 recommendations made and they are as follows:

1. “To evaluate the possibility of increasing the number of management-related subjects.”

As it is stated in the Report on implementation of recommendations (in SAR), implementing this recommendation is in progress. As an example it is mentioned that study course “Designing Advertising PR Campaigns” will be offered to students in Part C of the free elective courses and if the course will contribute significantly to the objectives of the study field and the programme, further updating of the course will be considered for inclusion in Part B of the restricted options. Nevertheless it is not clear, as of which semester/date the aforementioned study course will be available for students in part C and when the re-evaluation for including or not including it in part B would happen, and what could potentially be next management-related subjects incorporated in this study programme, therefore it is not clear, if there is a strategic approach and this recommendation could be considered as partially completed.

2. “Promote employers’ involvement in the management of the study program.”

Although, unfortunately, not a single employer who is included in the study council was present during the assessment visit, this recommendation could be considered as completed. Representatives of management were able to describe the involvement of employers in the study council and how continuous formal and informal communication is maintained between the management and teaching staff of the study programme and the employers. One example of employer involvement in the management of the study programme was organizing brainstorming sessions to formulate the requirements for students within this programme and later on including employer’s suggestions when developing and improving the curriculum.

3. “Promote the prospects of the study programme in the field of sports technology.”

Although this recommendation is continuous, it could be considered as completed. Both management and academic staff members were able to name several partnerships that the university has with sports technology companies and sports companies that use sports technology on a daily basis. For example Fan Apps and Kaizen Gym. The same message was conveyed by students, especially alumni, who mentioned that they were introduced with various sports technologies (e.g. training planning software, GPS monitoring systems) during their studies and taught basic skills to be able to work with the respective technologies.

4. “To ensure the continuous academic development and upgrading of the qualifications of the teaching staff in the study programme, as well as to encourage a continuous increase in the number of research publications by the teaching staff.”

In the Report of implementation of recommendations (in SAR), it is stated that the number of Web of Science/Scopus publications have increased in recent years and as well now more academic staff members hold PhD degrees, therefore the recommendation could be considered as completed. Nevertheless, it is important to bear in mind that academic development and upgrading of the qualifications of teaching staff is a continuous process, therefore it is suggested to try to minimize

the gap between the number and quality of publications between more experienced academic staff and the less experienced. Last but not least, with regards to professional development courses to look also outside of the courses offered by the University of Latvia, including internationally and also to work on the improvement of English language skills (raising the average level from B2 to C1).

The First level (short-cycle) study programme "Sports Coach" (41813) was licensed on 23rd of April, 2019, according to the decisions by the Study Accreditation Commission. At the time of licensing there were 8 recommendations made and they are as follows:

1. "There are concerns about implementing the programme in several regional branches of the University at the same time, given the limitations in teaching staff resources. (Sports Coach)"

After the assessment visit it is clear that the overall implementation of the study programme in regional branches is successful even with the limitations in teaching staff resources (the recommendation could be seen as completed). This conclusion is made based on the meetings with the directors of all branches, staff who travel to branches, both current students and graduates from branches. Students at branches are taught by the same staff that teaches the study programme in Riga in that way maintaining the quality of the study courses across all branches. What is more, staff members report that they do not mind the traveling part and do not see going to branches as a burden, but rather enjoy the change of environment and being able to travel during the year. Last but not least, management explains that finally academic staff members who go to branches now also get paid for the time they spend on the road.

2. "Insufficient child-centered approach to the training process (Sports Coach)"

As it is stated in the Report on implementation of recommendations (in SAR), the study course "Sports Education" curriculum has been improved to include more topics on child-centered approach. The recommendation could be considered as completed. Child-centered approach has also been chosen as focus in several qualification papers and bachelor thesis's.

3. "Concerns about comparable courses in the event of the programme's closure. The example given is the study programme "Sports Teacher". (Sports Coach)"

Based on the given information in the Report on implementation of recommendations (in SAR), 9 students have been cross-aligned and a total of 57 cross-alignments have been carried out since the programmes were licensed. The recommendation could be considered as completed.

4. "The topics of the attached publications do not sufficiently reflect research work in the field of sports science for the specializations Basketball and Football (Sports Coach)"

While according to the Report on implementation of recommendations and the List of publications (in SAR) there has been several publications produced for the specializations of Basketball (1 publication) and Football (2 publications), 3 publications over 5 and a half years is still not many, therefore this recommendation could be considered as partially completed.

5. Experts' long-term recommendation: to supplement the study course "Introduction to Sports Rights" with issues related to the Law on Protection of Children's Rights (Sports Coach)

Based on the Report on implementation of recommendations (in SAR), the study course "Introduction to Sports Rights" curriculum has been complemented with the Law on Protection of Children's Rights, including topics such as social protection for children's rights and youth and athlete's rights to privacy. The recommendation could be considered as completed.

6. Experts' long-term recommendation: to complement the course "Introduction to Philosophy" with issues specific to the field of sport, e.g. philosophy of sport, ethics of sport and coaching, etc. (Sports Coach)

According to the Report on implementation of recommendations, the study course "Introduction to Philosophy" curriculum has been complemented with the aforementioned topics, thus giving students better understanding on the philosophy of sport, role of technology in sport and others. The recommendation could be considered as completed.

7. Experts' long-term recommendation: to introduce a common system for the teaching staff of the

University to provide feedback to students on recommendations for programme improvement. (Sports coach)

As stated in the Report on implementation of recommendations (in SAR), management of the First level (short-cycle) study programme "Sports Coach" (41813) follows the UL policy on surveys and the programme director conducts discussions with students and teaching staff when necessary. Technically the recommendation could be considered as completed, nevertheless a strong suggestion would be to reconsider the timing when the feedback surveys are distributed and when the deadline for filling them out is set in order to avoid survey bias and get the most honest feedback from students.

8. Experts' long-term recommendation: to expand the range of study programmes where students could continue their studies in case of a gap in their studies. (Sports coach)

Taking into account that this is a long-term recommendation which involves complex processes, the steps that the UL has taken so far (signed agreement with Latvian Academy of Sport Education, in case of programme's closure and work in progress to renew "Sports Teacher" programme), this recommendation could be considered as completed.

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

Conclusions:

In summary the UL has responded positively to previous accreditation recommendations with some specific areas warranting continuous improvement. Commendable progress has been made in areas such as the quality of studies in branches, the diversity in the curriculum (especially for First level (short-cycle) study programme "Sports Coach" (41813) and the employer involvement in the management of study programmes and the study process as such. Ongoing attention should be paid to the professional development (including international) of the teaching staff and the planned changes in admission criteria.

Strengths:

1. Quality of studies in branches.
2. The diversity and contemporary approach of the curriculum (in both study programmes).
3. Employer involvement in the management of study programmes and in the study process (form part of the study council, guest lecturers, field trips, internship opportunities), nevertheless it is not clear to what extent employers are involved. A strategic approach to the employer involvement could help improve the partnership even more.

Weaknesses:

1. Professional development of teaching staff.
2. Unclear about the changes in admission criteria for studying in this study field.

### **Assessment of the requirement [4]**

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

Out of 14 recommendations 10 (71% are considered as completed, 3 partially completed and 1 not completed (dismissed).

### **1.7. Recommendations for the Study Field**

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

Develop an effective strategy for disseminating information to students, improved on the basis of their feedback.

Develop an effective strategy to gather feedback from employers and map their needs.

In a 2 year period come up with a strategic approach on broadening the admission criteria to help reduce the high drop out rate of students. Monitor progress annually and come up with changes, if necessary.

Define a global strategy to develop the research activities, namely, to decrease the differences in the scientific outputs among the elected academic staff and to focus the research scope on a more centered "Sport" approach, namely to publish original research in the most prestigious journals in this field.

Support the development of PhD in "Sport", increasing the number of teaching staff with specific education and experience in this field.

Reinforce international cooperation in the field of scientific research, namely in connection with the invited lecturer teachers and staff that participate in the study programmes.

Prepare a strategic plan to improve internationalization / mobility of students and teachers.

Concerning the internships, it would be important to support the coaches and other sport and health professionals who are tutoring the students with some specific education to better supervise these activities, namely some schooling support from the UL staff.

Develop and implement thorough workload distribution policies that are transparent, regularly updated to take into account the needs and contributions of all faculty members, and take into account their present position.

Promote cooperation with representatives of regional municipalities and educational institutions (gymnasiums, secondary schools etc.).

Look for more opportunities to attract foreign lecturers to the Erasmus teaching mobility programme and offer to students a short term Erasmus exchange programme.

Reinforce the UL alumni networking for sharing with experience and motivating during the studies

It would be advisable to renew the "Teacher of Sports and Health Education" programme.

### Long-term recommendations

Professional development of teaching staff: \*Improve the level of English for the teaching staff raising the average from B2 to C1 (for 75% of staff, have proof of this level of English (e.g. IELTS, TOEFL and other internationally recognized language proof certificates). \*By 25% improve participation in professional development courses and attendance of and presenting in international conferences abroad.

Come up with a strategic approach of the involvement of employers within the management of the study field. Upon next accreditation present progress with regards this recommendation.

To guarantee that faculty members' distinct growth demands are adequately met by professional development courses, the organisation should create a customised evaluation framework that enables one-on-one conversations and avenues for feedback.

## II - "Sports Coach" ASSESSMENT

### II - "Sports Coach" ASSESSMENT

#### 2.1. Indicators Describing the Study Programme

##### Analysis

2.1.1. The first level (short-cycle) programme 'Sports Coach' (41813) (SCSP Sports Coach) is developed in accordance with the learning objectives outlined in the "Sport" study field.

The relevant compliance with state education standard is provided in Appendix: PSP-3-COMPLIANCE-with\_EDUC-STANDARD.docx, with more detailed analysis under criterion 2.2.1. The content and title of SCSP Sports Coach are related to the study field 'Sports', and the name of this study field corresponds with the name of this study program.

