

# Expert group joint opinion

Evaluation Procedure: Assessment of Study Field

Higher Education Institution: Daugavpils University

Study field: Internal Security and Civil Protection

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

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Daugavpils University (DU) is a prominent academic institution in Latvia, founded in 1921 and dedicated to providing high-quality education and research opportunities. With a focus on areas like life sciences, linguistics, and social sciences, DU serves over 2,200 students from various countries, fostering a dynamic environment for learning and innovation. Emphasising scientific research and international collaboration, the university plays a vital role in societal development in Daugavpils and the Latgale region. Its motto, "Scientia Vincens" (Through Knowledge You Win), showcases its commitment to student empowerment and future success. (available at: <https://du.lv/en/about-us/about-university/>)

DU's mission emphasises sustainable societal development and aims for an ambitious vision for 2030, focusing on integrating education and science to drive regional growth. Operating in three main strategic areas—natural sciences, social sciences, and humanities—the university promotes interdisciplinary studies and partnerships with the business sector. Despite challenges, such as demographic decline and student competition, DU has successfully maintained a stable student population and attracted international students through English-language study programmes. DU continues to modernise and engage with the community as it strives to enhance its role in education and research. (SAR, p. 4-5)

During the assessment process, three study programmes in the study field of "Internal Security and Civil Protection" were evaluated, including "Civil Security and Protection" (short-cycle professional study programme), "Labour Protection" (professional master's study programme), and "Economic Security" (joint academic master's study programme).

Feedback from the assessment visit highlighted a well-organised quality assurance system with no significant issues found in the study programmes. However, some concerns were raised regarding the current distribution of CP which was not clearly motivated to exceed the 120 CP limit as well as the amount of publications by the teaching staff which did not meet the requirements quite well.

The demand for civil protection and cybersecurity expertise is expected to grow, which aligns with the DU's capabilities. The library resources were deemed satisfactory, while in some study programmes updated literature is needed. The motivation of both students and faculty was noted positively. However, it was suggested that DU could leverage its unique regional advantages for marketing and recruitment, such as updating its website and promoting job tenders more widely on platforms like cv.lv and social media.

Concerns were raised regarding collaboration in the joint study programme, as aspects often functioned separately despite shared resources. Although Latvian legislation poses challenges, progress has been acknowledged, indicating a commitment to improvement. Recommendations included better coordination between participating institutions' websites to enhance visibility and opportunities for student interaction during mobility events to foster community collaboration.

Language proficiency in English emerged as a crucial factor for the success of the joint study programme, and increased internationalisation and mobility. While English language training has been consistently available, its outcomes have not been systematically assessed; instead, evaluations have been inconsistent and subjective. To ensure that the proficiency level aligns with the declared skills, it has been suggested to seek a solution for level assessment. For example several higher education institutions in Latvia (Riga Technical University, Turība University, Art Academy of Latvia, Transport and Telecommunication Institute, EKA University of Applied Sciences) currently utilise and accept Duolingo. (see: [https://englishtest.duolingo.com/institutions/accepting\\_institutions](https://englishtest.duolingo.com/institutions/accepting_institutions)). Therefore, it might be worthwhile to consider using this platform or a comparable one to obtain a reliable evaluation. The significance of collaborating with employers was acknowledged, and while the internship aspect

of future academic study programme was deemed valuable, it was noted as not being mandatory. Additionally, exploring international projects and funding opportunities was recommended to enhance the benefits of the joint study programme for students and faculty. In conclusion, DU is a significant academic institution in Latvia, dedicated to high-quality education and research that supports societal development in the region. The assessment of the study programmes in "Internal Security and Civil Protection" revealed a well-organised quality assurance system with no major issues, although there are areas for improvement regarding the distribution of credit points, and faculty publication rates in the study programmes. The demand for expertise in civil protection and cybersecurity is projected to grow, aligning with DU's strengths. However, challenges, including the need for updated literature, enhanced English language proficiency, and better collaboration in the joint study programme, have been identified. Recommendations to strengthen recruiting efforts and increase engagement with employers are essential for fostering a supportive educational environment. Overall, the assessment found the quality control at DU to be sound and adequate, while emphasising the need for ongoing improvement and collaboration.