2.1.2. The SCSP Sports Coach code (41813) corresponds to Cabinet Regulations no 322 of 20 March 2001 Regulations on the Latvian Classification of Education, where "41" indicate the level of higher education (level 5) of the Latvian Qualifications Framework, while "813" refers to Sports field. The SCSP Sports Coach code awards a short-cycle diploma of professional higher education with level 5 professional qualification Sports Coach. The SCSP Sports Coach code corresponds to the title of the study programme Sports Coach.

This two year duration (or two and a half year for part-time extramural students ), (a total of 82 LV credit points (CP/123 ECTS)) SCSP Sports Coach focuses on knowledge, skills and competencies that are vital to be a sports coach according to the national and international requirements. The duration and scope of the SCSP Sports Coach implementation are reasonable and justified. It is not clear however how the aim of the SCSP Sports Coach "To provide students with the opportunity to acquire the knowledge, skills, competences in sport necessary to work as a sports coach with the qualification of sports coach in accordance with the national and international requirements of professional competence" could be measured. If the goal would be to provide students with knowledge, skills and competence necessary, then this goal would be better related with the objectives and learning outcomes stated and easier measurable (with study course assessments and qualification paper).

Admission requirements are clearly set up and along with the implementation language (Latvian) are reasonable and justified for this SCSP Sports Coach.

2.1.3. The study field "Education, Pedagogy and Sport," received accreditation on June 12th, 2013, according to the decisions by the Study Accreditation Commission and the majority of recommendations provided by the experts have been fully implemented. As part of the current accreditation process, a new study field called "Sport" is being developed. The SCSP Sports Coach is one of the two study programmes that make up the study field "Sport".

Since the licensing of the SCSP Sports Coach (19.04.2019, Licence No - 04047-108), several changes have been made to the content of the SCSP Sports Coach.

Firstly, the study programme has been supplemented with two new modules - tennis and volleyball, the inclusion of which was approved by the decision of the Study Quality Commission of the Academic Information center (AIC) No. 2022/13-I. The tennis and volleyball modules were created in response to the demand of the respective sports federations for the training of new coaches at the UL, because in tennis and volleyball, as in other sports, the training of professional coaches is a topical issue. What is more, the Latvian Tennis Federation (LTF) and the Latvian Volleyball Federation (LVF) consider that coaches should have at least a short cycle (first level) higher education in the field of sport, to acquire knowledge such as anatomy, physiology, sports psychology, pedagogy, sports specialization, etc. LTF and LVF believe that coaches should obtain at least a short-cycle (first-level) higher education in the field of sports, within the framework of which

it is possible to acquire knowledge within 2 or 2.5 years.

From the academic year 2023/2024, a fifth module, Physical Fitness, has been added to the SCSP Sports Coach. This was created to respond to the demand from the representatives of different sports in relation to the relevance of general physical fitness in the modern sport system. The specialization was approved by the Study Field Council of Faculty of Education, Psychology and Art (from 02.01.2024. Faculty of Education Sciences and Psychology), as well as by the Faculty Council. Aforementioned corrections along with other minor corrections regarding elective courses are all justified, reasonable and fully supported.

2.1.4. The need for the SCSP Sports Coach is reported in the “Latvian Sports Policy Guidelines 2022–2027” as one of the future challenges indicated in the document is “to promote healthy lifestyle and strengthen the development of grassroots sports”. One of the goals in the aforementioned guidelines is also to increase the number of people who take part in physical activity or sports at least 1 to 2 times per week and coaches who have completed quality education programmes can help achieve this goal to diverse groups of society across the country. Regarding economic justification, the correlation between physical activity and health is ever present, and healthier citizens burden less the healthcare system and bring more value to the economic and social development of the country.

While in SAR section 1.3.1. it is written that all alumni work as sports coaches, meetings with alumni indicated a slightly different situation. Some graduates informed the experts that for various reasons they have followed different career paths, nevertheless the majority seemed to have stayed in coaching, whether part-time or full time and both in the areas of branches and as well in the capital city. Dropout rates are still considerably high and more work needs to be done to research reasons and come up with strategies on how to ensure that more students complete the programme.

2.1.5. N/A

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

Conclusions:

The SCSP Sports Coach is compliant with the study field 'Sport'. The duration and scope of the SCSP Sports Coach implementation are reasonable and justified. The admission requirements are clearly set up and, along with the implementation language (Latvian), they are reasonable and justified for this SCSP Sports Coach. Corrections in the study programme, along with other minor changes regarding elective courses, are all justified, reasonable, and fully supported. There is a strong economic and social justification for the study programme; however, student dropout rates are still considerably high. Minor corrections are necessary to justify full compliance with the study field. The SCSP Sports Coach is becoming more diverse as three new specializations are justifiably introduced for students to choose from.

Strengths:

1. Corrections in the SCSP Sports Coach parameters are well justified, adding 3 new specializations, namely volleyball, tennis and physical fitness. Corrections were introduced, taking into account the needs of respective national sport federations and other employers.
2. There is rather strong economic and social justification for the need of the programme. This justification is based on both National legislation and needs of employers, both in Riga and branches.

Weaknesses:

1. Unclear study SCSP Sports Coach.

2. Student drop out rates are still considerably high.

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

### **Analysis**

2.2.1. In general, the SCSP sports coach is in line with the sectoral regulatory framework. The relevant educational standard and qualifications are set out in PSP-4-COMPLIANCE-TRAINER-TRAINER-STANDARD.docx. However, for several of the 'levels of understanding', it is not unambiguously clear how they are embedded in the respective programme. To mention just a few of them:

- 1) "Trends in the use and development of renewable energy sources (which are essentially sun, wind, waves, etc. - expert adds)" in the curriculum course "Biochemistry fundamentals in sport".
- 2) "Development of motivation" in the course "Introduction to Philosophy I".
- 3) "External communication with stakeholders. Public relations" in the course 'Introduction to Philosophy I'.

It is also not clear why there is no separate course on research methods. Given the requirement for students to write a qualifying thesis, a course on research methods seems necessary.

The compulsory courses are mostly aligned with the programme objectives, ensuring students gain the necessary skills to enter the coaching labour market. This includes pedagogical skills, sport-specific and anatomical knowledge, and practical experience. The total number of students in the modules is sufficient to allow for the most detailed study of all the knowledge and skills required for a particular sport. This teaching model ensures that students acquire the necessary knowledge and skills in their chosen sport (Annex: PSP-4. Compliance of the short cycle professional higher education study programme "Sports Coach" with the professional standard). The modular approach has been deliberately chosen to ensure quality, rather than a general learning of many sports over 2 or 2.5 years.

The modules (basketball, football, tennis, volleyball, and general physical fitness) in the SCSP Sports Coach, taught by highly qualified professionals, make the programme unique in Latvia. Detailed module content and schedules are available in Annex PSP-5 (Study plans of the short-cycle professional higher education study programme "Sports Coach"). Small student groups ensure in-depth knowledge in each sport.

In short, the learning outcomes in each module are:

Basketball: Design long/short-term training plans, evaluate exercises, and conduct training for all ages.

Football: Design training plans based on skills, manage training processes, and integrate knowledge for various (age) levels.

Tennis: Teach basic principles, correct exercise execution, manage training, and referee tournaments.

Volleyball: List techniques, define training structures, and critically analyze and adjust plans.

General Physical Fitness: Understand fitness roles in sports, define exercises, and integrate physical fitness into training.

The content of the SCSP Sports Coach is generally in line with modern labour market trends, as it prepares coaches of high quality. This education is necessary for coaches to be eligible to work in professional sport education institutions. Latvia currently needs more than 150 coaches in various sports, which indicates that the SCSP Sports Coach is vital for the Latvian sports education. In addition to the SAR document, employers also confirmed during the assessment visits that the curriculum meets employers' expectations, but in particular with regard to the need for sports coaches in sports schools. Unfortunately, completion of the Sports Coach curriculum does not allow one to work as a physical education (PE) teacher in general education schools, where there is a serious shortage of teachers.

However, it is commendable that students are able to study in regional branches in their hometown,

which allows adults who are already working and have families to study without leaving home. This provides an opportunity to develop sporting opportunities and to raise the level of physical activity in remote areas.

#### 2.2.2. N/A

2.2.3. According to SAR (chapter 3.2.3.), the study courses and examinations use oral, written, and combined assessment methods across all modules. Practical assignments, seminars, group work, discussions, project development, and study tours are widely used. Various methods like introductory, interactive, consolidating, and problem-oriented lectures are employed. Practitioners and professionals are invited to teach, enhancing the theory-practice connection. The programme "Sports Coach" includes visiting lecturers, such as lawyers Beatrise Bitane and Jānis Siliņš, who cover sports law, and experts in tennis and basketball who provide specialized insights. Guest lecturers were highly appreciated by students during the assessment visits. At the same time, however, it was pointed out that guest lecturers from abroad should be significantly more involved in teaching. Employers also contribute by conducting seminars and organizing work experience visits. Meetings with students and alumni clearly showed that this contribution is highly valued.

The programme "Sports Coach" at UL employs student-centred methods, focusing on real-world applications in sports pedagogy (SAR, chapter 3.2.3). However, at the meeting, the alumni pointed out that the practical assignments for example in the practical lectures and seminars could be even more 'real-life' and reflect what happens in the work environment. One example is the organisation of sporting events in cooperation with different sports organisations and clubs. Practical lectures involve guiding a target audience, usually children and young athletes, through exercises. This approach is particularly emphasized in the football module with the Riga Football School. Teaching skills are adapted to different sports, age groups, and levels. Unfortunately, however, the curriculum does not address the issue of training for people with disabilities, while in the cities where regional training is organised, the conditions for sport for people with disabilities exist.

Practical classes for all modules will take place in Riga, where regional students will participate after signing the contract. This ensures a consistent infrastructure and a personalised approach between lecturers and students. This arrangement was welcomed by regional branch directors, lecturers, students, alumni and employers alike. The programme "Sports Coach" uses an e-learning environment (Moodle) for accessing learning materials, assignments and assessments, and was highly appreciated by students, alumni and teachers alike.

Regular course revisions and meaningful learning outcomes foster student understanding and ownership of their learning. However, it would be more helpful if students did not give a feedback at the end of the course about their teacher and their teaching, but reflected more on their own contribution to learning. Lecturers use appropriate methods and assessment criteria aligned with course aims and learning outcomes. Meetings with lecturers and regional branch directors during assessment visits clearly demonstrated their high level of awareness and motivation. Feedback and support are provided throughout the study process, with transparent grading criteria, this was confirmed by both teachers and students.

The programme "Sports Coach" promotes student mobility and involvement in academic research and social activities, like the "More than Gold" and "LIFE age" projects. Internal quality assurance policies encourage active student participation in improving the study process. Student proposals and feedback are considered for continual improvement, ensuring a responsive and dynamic learning environment. However, students do not participate in international mobility.

2.2.4. According to SAR (p. 135), the SCSP Sports Coach includes three practices: Introductory Practice (2KP, 3ECTS), Practice I (6KP, 9ECTS), and Practice II (8KP, 12ECTS). These practices are undertaken at professional sports education institutions through a tripartite agreement. Students

can choose their placements or use those provided by the UL, while students can also choose a new place for an internship of their choice. Students and alumni say that the organization of placements is smooth and the choice of placements is adequate. The experts also found the training centers or sports facilities visited in the regional branches to be extremely modern and the opportunities for training in different sports excellent and varied. While it is recommended to experience different schools for each practice, students may complete all practices at one nearby school to manage workload.

All three practices must be completed within the chosen module, allowing students to progressively acquire practical coaching knowledge with the guidance of mentors and supervisors. Practices are integrated with module courses, blending theoretical and practical learning. Grades for practices are based on the practice supervisor's evaluation and a practice diary, which includes session observations, conducted sessions, and sports school documentation analysis. Football module students often practice at the "Riga Football School," basketball at "BS Riga," tennis at "Enri," and volleyball at Jūrmala Sports School. In exceptional cases, other sports clubs or schools may be used. The new "General Physical Fitness" module also requires practice in sports schools, focusing on general physical fitness tasks.

In terms of the provision of internship, there is close cooperation with employers, which was evident during the assessment visit and in discussions with the various parties involved. Traineeship centres, or future employers, often offer work to students during the internship, which is an excellent opportunity for young future professionals. However, the experts were under the impression that apprenticeship opportunities in regional branches are more limited compared to Riga. In the regional branches, it was also acknowledged that cooperation exists with a number of sports schools, but not with all sports clubs. Collaboration with internship training centres could also be strengthened in the sense that UL could provide pedagogical training on supervision/mentoring for internship supervisors, which would certainly raise the overall quality of teaching and learning.

Practices help develop regional sports and provide varied coaching experiences. Despite logistical challenges, regional students sometimes practice in Riga, giving them the opportunity to learn from some of the best experts in the country. Providing internships in their home town is recognised by the experts as a way of enabling students to better combine their studies with their professional life. However, it would be worthwhile to encourage students to undertake work placements abroad, which would give them an even broader insight into the coaching profession and, in some cases, new insights into the coaching of different sports.

#### 2.2.5. N/A

2.2.6. Students in the SCSP Sports Coach must complete and defend a qualification paper related to their chosen module (basketball, football, tennis, volleyball, or general physical fitness). This paper involves analyzing coaching topics and incorporating employer recommendations (SAR, p.136). Students choose their topics and supervisors voluntarily, using research developed during "Practice I" and "Practice II." The qualification paper includes theoretical and empirical research, with recommendations for coaching based on data and literature review.

The defense board includes employers and professionals, ensuring relevance to the labour market and sports education trends in Latvia. Topics often focus on training methodologies, with significant contributions to their respective sports. Board members highlight the high value of these papers. Most grades range from 6 to 7, with occasional high distinctions.

The fact that the topics of the students' qualification paper are relevant to their field of study and correspond to the curriculum was also confirmed by the alumni at the meeting with the experts. The alumni gave concrete examples of how their chosen thesis helped them to better understand the specificities of their future work, including through data analysis. The possibility of using the research databases provided by UL also supported the writing of the qualification paper.

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

### Conclusions:

In conclusion, the SCSP Sports Coach blends theoretical and practical learning effectively, preparing students for successful coaching careers and contributing to the development of sports education in Latvia. Encouraging students to undertake international internships could further enhance their professional insights and skills.

### Strengths:

1. Close cooperation between UL and employers in finding internship places for students. However, in the future, in order to improve the quality of teaching and learning, pedagogical training on mentoring could be offered to internship supervisors.
2. Teaching materials and learning tasks in the e-learning environment (Moodle) support student learning.

### Weaknesses:

1. Unclear how some “levels of understanding” are taught in the mentioned study courses (PSP-4-COMPLIANCE-with-PROFES--STANDARD.docx.)
2. Students do not undertake internships abroad. This should be strongly encouraged, in cooperation with employers, including through short-term mobility, so that future coaches can gain experience by studying alongside coaches abroad.

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

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

## 2.3. Resources and Provision of the Study Programme

### Analysis

2.3.1. The SCSP Sports Coach combines theoretical and practical courses which have adequate infrastructure. The premises of the Faculty of Education, Psychology and Art provide the appropriate premises for theoretical lectures with well-equipped study rooms and IT support, and a sports hall for practical courses. The sports hall is freely accessible for students and staff during the whole day. Some specific courses connected with anatomy and biochemistry are implemented at UL campus premises. Separate specialised courses are held at the Olympic Centre or the “Enri” Tennis Club that offers the specialised infrastructure of the respective sport for the study process. The study schedule is made convenient so that students do not have to move to different places during one day.

All specific sport equipment are appropriate and in sufficient amount. The equipment is renewed every year as required for the needs of the teaching staff according to priorities and budget availability. The absence of an outdoor field for football specialization can be mentioned as a minor drawback.

The list of literature is updated annually keeping up with the latest sports trends. The programme director is responsible for identifying the necessary literature provided by the lecturers. The e-resources are accessible as well and the library staff could provide the support for effective work with it.

The regional branches' premises and technical facilities allow fully ensuring the conditions necessary for theoretical and practical studies that are included in the SCSP Sports Coach. The study

programme students carry out practical training in a very well equipped multi-purpose athletics arena in Kuldīga. In other branches, such as Madona and Tukums, practical courses are conducted in the sports halls of sports schools or sports centres, which have sufficient capacity for training in practical activities. There are established close collaboration with local municipalities for using these sports facilities.

### 2.3.2. N/A

2.3.3. To estimate the financial provision of the SCSP Sports Coach is calculated based on a methodology developed by the UL. This methodology considers the expenses, study programme plan, the teaching staff involved, the projected number of students, and other factors outlined in the "Financial Support System," ensuring the reliability of the forecasts.

According to SAR (p.140) the main source of funding is tuition fee of part-time extramural studies in 2022/2023. The state budget grant from the Ministry of Education and Science is quite small. According to SAR calculation was done based on the 4 state budget-funded places for full study period. The state budget-funded places are available only for 2 full time students since 2021.

The tuition fees have been raised due to several factors, including the inflation rate, higher salaries for academic staff, and increased infrastructure costs. It was increased from 1440 EUR for part-time and 1800 EUR in 2019/2020 to 1700/2100 EUR in 2024/2025. The increase is 18%, which corresponds to the overall situation in the country and has economical background.

The total number (full and part time) of matriculated first year students differs from 44 to 57 (in 2023). The highest rate of dropout was in 2021 (n=23), and as a possible cause could be the inability to continue studies under the influence of COVID-19 consequences.

According to SAR (p.140) programme costs for full-time regular studies in 2023/2024 was 41 372 EUR per year and the main cost position was teaching staff wage (62%). The calculated cost of the study programme per one student (prime cost) was 2 347 EUR per year, and to be profitable, the minimum number of students should be at least 32. It means that this format of study does not cover all costs, and it is necessary to be able to offer students to study in various forms.

The costs for part-time extramural studies is almost twice 80 640 EUR per year, and the teaching staff wage is 51%. There is an additional cost position "Other costs" with 12%. According to calculations the cost of the study programme per one student (prime cost) is 917 EUR per year, and the minimum number of students should be at least 30. As part-time students dominated in total numbers. As stated in SAR (p.141) the part-time studies fee is able to compensate for the costs of the full-time studies, so that the programme can be considered as cost-effective. The total profitability of the programme (full time and part time together) in 2023/2024 was 14%.

The study field management took several financial savings measures to optimize the use of available financial resources. Seventeen study courses are offered in conjunction with the other study programme in the field of "Sport" - Academic bachelor study programme "Sports, Technology and Public Health" (43813). Some of the module courses are organised jointly for the two study formats (full and part time studies). The minimum number of students is set for new study year student groups, and the minimum number of students to create a specific sport module is 3 people (for all groups together). This approach allows for more efficient utilization of both teaching staff and infrastructure resources.

The SCSP Sports Coach has additional fundings that may be financed from income received from lifelong learning and other services, as well as from the financial resources accumulated by the structural unit, which are sufficient to support the study process. The faculties also receive financial support for programme development from the Study Quality Improvement Fund of UL.

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

#### Conclusions:

For the SCSP Sports Coach, there are a sufficient number and quality of premises and IT equipment. For students available and ensured IT support, literature and e-resources that are needed in the study process. Regional branches have close cooperation with the local municipalities to use their infrastructure and sport facilities. All specific sport equipment are appropriate and in sufficient amount.

The total number of students are stable but dominated part-time extramural studies.

The SCSP Sports Coach is able to ensure the implementation of both study forms based on the available financing and, if necessary, receiving support from other UL funds.

#### Strengths:

1. Harmonized some study courses of SCSP Sports Coach and Academic bachelor study programme "Sports, Technology and Public Health" (43813) that allow to optimize the costs.
2. Well organized collaboration for regional branches with local municipalities.
3. The management of SCSP Sports Coach is able to balance costs with revenues and can be considered as cost-effective.