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

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#### **1.1 Management of the Study Field**

##### **Analysis**

###### **1.1.1.**

The "Internal Security and Civil Protection" study field at DU is an essential part of the university's strategic specialisation in social sciences (however, it should be noted that page 14 of the SAR it is incorrectly listed as natural sciences), as outlined in Cabinet of Ministers Order No. 449 of June 21, 2022. The "Social Sciences" field is also aligned with DU's Development Strategy for 2022-2028, aiming to provide high-quality education that prepares students for competitiveness in the international labour market while promoting lifelong learning. (annex Latvian only: 1.1.DU attīstības stratēģija 2022\_2028.pdf)

DU seeks to enhance its role as a leading educational and research centre in Eastern Latvia, focused on developing highly qualified specialists supported by modern infrastructure. The study programmes within this study field include (SAR, p. 14-15):

- 1) Civil Security and Protection (41861, 5th LQF), Short-cycle professional higher education study programme.
- 2) Labour Protection (47862, 7th LQF), Professional master's study programme.
- 3) Economic Security (45861, 7th LQF), Joint academic master's study programme (with Riga Stradiņš University) .

The goal of these study programmes is to prepare internationally competitive specialists in civil security and labour protection. Objectives include ensuring the availability of relevant study programmes, integrating theory and practice, aligning study course content with professional standards, and fostering understanding of EU and Latvian regional policies. The study programmes also aim to encourage cooperation between students and faculty, contribute to the national economy, and strengthen DU's connections with local communities. (SAR, p. 15)

During the assessment visit, there emerged a pronounced awareness of the region's significance, coupled with a strongly patriotic society that acknowledged its crucial role in maintaining the security of the eastern border. Nonetheless, there were also expressions of a sentiment suggesting that individuals from outside the community might not be particularly welcomed. In this context, the pivotal role of DU as a facilitator of societal change is clearly evident. The university actively contributes to fostering a more open community through its diverse educational programmes, as well as by introducing international expertise, knowledge, and individuals into the region.

As it is stated in the SAR (p. 15), these aims align with European education trends and regulatory requirements, with the study programmes designed to equip students with a solid scientific foundation for their professional careers and future research activities. It could be concluded that the aims are both clear (focused on producing qualified professionals) and attainable. However, it may be beneficial to include specific examples or metrics that illustrate how these aims have been achieved or are being measured, such as employment rates or student feedback. For instance, employers expressed satisfaction with the outcomes, and students are pursuing multiple levels of education within this study field, which focus on professional development. At the same time, despite offering unique study programmes, there has not been recognised significant effort made to engage international students or faculty.

#### 1.1.2.

Based on the analysis of formal indicators, student surveys, and external factors, the study field council conducted a SWOT analysis for the "Internal Security and Civil Protection" study programmes to identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats related to its implementation. (SAR, p. 16) The analysis highlighted several strengths, including clear goals, a qualified academic staff, strong cooperation with local councils and educational institutions, and effective integration of studies and research. However, the study field also faces weaknesses such as underutilised exchange opportunities, low staff remuneration, and insufficient scientific collaboration with foreign institutions. (SAR, p. 17-18)

Opportunities for growth include improving academic content, increasing collaboration with regional entrepreneurs, and attracting more international partnerships. Nonetheless, threats exist, such as declining student numbers due to demographic issues, low local wages, and the potential outflow of students studying abroad. (SAR, p. 20)

Overall, the "Internal Security and Civil Protection" study field at DU has a solid foundation for future academic and professional development. The study field aims to enhance the quality of education, strengthen international relations, and bolster the scientific capacity of its faculty. The development plan has been prepared for the next six years (annex: 2.1.2\_Study field development plan summary\_EN.docx) and focuses primarily on continuous improvement, with particular emphasis on rejuvenating academic staff and enhancing e-learning opportunities that have gained importance during the COVID-19 pandemic. (SAR, p. 21)

Although the development plan is formally documented, it is relatively general and lacks specific annual objectives necessary for measuring progress toward desired goals. Acknowledging this issue, an improved development plan was subsequently presented; however, it remains unclear whether measurable results were included in response to the expert team's inquiries or if an integrated workflow is in place to ensure the desired outcomes of the development plan. Furthermore, the DU public webpage (available at <https://du.lv/en/about-us/documents/>) has featured a dated development plan for 2015-2020, which also did not contain specific measurements. As a result, it is difficult to ascertain whether the development plan includes clear and measurable objectives that are adequately communicated and agreed upon within the organisation.