#### Weaknesses:

1. The SCSP Sports Coach has a large majority of full-time students which poses a risk to sustainability as their numbers could decrease. A suggestion could be to increase the attractiveness of the programme for secondary school graduates.
2. The relatively high dropout rate of part-time students. A suggestion could be to implement motivational interviews before admission to enroll high-motivated candidates and improve the supervision during the studies. The alumni networking could help in the study process.

### Assessment of the requirement [6]

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

For the implementation of the SCSP Sports Coach, the necessary IT support, availability of literature sources, equipment and arrangement of study rooms are fully provided.

### 2.4. Teaching Staff

#### Analysis

2.4.1. The qualifications of the teaching staff involved in the SCSP "Sports Coach" are appropriate in both academic and practical terms. The teaching staff is composed of experienced academic staff and knowledgeable practitioners. The academic staff with high academic degrees teach theoretical study courses whereas teachers with extensive experience and achievements in their sport teach practical courses. Students could acquire both theoretical and practical knowledge to enter more successfully into the coaching labour market. The level of lecturers' qualification is of key importance for the achievement of the aims and objectives of the SCSP "Sports Coach". Moreover, the high qualifications of the teaching staff enable students to learn and understand the characteristics related to the specific sport, which allows them to start their professional activity.

The teaching staff of this study programme is also based on continuity. Degree candidates or PhD students teach several study courses, which can be highlighted as a positive strategy.

According to SAR (p.144-145), 24 teaching staff are involved in the implementation of the SCSP

"Sports Coach". This academic staff consists of 7 lecturers, 3 assistant professors and 4 associate professors. 14 teaching staff present UL as the main place of employment and 10 members are recruited as practitioners from the coaching environment for whom work in the UL is the side job.

It should be also noted that UL has been able to ensure the same composition of teaching staff for students of both Riga and regional branches, which is very positive. Hence, the composition of the academic staff of the programme is suitable for the successful implementation of the programme.

The elected academic staff members also carry out research work in the field, participating in some funded research projects, or by carrying out research related to the study process, funded by the faculty, national study and science base funding, including the participation in several conferences and seminars and the publication of scientific articles. In fact, the qualification of the teaching staff members enables the achievement of the aims and learning outcomes of the study programme and the relevant study courses.

However, it could be important to increase the number of elected academic staff. Although the presence of teaching staff having UL as the side work and being engaged in the field of sports is of utmost importance especially in a Sport Coach programme, the percentage (41.67%) of these staff members in the total teaching staff can be considered too high even in a first level (short cycle) study programme. Furthermore, the presence of foreign lectures, even in a remote mode, could increase the quality and diversity of the programme.

2.4.2. In Section 3.4.2 (p.143), the SAR presented information on the changes in the composition of the teaching staff of the SCSP Sports Coach.

From the data, it can be observed that the composition of the teaching staff has been changed in some courses due to different factors, namely to: (i) different roles that were assigned to the field experts (for instance, head coach of a football club) not allowing to be available to teaching activities; (ii) the workload of some academic staff, leading to changes in the teaching roles of some courses; (iii) cessation of the contract with UL; and (iv) the analysis of the feedback from students. The teaching staff replacement members have knowledge and experience in the specific content, thus contributing to the development of students' learning outputs.

The analysis of the composition of the teaching staff of the study programme "Sports Coach" includes both academic lecturers and researchers and experienced practitioners who are specialists in their sport.

More than half of the programme's teaching staff aged between 31 and 50. On a positive note, several assistant and associate professors are under 40 years of age, which indicates a good perspective for the development of the programme in the context of resources of the teaching staff and their career development.

In summary, UL takes measures so that changes in the composition of the teaching staff do not negatively affect the quality of the implementation of the study programme and the compliance of the study programme with the requirements specified in regulatory enactments.

2.4.3. N/A

2.4.4. There is a good connection between the scientific research and the study process, especially under the courses that support the "Sport" field. Study courses included in the study programmes are related to the research areas of the teaching staff, especially considering the interdisciplinary focus of the interventions and the activity of the elected academic staff.

From May 2019 to May 2023, 121 Web of Science and 101 Scopus scientific publications have been indexed for the faculty members involved in the field of study (SAR, p.76). The data show that the average number of publications in the period under review is 28 publications indexed in the Web of Science database and 22.5 publications indexed in Scopus. Overall, these research outputs are positive, highlighting the effort of the teaching staff and the UL board to develop and improve the

research activities.

Despite the difficulties and constraints to be involved in granted projects reported during the assessment visit by the teaching staff, the lecturers of the SCSP "Sports Coach" participate in some research projects and publish their work at international seminars and in scientific journals. However, there are some significant differences between the research outputs of the teaching staff (including the academic elected) and most of the relevant staff CVs are not directly associated with Sports. Furthermore, the strategy of the University should position the direction of the LU to the standards that they are willing to achieve, namely publications as original research in the most prestigious journals in the field of "Sport".

The teaching staff members present several years of practical experience in the field, which is more significant regarding the staff who work mainly at different institutions rather than UL (guest lectures). As it can be observed in the SAR (p. 144) and in the curriculum vitae presented by each staff member all module teachers are high-level professionals in their respective sports which significantly enhances the quality of the SCSP "Sports Coach".

2.4.5. Cooperation between teaching staff is facilitated through meetings, during which the programme director informs them of the desired course of action. Meetings are held in which the teaching staff and the programme director agree on the stages of acquiring the respective sports and topics to be covered in the specific study courses. This communication makes it possible to avoid duplication of topics in different study courses.

An important mechanism of cooperation underlined during the assessment visit is the analysis of the results of the annual student surveys. Based on the feedback provided by the students, the programme director indicates to the teaching staff the improvements to be made, the aspects that need to be improved, as well as gives long-term recommendations. Although these procedures are of great importance, it would be important to define a detailed plan to coordinate all these pedagogical and scientific activities, namely with a great effort to coordinate the work of the teaching staff that does not present UL as the main place of employment.

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

Conclusions:

The qualification of the teaching staff members enables the achievement of the aims and learning outcomes of the study programme and the relevant study courses. However, the relative presence of teaching staff (~40%) having LU as the side work can be considered too high even for a first level (short cycle) study programme.

The research outputs are overall positive, highlighting the effort of the teaching staff and the UL board to develop and improve the research activities. Nevertheless, there are some significant differences between the research outputs of the teaching staff (including the academic elected) and most of the relevant staff CVs are not directly associated with Sports.

Strengths:

1. The qualification of the teaching staff members, including both academic staff and teachers with experience in the field.
2. The teaching staff members present several years of practical experience in the field.
3. The same composition of teaching staff for students of both Riga and regional branches.
4. Changes in the composition of the teaching staff do not negatively affect the quality of the study programme.
5. The overall research outputs are positive.

Weaknesses:

1. The percentage (~40%) of the staff members in the total teaching staff that do not present UL as the main place of employment.
2. There are some significant differences between the research outputs of the teaching staff (including the academic elected) and most of the relevant staff CVs are not directly associated with Sports.

### **Assessment of the requirement [7]**

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Partially compliant

The qualification (education, experience in the field) of the teaching staff members and the research outputs enables the achievement of the aims and learning outcomes of the SCSP "Sports Coach" and the relevant study courses. However, there are some significant differences between the research outputs of the teaching staff (including the academic elected members).

## **2.5. Assessment of the Compliance**

### **Requirements**

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The SCSP "Sports Coach" complies with the national standard for professional higher education as per Cabinet of Ministers Regulation of 13 June 2023 No. 305 "Regulations on the State Standard for Professional Higher Education" (Annex: PSP-3-ATBILSTIBA-IZGLITIBAS-STANDARTAM.docx).

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The SCSP "Sports Coach" is compliant with the professional standard of "Sport coach" (Standart No. 3422 03) issued by the Ministry of Higher Education and approved by the Vocational education and employment tripartite cooperation sub-councils at the meeting of December 14, 2022, prot. No. 7 (Annex: PSP-4-ATBILSTIBA-PROFESIJAS-STANDARTAM.docx) The detailed compliance analysis is revealed under the section 2.2.1. Even though there were a couple of shortcomings, the experts believe they do not significantly impact overall compliance.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The descriptions of the study courses are available in both English and Latvian and are

compliant with the requirements of the Sections of the Law on Higher Education Institutions regarding the content of the study course descriptions.

(Annex: Sporta treneris 6.pielikums (2).zip)

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The diploma and the diploma supplement comply with the regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers No. 202 of 16.04.2013 (Prot. No. 20 13§). The diploma supplement corresponds to the model established by the European Commission, the Council of Europe and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO/CEPES). The diploma supplement is prepared to provide objective information and to ensure academic and professional recognition of qualification documents (e.g. diplomas, certificates).

Annex: PSP-1-DIPLOMS-AR-PIELIKUMU.docx

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The knowledge of the state language of the teaching staff involved in the implementation of the study programme complies with the regulations on the scope of knowledge of the state language and the procedure for testing knowledge of the state language for the performance of professional and official duties. As confirmed in a signed document by the Head of the Study Field Sanita Baranova (Annex:SV-12-APLIECINAJUMS-LATV-VAL(1).edoc/ UL document No. 30-37/93).

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The English level of the teaching staff of the SCSP "Sports Coach" is at least B2 level as confirmed in a signed document by the Head of the Study Field Sanita Baranova (Annex: SV-20-Apliecinājums par Angļu valodas prasmi vismaz B2 līmenī.edoc UL document No. 30-37/100).

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The sample of the study agreement corresponds to the Cabinet of Ministers' regulations No. 70 of January 23, 2007 (prot. No. 6 § 11) and the form of the contract was approved on 28.09.2022. (UL order Nr. 1-4/497).

Annex: SV-8-STUDIJU-LIGUMA-PARAUGS.pdf

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

As stated in the provided agreement in case of discontinuation of the first level higher education study programme "Sports Coach" (41813), Latvian Academy of Sport Education undertakes to provide opportunities for continuation of studies in the first level higher education study programme "Education and Sports Work Specialist" (41813).

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

Acting on the basis of the Constitution of the University of Latvia (approved by the 27.05.2022. decision of the Constitutional Assembly No 2-2/9), shall guarantee compensation for students if study programme is not accredited due to the action (activity or failure to act) of the UL or the licences of the study programmes are revoked and the student does not wish to continue studies in another study programme (UL document No. 71-61/5).