Establishing clearer interim milestones would enhance the understanding of the impact of activities and the feasibility of achieving the final objectives, and it is important to publicly present these milestones, making them accessible in both Latvian and English on the DU's website.

#### 1.1.3.

A key prerequisite for the implementation of the study field "Internal Security and Civil Protection" and its study programmes at DU is the establishment of a management and internal quality control system. This system ensures that study programme content meets current higher education standards and labour market demands in Latvia and the EU. Quality assessments are conducted to monitor study programme execution, improve content, and plan future developments. This process

is overseen by the study field council, which analyses various factors such as accreditation compliance, academic performance, and student feedback to recommend improvements. (SAR, p. 21-22) During the assessment visit, it was recognized by all stakeholders that the relationships among them are effective, reinforcing a straightforward and logical decision-making process and a problem-solving-oriented attitude.

DU employs both an internal quality assurance system and external evaluations in cooperation with the Ministry of Education and Science. The internal system is managed by various faculty departments and the Centre of Study Quality Assessment, ensuring continuous quality control at all stages of study programme delivery, from student enrollment to the evaluation of academic staff. (SAR, p. 21-22) This cooperative approach has fostered a strong connection between stakeholders, further facilitating effective decision-making.

The head of the study field, in cooperation with study programme directors, organise and coordinate the study process in the study programmes included in the study field, monitor quality, and prepare annual self-evaluation reports. These reports are discussed, approved, and published within the DU internal network, fostering transparency and accountability. (SAR, p. 22) The collaborative dynamic among stakeholders contributes to an environment where constructive feedback is valued, enhancing the overall quality of the study programmes. Furthermore, during the assessment visit, students rated the study programme directors very highly, clearly emphasising their support and willingness to help, as well as acknowledging their significant contributions.

Additionally, DU's Student Service Center (SSC) plays a crucial role in supporting students by providing essential information, consultations, and services. The SSC issues necessary documentation, advises students on various issues related to academic life, and organises informative events. (SAR, p. 22) The positive interactions within the institution were reflected during the assessment visit in the SSC's efforts to create a supportive atmosphere, which is acknowledged by both students and faculty.

Overall, the support from DU's administrative and technical personnel is viewed positively, with effective communication and resource sharing among faculties ensuring that students and study programme directors receive the assistance they need to facilitate a successful study process. (SAR, p. 22) The acknowledgement from all stakeholders during the assessment visit of these collaborative relationships underscores the effectiveness of DU in fostering a constructive and supportive academic environment.

#### 1.1.4.

Admission to the short-cycle professional higher education study programme "Civil Security and Protection" in the study field of "Internal Security and Civil Protection" at DU follows the established guidelines outlined in the "Daugavpils University Admission Rules for Full-Time and Part-Time Undergraduate Studies." Similarly, admission to the Professional Master's study programme in "Labour Protection" and the joint Master's study programme in "Economic Security" adheres to the "Daugavpils University Admission Rules for Full-Time and Part-Time Higher Level Studies." The admission process occurs annually in accordance with these rules, which are approved by the DU Senate each year. (SAR, p. 23)

The admission regulations are updated annually to comply with the Act on Higher Education Institutions and the Cabinet of Ministers' regulations from October 10, 2006, No. 846, which detail the requirements, criteria, and procedures for admissions. The DU Council of Studies also plays a role in this process. Specific provisions for foreign applicants are included in the "Admission Rules for Full-time Studies for Foreigners," which are accessible separately. (SAR, p.23)

Comprehensive information regarding the admission process, including links to the admission rules, can be found on the DU website: <https://du.lv/en/studies/admission/>. Additionally, detailed descriptions of study programmes, admission requirements, and objectives are available at the Study Programmes section: <https://du.lv/en/studies/study-programmes/>.