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

**Assessment of the requirement [8]**

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

SCSP Sports Coach complies with regulatory enactments and requirements.

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

The SCSP Sports Coach blends theoretical and practical learning effectively, preparing students for successful coaching careers and contributing to the development of sports education in Latvia. Encouraging students to undertake international internships could further enhance their professional insights and skills. The teaching staff comprises experienced academics and knowledgeable practitioners. Academics with advanced degrees teach theoretical courses, while practitioners with significant experience and achievements in sports handle practical courses. This allows students to gain both theoretical and practical knowledge, enhancing their entry into the coaching labour market. The implemented 5 modules cover request of coaches for team sports games and physical fitness. The need for a tennis module raises the question, as only 5 graduates have completed it so far but the responsibility for the usefulness of this module belongs to the study programme administration.

The SCSP Sports Coach offers ample and high-quality facilities and equipment. Students have access to necessary, literature, and e-resources for their studies, and are provided with IT support. Regional branches collaborate closely with local municipalities to utilize their infrastructure and sports facilities, ensuring adequate and appropriate sports equipment.

Notably, the programme management maintains a consistent teaching staff composition for both Riga and regional branches, which is highly beneficial. Thus, the academic staff composition is well-suited for the programme's successful implementation and ensures the same study quality standards.

It may be important to increase the number of elected academic staff. Additionally, incorporating foreign lecturers, even remotely, could enhance the programme's quality and diversity.

The study courses align with the research areas of the teaching staff, emphasizing the interdisciplinary nature of their work and the contributions of elected academics. The qualifications of the teaching staff mostly support the achievement of the programme's goals and learning outcomes. The research outputs are generally positive, reflecting the dedication of the teaching staff and UL's administration to developing and improving research activities.

It is important to note that all identified weaknesses mainly highlight areas for potential development and do not fundamentally affect the overall quality of the SCSP Sports Coach.

#### Strengths:

1. Corrections in the SCSP Sports Coach parameters are well justified, adding 3 new specializations, namely volleyball, tennis and physical fitness. Corrections were introduced, taking into account the needs of respective national sport federations and other employers.
2. A rather strong economic and social justification for the need of the programme based on both National legislation and needs of employers, both in Riga and branches.
3. Close cooperation between UL and employers in finding internship places for students.
4. Teaching materials and e-learning tasks in the e-learning environment (Moodle) support student learning.
5. The study programme is available in regional branches.
6. The high-level sports professionals are involved in the implementation of study practical courses.
7. The harmonization of part of courses with programme "Sports, Technology and Public Health" that allows get a bachelor's degree in shorter time and reduce the costs of teaching staff wage.

#### Weaknesses:

1. Unclear how some "levels of understanding" are taught in the mentioned study courses (PSP-4-

COMPLIANE-with-PROFES--STANDARD.docx.)

2. No research methods course.
3. Unclear SCSP Sports Coach aim and how it could be measured.
4. Student dropout rates are considerably high.
5. The study programme graduates can not work at school.

## Evaluation of the study programme "Sports Coach"

Evaluation of the study programme:

Good

## 2.6. Recommendations for the Study Programme "Sports Coach"

### Short-term recommendations

Consider including a "Research Methods" course in the study programme as students at the end of the programme are expected to deliver a Qualification Paper and basics in research methods seems necessary.

Revisit study aim and either adjust it or in detail explain how "Providing students with the opportunity to..." can be measured. Potentially using SMART goals strategy might prove useful which indicates that goals should be specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound.

The recommendation would be to thoroughly go through the information represented in Appendix PSP-4-COMPLIANE-with-PROFES--STANDARD.docx. and make the necessary changes either in translation from Latvian to English or in moving some topics to the study courses where they would belong much more naturally. It could also be suggested to consider "Research methods" as a separate study course as it looks like research methods related topics are added to various subjects randomly.

Recommendation would be to do an in-depth research on reasons and circumstances why students stop studying in this specific programme and then come up with a strategic approach on how to lower the dropout rate (e.g. adding motivation letter to admission criteria, seeking additional ways how to support students before the assessments and if they experience financial difficulties etc.).

Increase the number of elected academic staff, including for instance the presence of foreign lectures.

Reinforce the promoting the programme within sport schools in other regions and attracting more secondary school graduates.

Reinforce the UL alumni networking for sharing with experience and motivating during the studies.

### Long-term recommendations

Study placements abroad should be strongly encouraged for students in cooperation with employers, including through short-term mobility, so that at least 10% of future coaches gain experience by studying with coaches abroad.

In order to improve the quality of teaching and learning, pedagogical training on mentoring could be offered to internship supervisors.

UL should prepare a strategic plan to overcome the differences in the research outputs among teaching staff members.

## II - "Sports, Technology and Public Health" ASSESSMENT

### II - "Sports, Technology and Public Health" ASSESSMENT

#### 2.1. Indicators Describing the Study Programme

##### Analysis

2.1.1. The Academic bachelor study programme "Sports, Technology and Public Health" (43813) (ABSP Sports, Technology and Public Health) is developed in accordance with the requirements of the study field "Sport" because the programme is structurally and substantively developed with a focus on Sports Science and subordinated to other related study blocks, including sport pedagogy studies. The relevant state education standard is provided in Appendix BSP-3--COMLIANCE\_TO\_STANDARD.docx (with more detailed analysis under criterion 2.2.1.) . The ABSP Sports, Technology and Public Health is compliant with the study field "Sport".

2.1.2. The ABSP Sports, Technology and Public Health code (43813) corresponds to Cabinet Regulations no 322 of 20 March 2001 Regulations on the Latvian Classification of Education, where "43" indicate the level of higher education (level 6 or level 7) of the Latvian Qualifications Framework, while "813" refers to Sports field. The ABSP Sports, Technology and Public Health code awards an academic bachelor's diploma of professional higher education with level 6 or level 7 professional qualification Bachelor of Health Sciences in Sport. The ABSP Sports, Technology and Public Health code corresponds to the title of the study programme Sports, Technology and Public Health.

This three year duration (a total of 120 LV credit points (CP) or 180 ECTS) ABSP Sports, Technology and Public Health focuses on knowledge, skills and competencies that are vital to work in the areas linked to sports, technologies and public health. The duration, scope and interrelation of study programme, aims, objectives and learning outcomes are reasonable, justified and interrelated.

Admission requirements are clearly set up and along with the implementation language (Latvian) are reasonable and justified for this ABSP Sports, Technology and Public Health.

2.1.3. The study field "Education, Pedagogy and Sport," received accreditation on June 12th, 2013, according to the decisions by the Study Accreditation Commission and the majority of recommendations provided by the experts have been fully implemented.

As part of the current accreditation process, a new study field called "Sport" is being developed. The ABSP Sports, Technology and Public Health is one of the two study programmes that make up the study field "Sport".

Since the licensing of the ABSP Sports, Technology and Public Health, the parameters of the study programme have remained essentially unchanged, with the exception of the Bachelor's degree to be awarded, which needs to be changed from a Bachelor of Social Sciences in Sport Science to a Bachelor of Health Sciences in Sport.

The change is based on the assessment given by industry representatives from the Latvian Council of Sports Federations, the Latvian Athletics Union, the Sports Union of Latvian Higher Education Institutions, as well as employers of the profile of the programme and the graduates. In addition, the Cabinet of Ministers No. 595 "Regulations on the groups, branches and subbranches of Latvian science", which include the learning outcomes of the study programme and study courses, also include the sector groups "Medical and Health Sciences" in the Health and Sports Sciences sector.

Looking at the content and distribution of the study courses of the programme, more than 70% of the course scope (76 (114 ECTS) credit points out of 108 (162 ECTS)) is covered by study courses in the field of health and sports sciences.

During the reporting period, changes were also made to some study courses. The changes were mainly made to improve the quality of study courses in line with modern scientific requirements. For example, 4 CP (6 ECTS) study course "Introduction to Law" was substituted by a better suited for the programme - 4 CP (6 ECTS) "Law and Sport". Changes in study courses were made based on the feedback of students and analysis of the content of existing study courses at that time.

All changes in the parameters of the ABSP Sports, Technology and Public Health as well as study courses and its curriculum that are represented in the SAR (section 3.1.1.) are justified and fully supported.

2.1.4. Given the diversity of career opportunities for graduates of this ABSP Sports, Technology and Public Health and the nation wide recognition of the need of sports specialists ("Latvian Sports Policy Guidelines 2022-2027"), there is a very strong social justification of this study programme. With regards to economic justification, the correlation between physical activity and health is omnipresent, and healthier citizens burden less the healthcare system and bring more value to the overall economic and social development of the country. Recent changes in study programme parameters only emphasize the strong focus on the public health aspect in this study programme, which makes it even easier justifiable in terms of nationwide benefit.

Dropout rates are still considerably high and more work needs to be done to research reasons and come up with strategies on how to ensure that more students complete the ABSP Sports, Technology and Public Health.

2.1.5. N/A

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

Conclusions:

The ABSP Sports, Technology and Public Health is developed in accordance with the requirements of the study field "Sport". The duration, scope and interrelation of ABSP Sports, Technology and Public Health aims, objectives and learning outcomes are reasonable, justified and interrelated. Admission requirements are clearly set up and along with the implementation language (Latvian) are reasonable and justified for this study programme. All changes in the parameters of the study programme as well as study courses and its curriculum are justified and supported. There is a strong economic and social justification of the ABSP Sports, Technology and Public Health.

Strengths:

1. Diversity and the contemporary approach of the selection study courses in the ABSP Sports, Technology and Public Health.
2. Flexible and open minded approach in evaluating the degree awarded and the study courses necessary.
3. Student and graduate involvement in evaluating and changing the curriculum.