The admission process is further regulated by “Full and part-time study opportunities,” “DU admission rules,” registration fee, tuition fee in study programmes, and the number of study places for admission, all of which must receive prior approval from the DU Senate. This governing body also establishes deadlines for the admission competition and formally announces the admission process (SAR, p. 24).

The “DU Admission Rules” and “Study Opportunities” documents specify the requirements for prospective students, detailing mutual rights and obligations during the admission process. They also provide insights into the evaluation criteria for competition, additional requirements based on prior education, and the procedures involved, which include applicant registration, competition procedures, announcement of results, signing study agreements, and final registration in the list of students (matriculation) (SAR, p. 23).

The admission process is managed by the Secretariat of the DU Admission Commission, which determines and approves competition results and can redistribute admission places as necessary. Their responsibilities are detailed in the document on “Mutual obligations and rights during the admission process.” The DU admission procedure emphasises efficiency and transparency, featuring information boards in the DU hall, consultations available in person, by phone, and via email, as well as communication through DU's social media accounts (SAR, p. 24).

Applicants who wish to challenge the admission decision rendered by the DU Admission Commission may do so following the outlined “Procedure in which a person can challenge and appeal decisions related to admission to a study programme at Daugavpils University” (available at: [https://du.lv/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/Kartiba\\_kada\\_persona\\_var\\_apstridet\\_un\\_parsudzet\\_ar\\_uznemsanu\\_saistitus\\_lemumus.pdf](https://du.lv/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/Kartiba_kada_persona_var_apstridet_un_parsudzet_ar_uznemsanu_saistitus_lemumus.pdf)).

For the study programmes implemented by the study field “Internal Security and Civil Protection,” students can be matriculated also in later stages of studies according to the “Procedure for starting studies in later study stages at Daugavpils University” (available at: [https://du.lv/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/ENG\\_Procedure-for-the-initiation-of-studies-in-subsequent-study-stages-1.pdf](https://du.lv/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/ENG_Procedure-for-the-initiation-of-studies-in-subsequent-study-stages-1.pdf)), taking into consideration the applicants’ professional experience and prior formal and informal education (as detailed in the “Regulations on recognition of competences acquired outside of formal education or professional experience and study results achieved in prior education at Daugavpils University,” available at: [https://du.lv/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/Nolikums\\_par\\_arpus\\_formalas\\_izglitibas\\_apguto\\_vai\\_profesionalaja\\_pieredze\\_ieguto\\_kompetencu\\_un\\_iepriekseja\\_izglitiba\\_sasniegtu\\_studiju\\_rezultatu\\_atzisanu\\_DU-1.pdf](https://du.lv/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/Nolikums_par_arpus_formalas_izglitibas_apguto_vai_profesionalaja_pieredze_ieguto_kompetencu_un_iepriekseja_izglitiba_sasniegtu_studiju_rezultatu_atzisanu_DU-1.pdf)) (SAR, p. 24).

In conclusion, DU has established a robust and effective system for student admissions, featuring clear procedures for recognizing study periods, professional experience, and prior formal and non-formal education. This framework is designed to logically assess students' achievements and learning outcomes. While DU meets the necessary admission standards and fosters an inclusive and supportive environment for prospective students, the involvement of stakeholders in the admission process was not clearly addressed during the assessment visit. However, they are adequately informed about the established criteria and procedures, which contributes to transparency and coherence within the system.

#### 1.1.5.

According to the SAR (chapter 2.1.5) as well as the “Regulation on studies at Daugavpils University” (available at: [https://du.lv/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/ENG-NOLIKUMS\\_PAR\\_STUDIJAM\\_DU\\_2018-1-1.pdf](https://du.lv/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/ENG-NOLIKUMS_PAR_STUDIJAM_DU_2018-1-1.pdf)) the assessment methods, principles, and procedures at DU play a pivotal role in evaluating student achievements and ensuring alignment with educational goals. The regulatory framework underpins the DU commitment to quality assurance in higher education, adhering to the Standards and Guidelines established in 2015. The assessment procedures are clearly defined in both the SAR and

the DU's regulations, ensuring transparency and reliability in the evaluation process.

The assessment process at DU is grounded in key principles that emphasise clarity, accessibility, and fairness. Assessment criteria are shared with students at the beginning of each study course, and evaluators receive thorough training to ensure effective evaluations (SAR, p. 25). It was demonstrated during the assessment visit that comprehensive study course descriptions are available in the university's E-environment and was confirmed by the students that are discussed during initial meetings. Clear understanding about the requirements needed to accomplish during the study course were reflected by the students.

DU effectively employs both formative and summative assessments. Formative assessments provide ongoing feedback to foster reflection and improvement, while summative assessments, including mid-term tests and final examinations, evaluate overall performance at the end of each study course (SAR, p. 25).

DU emphasises continuous improvement in its assessment methods. By analysing student surveys and performance indicators, DU remains responsive to both the needs of its students and the objectives of its study programmes. Adjustments to assessment practices are made as necessary, with changes reviewed and approved by relevant academic councils to maintain educational standards. (SAR, p. 25)

In conclusion, DU's systematic and well-defined approach to student assessment not only meets regulatory requirements but also fosters a supportive and dynamic learning environment that encourages academic success and personal growth among students. During the assessment visit, students confirmed the transparency of the educational process and noted the responsiveness and care of faculty and study programme leaders in addressing both academic concerns and other issues. It was highlighted that faculty members have provided learning materials to the students who were unable to attend lectures, demonstrating a commitment to meaningful learning rather than focusing on quantitative measures such as attendance. DU takes into account the needs and challenges of its students, making every effort to ensure they receive a quality and substantive education. This commitment is a strong indicator of quality that is highly valued by students.

#### 1.1.6.

"The Code of Ethics for Employees and Students of Daugavpils University" (available only in Latvian at: <https://du.lv/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Etikas-kodekss.pdf>) establishes clear ethical guidelines to uphold academic and professional integrity among students and faculty. It emphasises the importance of avoiding plagiarism, intellectual property violations, and fraud, ensuring that all assessments are conducted fairly and transparently. In alignment with the "General Guidelines of Academic Integrity," (available only in Latvian at: <https://ebooks.rtu.lv/product/akademiska-godiguma-terminu-vardnica-akademiska-godiguma-vispare-jas-vadlinijas/?lang=en>) DU has established strict measures for identifying and addressing instances of academic dishonesty, including a thorough plagiarism detection process for final examination papers. (SAR, p. 26)

Daugavpils University requires electronic submissions of theses to its information system for plagiarism detection using tools like PLAG LV and OXSICO. During the reporting period, about 7% of submitted theses indicated signs of plagiarism, which were evaluated by an Expert Commission for appropriate accountability. Relevant study courses in the "Internal Security and Civil Protection" study field address academic integrity and the consequences of violations. Overall, the university promotes a culture of integrity and transparency (SAR, p. 26). Only one case of plagiarism was reported during the assessment visit, with the student being allowed to resubmit their work. Similar to many universities, DU also faces challenges with AI use in research and final theses, lacking established solutions for balancing its benefits against potential misuse.

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

DU has developed a comprehensive framework for the "Internal Security and Civil Protection" study field, aligning with national strategies to produce qualified professionals while fostering an inclusive learning environment. DU's commitment to maintaining academic integrity is demonstrated through clear ethical guidelines, effective plagiarism detection tools, and a supportive approach that addresses student needs. During the assessment visit, stakeholders recognized the transparency and effectiveness of DU's assessment processes and management systems. While the university excels in promoting quality education and international competitiveness, it faces ongoing challenges related to AI use and engagement with international students. Establishing clearer interim goals within its development plans could further enhance progress measurement and ensure the success of its study programmes.

**Strengths:**

- 1) The study field aligns with national strategies, emphasising high-quality education and international competitiveness.
- 2) DU has clear procedures for recognizing prior education and experiences, ensuring systematic student assessment.
- 3) Faculty members provide robust support and resources to students, reflecting a commitment to their learning.
- 4) DU emphasises continuous improvement by analysing student feedback and performance indicators.
- 5) Positive interactions among stakeholders foster a supportive and constructive academic environment, with DU serving as a crucial institution in enhancing internal security and supporting the community in this matter.