Weaknesses:

1. Student drop out rates are still considerably high.

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

### **Analysis**

2.2.1. The ABSP Sports, Technology and Public Health complies with state education standard (Compliance shown in annex: BSP-3-ATBILSTIBA-IZGLITIBAS-STANDARTAM.docx), offering a degree: Bachelor of Health Sciences in Sport within three years. The full-time ABSP Sports, Technology and Public Health, conducted in Latvian, spans 120 credit points (180 ECTS). According to SAR (p.97), the aim of the ABSP Sports, Technology and Public Health is to provide students with the opportunity to pursue higher academic education in sport science by facilitating the acquisition of theoretical knowledge and skills in sport science and related science disciplines in order to promote the development of students' competence to make decisions and solve problems in sport research and professional practice. Having mastered the ABSP Sports, Technology and Public Health, students have acquired comprehensive and specialized knowledge, skills and competences relevant to sport science in accordance with the Latvian Qualifications Framework (LQF) and the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) level 6.

Course content is designed to avoid overlap with other courses and to ensure continuity of learning. Courses are designed to achieve the learning objectives for which information is provided in the SAR (p.101-102; Table 3.2.1.1.). According to the Annex: BSP-6, the content of the study courses is connected with the results of the ABSP Sports, Technology and Public Health. The planned results of study courses included in the ABSP Sports, Technology and Public Health correspond to the achievable results of the study programme, which justifies the thoughtful inclusion and implementation of the courses in study programme.

During the assessment visit, students and alumni expressed their wish to see more focus on public health in the curriculum. Overall, however, there was satisfaction with the relevance of the curriculum, which meets employers' expectations. However, the diploma and competences acquired through the curriculum do not allow them to work as teachers in general education schools. Certainly, students do not choose the "Sports, Technology and Public Health" curriculum out of a desire to become teachers in the future, but given the shortage of PE teachers and the high average age of existing teachers, consideration could be given to including pedagogy in the curriculum or offering an additional module to reduce the shortage of teachers in schools.

The content of the curriculum is topical, the content of the courses/modules is interconnected and complementary, meets the objectives of the curriculum and ensures the achievement of the learning outcomes; complies with national regulations and the professional standard for coaches. However, there is a need to review the thematic focus on health in the health curriculum to address the synergies between sport and technology in a more meaningful way.

2.2.2. N/A

2.2.3. According to SAR (chapter 3.2.3.), the ABSP Sports, Technology and Public Health employs various teaching and assessment methods, including oral, written, and combined formats. Methods used include lectures (introductory, interactive, problem-oriented), practical assignments, seminars, group work, discussions, project development, and internships. During the assessment visit, lecturers and students also mentioned various study visits to potential employers. Guest lecturers (SAR, p.69), who are acknowledged experts in their field, currently teaching in the curriculum, deserve recognition from the students as well as from the experts. However, it was pointed out by programme directors, students and alumni alike, that guest lecturers from abroad should be significantly more involved in order to boost curriculum development and internationalization.

The ABSP Sports, Technology and Public Health supports research competence and dual careers for student-athletes. Senior students mentor first-year students. A student-centered approach and active learning methods (e.g., discussions, group work) are emphasized. The chosen forms, methods and techniques are based on aspects of interactive learning, hands-on learning and blended learning, while alumni at the experts' meeting pointed out that in traineeships students could be given more tasks that reflect more real situations and activities in the work environment. The e-

study environment (Moodle) provides access to course materials, tasks, and assessments. The Moodle system received a lot of praise from students, alumni and lecturers alike. According to the students, all the materials are easy to find on Moodle, the information exchange is fast and the teaching materials are up-to-date.

Lecturers use methods that promote active participation and critical thinking. The programme's evaluation system follows the university's examination procedures, ensuring continuous assessment. The Bachelor's programme assessment includes tests, independent work, and oral/written exams. A 10-point system is used, with clearly defined criteria. Students' competence is assessed through creative and practical assignments, discussions, and the application of theoretical knowledge.

Although student mobility is encouraged, students are reluctant to leave their home country because of work and personal problems. However, it should be better supported and also encouraged in cooperation with employers, as experience at international level and knowledge from foreign experts would also be important to boost sport and physical activity in their own country.

Overall, the ABSP Sports, Technology and Public Health encourages independent learning, self-assessment, and continuous feedback between students and lecturers. However, more guest lecturers from abroad should be involved and student mobility should also be encouraged.

2.2.4. In accordance with the Regulations of the Study Programmes and Continuing Education Programmes of the University of Latvia (24.04.2027, Senate Decision No.102), the programme includes 6 credit points (9 ECTS; 40 hours per week) student practice. According to the SAR (p.106), the aim of the practice is to improve the student's professional skills and competence in a professional environment, as well as to strengthen and supplement the knowledge according to the specifics of work in the fields of sport, technology and public health. The practice is carried out in accordance with the practice agreement, which defines the goals, tasks, evaluation procedure of the practice achievements, as well as the duties and responsibilities of the parties.

To foster professional development and career planning in sport, seminars with industry professionals are held during practice placements. These sessions allow students to learn about real-world processes and professional experiences. The aim is to consolidate theoretical knowledge, develop professional skills, and integrate into the organization's activities. Students must prepare and submit a practice report to the UL's practice supervisor. These academic practices are directly linked to the programme's learning outcomes.

The student chooses the practice placement from the offered organizations with which the UL has concluded bilateral cooperation agreements, or independently chooses the practice placement, which is agreed with the director of the study programme. The assessment visit showed that for students, finding an internship is easy and the process is simple; employers, including regional branches, are happy to offer enough internships in the hope that students will later accept a job offer. Many students (especially in regional branches) are already working professionally during their studies or find a job during their internships. The foregoing reassures the experts that the process is efficient and works well, as described in the SARs.

2.2.5. N/A

2.2.6. According to SAR (chapter 3.2.6., p.108) Bachelor's papers are aligned with the study content. Many students began their research in the 4th semester, continuing through their practice placements to produce high-quality papers. Topics included sport methodology (13), management (7), health and physical activity (18), and technology (7). All these areas are relevant and related to the study programme. Two bachelor's papers "Comparative analysis of spatial ability in different sports" and "Effect of sleep quality on cognitive performance of students" received the UL Rector's recognition for the excellent bachelor's papers.

During the assessment visit, it was clear from talking to faculty, students, and alumni that students can choose a dissertation topic based on their own interests and join in with ongoing research by faculty. Students will also be able to prepare their thesis and, among other things, carry out data mining for it during their internship. The range of databases (chapter 2.4.2., 3.3.1.) for research is of a high standard and the research laboratories are well equipped. In a few years, LU also hopes to build a new teaching building to further expand the research laboratories, including upgrading laboratory equipment and increasing research capacity.

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

Conclusions:

The ABSP Sports, Technology and Public Health provides theoretical knowledge and skills in sport science, promoting competence in sport research and practice, in line with Latvian and European Qualifications Framework level 6. Teaching methods include lectures, practical assignments, seminars, group work, discussions, projects, internships, and industry guest lectures. There is a call for more international guest lecturers to enhance curriculum development. The ABSP Sports, Technology and Public Health supports student-athlete dual careers and mentoring, using active learning methods and an e-study environment (Moodle) praised for its accessibility. Continuous assessment includes tests, independent work, and exams, promoting independent learning and self-assessment. Practical placements are crucial for improving professional skills, with many students securing jobs during internship. Bachelor's papers are aligned with the study content, offering opportunities for students to engage in faculty research.

Overall, the ABSP Sports, Technology and Public Health effectively collects and analyses data, receives feedback and ensures continuous improvement, although it needs to address public health in a more substantive way in the curriculum and involve more experts from abroad in the delivery of learning.

Strengths:

1. The experts from the world of work who are currently involved in teaching, as well as guest lecturers from abroad, are highly regarded specialists in their field and recognised by students and experts.

Weaknesses:

1. Only a few guest lecturers from abroad are involved in teaching.
2. The curriculum meets the expectations of employers, but the coverage of public health is not sufficient according to both students and alumni.

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

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

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

### **Analysis**

2.3.1. The ABSP Sports, Technology and Public Health is well-organized, with a broad curriculum that blends theoretical knowledge and practical abilities. This balance is essential for preparing students for real-world careers in sports science and public health, as well as academic success. There is a

strong emphasis on scientific research, which is facilitated by access to advanced facilities and equipment (chapter 3.3.1. of SAR). The incorporation of current research into course content keeps the curriculum relevant and students up to date on the most recent advancements in their disciplines (Annex: “BSP 5 Annex. Descriptions of courses(1).docx”). However, during assessment visit expert interviews with the students and the graduates revealed that few students are actively using the provided knowledge in their research outside of the curriculum.

The ABSP Sports, Technology and Public Health is supported by a robust information infrastructure that includes an extensive library with a wide range of resources, as well as access to journals and online databases (chapter 3.3.1. of SAR). This improves the learning environment and offers students the tools they need to succeed academically.

The UL has made significant expenditures to ensure that its materials and technology are cutting-edge. Laboratories and sports facilities are outfitted with cutting-edge equipment to meet the rigorous requirements required for current sports science research and training (chapter 3.3.1. of SAR). The programme is well supported by adequate financial resources to ensure high-quality education and research activities. This financial support covers anything from building upkeep to scholarships, assisting with the recruitment and retention of bright students and faculty (chapter 3.3.3. of SAR).

Overall, these regulations are clearly aligned with the unique features and conditions required for the implementation of the ABSP Sports, Technology and Public Health. This alignment fosters an environment conducive to learning and research, which is crucial for meeting educational objectives and preparing graduates to meet the expectations of professional and academic sectors.

### 2.3.2. N/A

2.3.3. The ABSP Sports, Technology and Public Health has well-structured and diverse funding, ensuring complete implementation and high-quality delivery. According to SAR, chapter 3.3.3., the principal funding sources are a state budget grant from the Ministry of Education and Science, as well as tuition fees from both local and international students. These diverse revenue streams allegedly ensure the programme's financial stability and long-term viability.

The state budget grant provides a significant portion of the money, supporting various parts of the programme such as infrastructure, faculty salaries, and research activities. Tuition fees also make a substantial contribution to the programme's financial health. For instance, the tuition fees from Latvian students and potentially those from the European Union, European Economic Area, and Swiss Confederation are crucial for maintaining the financial equilibrium of the programme (as per SAR, chapter 3.3.3.)