**Weaknesses:**

- 1) Unutilised exchange opportunities and insufficient engagement with international students and faculty limit global exposure and study programme diversity.
- 2) Low staff remuneration affects faculty retention and academic quality, while inadequate scientific collaboration with foreign institutions hinders research opportunities.
- 3) Development plans lack specific annual objectives and measurable milestones for effective progress tracking.

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

### **Analysis**

#### **1.2.1.**

DU has established a quality policy, which is publicly available and can be freely accessed on the website of DU under subsection "About us" under "Documents" (available at: <https://du.lv/en/about-us/documents/>). The Policy has been developed in accordance with European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) and is based on the criteria of the European Foundation for Quality Management Excellence model (EFQM). The internal quality assurance system of DU studies is based on the DU Development Strategy and is a part of the quality management system at DU. The Policy determines the guidelines for the development, evaluation and improvement of the study quality management system.

Based on the information provided in the SAR (p. 27), the aim of the quality assurance system established is to control the implementation of study programmes and plan development in order to fully achieve the aims set in the study programme and to fulfil the defined objectives. Based on the observations gained during the assessment visit, the quality control within DU is carried out continuously in everyday processes such as admitting students, recruiting academic staff, evaluating and improving study programmes, evaluating the activities of structural units, their



managers and staff according to the efficiency of science and the results of academic work.

In the SAR, (p. 28-29), it has been enlisted what are the activities performed in order to implement the inner quality assurance system of studies effectively within the study field of “Internal Security and Civil Defense”, for example, regular review of the study course descriptions, regular surveys of stakeholders (students, graduates and employers), development of academic staff skills such as participation in conferences and seminars. It can be stated that the system ensures continuous improvement and efficient performance of the study field and relevant study programmes.

#### 1.2.2.

Based on the information provided in the SAR (p. 30), there are regulations established within DU that set out the existing procedure within the higher education institution on how opening and managing of study fields and study programmes are performed (available at: <https://du.lv/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/REGULATIONS-FOR-THE-OPENING-AND-MANAGEMENT-OF-STUDY-FIELDS-AND-STUDY-PROGRAMS-OF-DAUGAVPILS-UNIVERSITY-1.pdf>).

As stated in the SAR (p. 30), the study field and the relevant study programmes are evaluated in accordance with the procedure of accreditation by the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Latvia, which is determined in Clause 48 of Chapter XII of the Law on Higher Education Institutions. The preparation of documents and annexes necessary for the evaluation of the field of study is carried out in accordance with the "Guidelines for the development of the self-evaluation report of the field of study" developed by the Higher Education Quality Agency of the Academic Information Center.

A substantial part of development and review of the study field and study programmes is the received feedback from students, employers and graduates. There is a structure established for monitoring the satisfaction of each of the groups involved in the QA system. The student satisfaction is being monitored 2 times per study year (SAR, p. 33), employers are mainly surveyed through internship surveys and additionally a separate survey once in 2 years (SAR, p. 34), while graduates are surveyed immediately after graduation and then after 1 year, and after 3 years (SAR, p. 34).

The established mechanism of data collection from each of the stakeholders is described in greater detail under analysis of 1.2.4. in this Report. According to the expert opinion, the procedure seems logical, efficient and available to the stakeholders involved.

#### 1.2.3.

DU has developed a mechanism for submission of complaints and suggestions and it is an important aspect of the quality assurance system. There exist various ways for students to submit their complaints and proposals: individually or collectively as a group as well as choosing between submitting the complaint/proposal directly with identification of their names or anonymously. It is also possible that the Student Council represents the student submitting the complaint on the behalf of the student (SAR, p. 31).

Based on the information provided in the SAR (p. 31), students have the right to submit complaints and proposals to the study programme director, the head of the major department, dean, vice-rectors, and rector. Submissions from students and the academic staff concerning the infringements and violations of the academic freedom and rights that are stated in the Constitution are examined by DU Academic Court or Arbitration. Drafting the submissions and their acceptance at DU is executed in accordance with the procedures set in “The Law on Submissions” (available at: <https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/164501-law-on-submissions>). Submissions concerning possible violations of the norms of “DU Code of Ethics” (available at: <https://du.lv/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Etikas-kodekss.pdf>), including action or conduct outside DU, if that affected the prestige of DU, may be made by DU academic, administrative, general staff, and students.