To ensure the ABSP Sports, Technology and Public Health profitability, a minimum number of students are required. Looking into SAR chapter chapter 3.3.3., one can find that in order for the programme to be financially feasible, there must be at least 85 state-funded students or at least 71 paying students. This level is crucial for funding the programme's costs, which include facility maintenance, equipment updates, and faculty research assistance. The programme's implementation options are flexible enough to fit varied student demands and maximise enrollment. Full-time studies in Latvian are the principal form of delivery, as they accord with state education standards and serve the bulk of the local student population. This method not only ensures a regular stream of students, but also contributes to the programme's profitability and sustainability (SAR, p.111).

Furthermore, the ABSP Sports, Technology and Public Health finance approach allows its ongoing development. Funds are allocated carefully to meet both present operational demands and future expansion ambitions. This involves investments in modernising classrooms, extending research possibilities, and improving the entire educational experience for students (SAR, chapter 3.3.3.). The emphasis on maintaining a strong financial base guarantees that the programme can adapt to

changing educational demands while continuing to attract top students and faculty. Despite a well-planned financial environment, the research course "Sports Technology and Public Health" has a profit margin of about 2% (SAR, table 3.3.3.3.). In the view of the expert commission this narrow profit margin poses a significant risk, particularly in the face of inflationary pressures. As costs rise, the financial viability of supporting second-year students becomes increasingly challenging, ending in a situation in which these students are no longer profitable. As a result, the curriculum relies heavily on a continual influx of new students to maintain financial stability and cover operational costs. This reliance stresses the importance of good recruitment strategies in ensuring a steady supply of incoming students in order to preserve the programme's financial health and overall performance.

Overall, the funding structure, combined with strategic resource allocation, guarantees that the "Sports Technology and Public Health" project accomplishes its immediate educational objectives.

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

#### Conclusions:

The UL's ABSP Sports, Technology and Public Health combines scientific research with cutting-edge facilities and has substantial capacity to provide comprehensive educational support. These features are reinforced by a well-designed funding system that draws from several sources to preserve financial stability and encourage continuous improvement. Updating resources, making sure second-year students can afford them in the face of inflation, and continuing to have a strong recruitment campaign are all continuous issues. The programme's long-term viability and sustainability will depend on how well it addresses these constraints through targeted investment, adaptable financing arrangements, and raising its appeal.

#### Strengths:

1. The ABSP Sports, Technology and Public Health features a robust support system, including cutting-edge facilities and extensive library resources, which enhances the learning environment.
2. There is a strong emphasis on incorporating scientific research into the curriculum to keep students up to date on the latest advances in sports science.
3. Modern laboratories and sports facilities provide students with hands-on experience and practical skills that are required for future jobs.
4. Adequate funding enables the long-term viability of high-quality education and research activities, such as scholarships and professorships.
5. Understanding the minimum number of students required for financial viability helps with planning and resource allocation.
6. Effective financial management improves both current operations and future development, guaranteeing that the programme can adapt to changing demands.

#### Weaknesses:

1. Ensuring that resources are continuously updated and aligned with the latest scientific advancements requires ongoing investment and careful management.
2. Rising costs make it difficult to sustain second-year students' profitability, leading to a heavy reliance on new student enrollment.
3. The need for a stable influx of new students to maintain financial stability adds pressure on recruitment strategies and marketing efforts, which can be challenging to sustain consistently.

### **Assessment of the requirement [6]**

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The UL's ABSP Sports, Technology and Public Health combines scientific research with cutting-edge facilities and has substantial capacity to provide comprehensive educational support. These features are reinforced by a well-designed funding system that draws from several sources to preserve financial stability and encourage continuous improvement.

## 2.4. Teaching Staff

### Analysis

2.4.1. The implementation of the ABSP Sports, Technology and Public Health involves qualified and relevant teaching staff from several faculties of the UL, including teaching staff from foreign universities.

According to SAR (p.113-114), 34 teaching staff are involved in the implementation of the ASP "Sport, Technology and Public Health" and 52.9% of them hold a PhD degree (4 PhD in Psychology, 4 PhD in Biology, 3 PhD in Administration, 3 PhD in Paediatrics, 1 PhD in Medicine, 1 PhD in Sports, 1 PhD in Philosophy, 1 PhD in Epidemiology). 22 teaching staff present LU as the main place of employment and 12 members have LU as the side work. The total number of professors and associate professors in this study programme is 9 (26.5% of the total staff members).

The composition of the academic staff of the programme complies with the requirements set out in the third paragraph of the first part of Article 55 of the "Law on Higher Education Institutions": the implementation of academic study programmes is carried out by no less than five professors and associate professors, who have been elected to academic positions at the respective higher education institution.

The elected academic staff members also carry out research work in the field, participating in some funded research projects, or by carrying out research related to the study process, funded by the faculty, national study and science base funding, including the participation in several conferences and seminars and the publication of scientific articles. The qualification of the teaching staff members enables the achievement of the aims and learning outcomes of the study programme and the relevant study courses.

However, it could be important to increase the number of elected academic staff, especially in a bachelor's degree where the academic involvement must be the focus. Although the presence of teaching staff having UL as the side work and being engaged in the field of sports and health is of utmost importance, the percentage (more than one third of the staff members) of these staff members in the total teaching staff can be considered too high. Moreover, there is only one teaching staff member with a PhD in the specific field of Sport. Thus, an effort should be made to support the development of PhD in "Sport", increasing the number of teaching staff with specific education and experience in this field allowing that the interdisciplinarity approach is carried-out under the core of Sport.

2.4.2. In Section 3.4.2, the SAR presented information on the changes in the composition of the teaching staff of the ABSP Sports, Technology and Public Health. From the data, it can be observed that since the programme licensing (2019), five lecturers have terminated their employment with the UL, and PhD students (R. Parandjuks, G. Bīlande, A. Klempere-Sipjagina, T. Stepiņš) continue their work. Due to the increased workload at the LU and having administrative roles, some lecturers did not continue to teach in this study programme (O. Molla, A. Ozola, I. Odina) and were also

replaced by PhD students (Z. Smite, K. Kiris) and lecturers from the field (E. Latkovska, L. Mihno) to deliver their study courses.

These teaching staff members have knowledge and experience in research and thus contribute to the development of students' research skills, as well as integrate the results of their research activities into the study courses they are teaching. The participation of specialists from the Sport and Health field keeps the content of the programme as close as possible to the specifics and current needs of the labour market.

The SAR provides examples of the recruitment of several former or current PhD students, thus ensuring continuity in teaching and a successful generational change. This creates conditions for sustainability in the future development of the study programme and its delivery by well-prepared and professionally oriented lecturers.

In summary, UL takes measures so that changes in the composition of the teaching staff do not negatively affect the quality of the implementation of the study programme and the compliance of the study programme with the requirements specified in regulatory enactments.

#### 2.4.3. N/A

2.4.4. There is a good connection between the scientific research and the study process, especially under the courses that support the "Sport" field. Study courses included in the study programmes are related to the research areas of the teaching staff, especially considering the interdisciplinary focus of the interventions.

From May 2019 to May 2023, 121 Web of Science and 101 Scopus scientific publications have been indexed for the faculty members involved in the field of study (SAR, p.76). The data show that the average number of publications in the period under review is 28 publications indexed in the Web of Science database and 22.5 publications indexed in Scopus. Overall, these research outputs are positive, highlighting the effort of the teaching staff and the LU board to develop and improve the research activities.

Despite the difficulties and constraints to be involved in granted projects reported during the assessment visit by the teaching staff, the lecturers of the ABSP Sports, Technology and Public Health participate in some research projects and publish their work at international seminars and in scientific journals. However, data on indexed publications (e.g. H-index) are missing for 8 of the 24 elected academic members, which should also be considered by the management board of the ABSP Sports, Technology and Public Health and the UL.

In fact, there are some significant differences between the research outputs of the teaching staff (including the academic elected) and most of the relevant staff CVs are not directly associated with Sports. Furthermore, the strategy of the University should position the direction of the UL to the standards that they are willing to achieve, namely publications as original research in the most prestigious journals in the field of "Sport".

2.4.5. Cooperation between teaching staff is facilitated through meetings, during which the programme director informs them of the desired course of action. During assessment visit meetings are held in which the teaching staff and the programme director agree on the stages of acquiring the respective sports and topics to be covered in the specific study courses. This communication makes it possible to avoid duplication of topics in different study courses.

An important mechanism of cooperation underlined during the assessment visit is the analysis of the results of the annual student surveys. Based on the feedback provided by the students, the programme director indicates to the teaching staff the improvements to be made, the aspects that need to be improved, as well as gives long-term recommendations.

Although these procedures are of great importance, it would be important to define a detailed plan to coordinate all these pedagogical and scientific activities, namely with a great effort to coordinate

the work of the teaching staff that does not present UL as the main place of employment.

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

Conclusions:

The qualification of the teaching staff members enables the achievement of the aims and learning outcomes of the ABSP Sports, Technology and Public Health and the relevant study courses. However, the relative presence of teaching staff (more than one third of the staff members) having UL as the side work can be considered too high. Moreover, there is only one teaching staff member with a PhD in the specific field of Sport.

The research outputs are overall positive, highlighting the effort of the teaching staff and the UL board to develop and improve the research activities. Nevertheless, there are some significant differences between the research outputs of the teaching staff (including the academic elected) and most of the relevant staff CVs are not directly associated with Sports.

Strengths:

1. The qualification of the teaching staff members, which are of high-quality;
2. The presence of teaching staff from foreign universities;
3. Changes in the composition of the teaching staff do not negatively affect the quality of the study programme.
4. The overall research outputs are positive.

Weaknesses:

1. The percentage (more than one third of the staff members) of the staff members in the total teaching staff that do not present UL as the main place of employment.
2. There is only one teaching staff member with a PhD in the specific field of Sport, which, at this consolidation phase of the UL, could be a concern for other achievements in the specific field of "Sport".
3. There are some significant differences between the research outputs of the teaching staff (including the academic elected) and most of the relevant staff CVs are not directly associated with Sports.

### **Assessment of the requirement [7]**

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Partially compliant

The qualification of the teaching staff members and the research outputs enables the achievement of the aims and learning outcomes of the ABSP Sports, Technology and Public Health and the relevant study courses. However, there are some significant differences between the research outputs of the teaching staff (including the academic elected members).

### **2.5. Assessment of the Compliance**

#### **Requirements**

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The ABSP Sports, Technology and Public Health complies with the national standard for professional higher education as per Cabinet of Ministers Regulation of 13 May 2014 No. 240 "Regulations on the national standard of academic education"

Annex: BSP-3-ATBILSTIBA-IZGLITIBAS-STANDARTAM.docx

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The descriptions of the study courses are available in both English and Latvian and are compliant with the requirements of the Sections of the Law on Higher Education Institutions regarding the content of the study course descriptions.

Annex: BSP 5.Pielikums Kursu apraksti.docx

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The diploma and the diploma supplement comply with the regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers No. 202 of 16.04.2013 (Prot. No. 20 13§). The diploma supplement corresponds to the model established by the European Commission, the Council of Europe and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO/CEPES). The diploma supplement is prepared to provide objective information and to ensure academic and professional recognition of qualification documents (e.g. diplomas, certificates).

Annex: BSP-1-DIPLOMS-AR-PIELIKUMU.docx

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The academic staff of the ABSP Sports, Technology and Public Health complies with the requirements of the Law on Higher Education Institutions regarding the minimum number (5) of professors or associate professors involved in the implementation of the aforementioned programme. As confirmed in a signed document by the Head of the Study Field Sanita Baranova (UL document No. 30-37/5).

Annex: 26.03.2024 - 30-37\_6 - Apliecinājums AL55 Sports, tehn. un sab.ves. 43813.edoc

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The knowledge of the state language of the teaching staff involved in the implementation of the study programme complies with the regulations on the scope of knowledge of the state language and the procedure for testing knowledge of the state language for the performance of professional and official duties. As confirmed in a signed document by the Head of the Study Field Sanita Baranova (UL document No. 30-37/93).

Annex: SV-12-APLIECINAJUMS-LATV-VAL(1).edoc

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The English level of the teaching staff of the study programme is at least B2 level as confirmed in a signed document by the Head of the Study Field Sanita Baranova (UL document No. 30-37/100).

Annex: SV-20-Apliecinājums par Angļu valodas prasmi vismaz B2 līmenī.edoc

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The sample of the study agreement corresponds to the Cabinet of Ministers' regulations No. 70 of January 23, 2007 (prot. No. 6 § 11) and the form of the contract was approved on 28.09.2022. (UL order Nr. 1-4/497).

Annex: SV-8-STUDIJU-LIGUMA-PARAUGS.pdf

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

As stated in the provided agreement in case of discontinuation of the first level higher education study programme "Sports Coach" (41813), Latvian Academy of Sport Education undertakes to provide opportunities for continuation of studies in the professional bachelor study programme "Sport Science" (42813).

Annex: SV-6.1;6.2. VIENOŠANĀS PAR STUDENTU PĀREJU.7z

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

Acting on the basis of the Constitution of the University of Latvia (approved by the 27.05.2022. decision of the Constitutional Assembly No 2-2/9), shall guarantee compensation for students if study programme is not accredited due to the action (activity or failure to act) of the UL or the licences of the study programmes are revoked and the student does not wish to continue studies in another study programme (UL document No. 71-61/5).

Annex: 25.03.2024 - 71-61\_5 - Rektora apliecinājums par kompensāciju SV "Sports".edoc

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

**Assessment of the requirement [8]**

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

ABSP Sports, Technology and Public Health complies with regulatory enactments and requirements.

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

Conclusions:

The ABSP Sports, Technology and Public Health provide unique multidisciplinary programme that allows to continue studies in different science fields.

The programme is developed in accordance with the requirements of the study field "Sport". The aims, objectives and learning outcomes are reasonable, justified and interrelated.

The ABSP Sports, Technology and Public Health effectively collects and analyses data, receives feedback and ensures continuous improvement, although it needs to address health in a more substantive way in the curriculum and involve more experts from abroad in the delivery of learning.

The qualification of the teaching staff members enables the achievement of the aims and learning outcomes of the study programme and the relevant study courses.

The ABSP Sports, Technology and Public Health combines scientific research with cutting-edge facilities and has substantial capacity to provide comprehensive educational support. These features are reinforced by a well-designed funding system that draws from several sources to preserve financial stability and encourage continuous improvement. Updating resources, making sure second-year students can afford them in the face of inflation, and continuing to have a strong recruitment campaign are all continuous issues. The programme's long-term viability and sustainability will depend on how well it addresses these constraints through targeted investment, adaptable financing arrangements, and raising its appeal.

It is important to note that all identified weaknesses mainly highlight areas for potential development and do not fundamentally affect the overall quality of the ABSP Sports, Technology and Public Health.

#### Strengths:

1. Diversity and the contemporary approach of the selection study courses in the study programme.
2. Flexible and open minded approach in evaluating the degree awarded and the study courses necessary.
3. Student and graduate involvement in evaluating and changing the curriculum.
4. The experts from the world of work who are currently involved in teaching, as well as guest lecturers from abroad, are highly regarded specialists in their field and recognised by students and experts.
5. The programme features a robust support system, including cutting-edge facilities and extensive library resources, which enhances the learning environment.
6. Modern laboratories and sports facilities provide students with hands-on experience and practical skills that are required for future jobs, although they are not used enough in the curriculum.
7. The harmonization of part of courses with programme "Sports Coach" that allows get a coaching profession in shorter time and reduce the costs.
8. The unique multidisciplinary programme that allows to continue studies in different science fields.

#### Weaknesses:

1. Student drop out rates are still considerably high.
2. Only a few guest lecturers from abroad are involved in teaching.
3. The curriculum meets the expectations of employers, but the coverage of public health is not sufficient according to both students and alumni.
4. The need for a stable influx of new students to maintain financial stability adds pressure on recruitment strategies and marketing efforts.

### **Evaluation of the study programme "Sports, Technology and Public Health"**

Evaluation of the study programme:

Good

### **2.6. Recommendations for the Study Programme "Sports, Technology and Public Health"**

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

Do an in-depth research (both quantitative and qualitative (a potential for a master's student thesis) on the reasons and circumstances why students stop studying in this specific programme. Come up with a strategic approach on how to broaden the admission criteria and lower the dropout rate. Monitor progress annually and come up with changes, if necessary.

As the involvement of international experts contributes significantly to the quality of teaching and also enriches the horizons of future Latvian coaches, it is important to involve guest lecturers, e.g. through e-lectures or e-courses.

UL should prepare a strategic plan to overcome the differences in the research outputs among teaching staff members.

Reinforce the promoting the programme within secondary school level graduates.

Reinforce the UL alumni networking for sharing experience and motivating during the studies.

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

Strategically explore ways how students who are experiencing difficulties (financial or others) could be supported by the UL. Until next accreditation present the progress, including challenges and success stories.

It is recommended to revise the content of the curriculum "Sport, Technology and Public Health", which deals with public health in relation to technology and sport.

Increase the number of elected academic staff, especially with education and research outputs centred in the "Sport" field.

To maintain resources current with scientific developments, establish a distinct budget for annual updates and innovations, ensuring consistent investment in cutting-edge equipment and materials.

Diversify the programme's appeal by adding new specialisations and industry ties, making it more appealing to a larger student population and reducing reliance on traditional recruiting methods.

Consider implementing a flexible pricing strategy that accounts for inflation. Include a long-term strategy for finance management.

Strategically explore the possibilities to implement this programme in the regional branches.

### **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**

<b>Requirements</b>	<b>Requirement Evaluation</b>		<b>Comment</b>
<p>R1 - Pursuant to Section 5, Paragraph 2.1 of the Law on Higher Education Institutions, the higher education institution/ college shall ensure continuous improvement, development, and efficient performance of the study field whilst implementing its internal quality assurance system:</p>	Fully compliant		<p>UL ensures continuous improvement, development, and efficient performance of the study field by implementing its internal quality assurance system. However, it needs to take a closer look at employer feedback and establish a process to inform students about the implemented improvements based on their input. It is important to note that these adjustments do not affect the overall assessment of this requirement.</p> <p>One criterion is partially compliant, but this does not affect the evaluation of the requirement, as UL still collects feedback from different parties, but more attention should be paid to feedback from employers and feedback to students on improvements made based on feedback. These shortcomings can be quickly remedied by UL.</p>
<p>R2 - Compliance of scientific research and artistic creation with the level of development of scientific research and artistic creation (if applicable)</p>		Partially compliant	<p>Although there are some good projects and publications carried out by the teaching staff and researchers involved in the study field, including publications indexed in Web of Science and Scopus, the most relevant ones are not totally related to “Sport” and there is a gap on the publications in the most significant and impactful journals in this study field. Moreover, there are some significant differences among academic staff members (including elected academic staff) in their research publications and projects.</p>

Requirements	Requirement Evaluation		Comment
R3 - The cooperation implemented within the study field with various Latvian and foreign organizations ensures the achievement of the aims of the study field.		Partially compliant	Although there are some good indicators (foreign teachers, outgoing mobility of teachers), the internationalization levels (especially from students) are very low.
R4 - Elimination of deficiencies and shortcomings identified in the previous assessment of the study field, if any, or implementation of the recommendations provided.	Fully compliant		Out of 14 recommendations 10 (71%) are considered as completed, 3 partially completed and 1 not completed (dismissed).

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

No.	Study programme	R5	R6	R7	R8	Evaluation of the study programme (excellent, good, average, poor)
1	Sports Coach (41813)	Not relevant	Fully compliant	Partially compliant	Fully compliant	Good
2	Sports, Technology and Public Health (43813)	Not relevant	Fully compliant	Partially compliant	Fully compliant	Good

#### The Dissenting Opinions of the Experts

No different opinions.