Based on the information that has been gathered during the assessment visit, the complaint system

is rarely used as students tend to express their opinion and dissatisfaction through surveys as there are various forms of surveys and questionnaires every semester. In the timeframe of the last 2 years, there has been 1 case where an official complaint was submitted, which the expert group sees as a good indicator. However, since 2013, there have been cases when complaints are made on the study quality such as communication problems, forms of examination, timetable matters. In cases of received complaints, all of them are always discussed with the involved parties. In the examination of complaints and proposals there participates study programme director and, if needed, also the head of the study field and vice-rector for studies. After the situation analysis, possible solutions are found, students are always informed about the implementation of the complaints and/or proposals (SAR, p. 32).

#### 1.2.4.

DU has established a data collection mechanism that is seen as effective and ensures regular collection and analysis of the information on the study programmes in the study field “Internal Security and Civil Protection”. DU operates an informative system DUIS, that holds statistical data and information on study programmes, students, and academic staff members. Data are entered into DUIS by study programme directors and they are summarised and verified by the Department of Studies. At the end of each month, the data from the DUIS system is exported to the State Education Information System (SEIS) (SAR, p. 33).

As stated beforehand in the analysis of 1.2.2 in this Report, a substantial part of improvement identification is surveys that are filled and afterwards received back from students, employers and graduates. In regards to employers’ surveys, during the assessment visit, the expert group asked the employer representatives whether they are involved in QA mechanism and the expert group did not receive a positive confirmation on that. However, the expert group considers a possibility that the employers present in the assessment visit may not be directly involved as the target group of the performed surveys. Based on the meeting during the assessment visit with the QA manager, it was specified that there are various forms of surveys that are filled by each of the stakeholder groups. First form of student survey is announced by the Centre of Study Quality Assessment 2 times a year – for the first year students 2 months after beginning the studies, and at the end of each academic year (SAR, p. 33). The other form of student survey conducted is initiated by the Student Council, which takes place at the end of every study semester, and academic staff in various cases do their own surveys of monitoring to evaluate the student satisfaction with the specific study course. The data gained in surveys are collected in the DU survey system (Open Source Project LimeSurvey), data are analysed. Their results are reflected in the study field self-assessment reports that are prepared and gathered annually (SAR, p. 33). The overall activity and responsiveness of students is around 60% as specified during the assessment visit, which in the opinion of the expert group is optimal. It was asked during the assessment visit what the procedure is in case there has been negative feedback from students on the lecturer. Usually, there is a conversation individually with the lecturer on what has been the problem and what can be potentially improved/changed in order to fix the issues. In case the problem is not getting fixed and the study course is still receiving negative evaluation, there is an in depth monitoring of the study course and accordingly, stricter measures are applied as a change of lecturer.

In the evaluation of the study field, it is important also to point out that one of the study programmes within the study field is a joint study programme, which also has to be properly evaluated as part of the QA management system. For the matters that regard the quality of the study programme “Economic Security”, it was stated during the assessment visit that the first instance reported to is the Joint study programme Council, which include the study programme directors. In these Council meetings, they are addressing issues related to quality matters. In case of necessary improvements, they discuss them openly and can request assistance from the Head of Quality Assessment Centre of DU. To the expert group, there was a bit of a lack of clarity on how

practically the quality assessment is planned for the joint study programme students as to who is the responsible party to perform summary results of surveys by the students.

In regards to employers and graduates, in general the surveys are organised once in two years. Alumni survey data contains the information on the trends of alumni employment, assessment of the acquired study programmes and proposals for their improvement. Questionnaires or interviews of graduates are organised both immediately after graduation, and after graduation (after a year, three years). Employer surveys are executed and their data are summarised by the study programme directors. On a regular basis, employers are surveyed after internships, the survey of employers not involved in internship provision takes place every two years on average. (SAR, p. 33-34). As specified during the assessment visit, employers and graduates are more responsive than the students in filling the surveys.

After processing the obtained data and reviewing the results, changes are introduced into the content of the study programme. The director of the study programme informs all involved parties (students, teaching staff, employers, graduates) about the changes introduced, thus providing feedback. The recommendations or reprimands mentioned in the surveys and the prevention mechanisms are discussed in meetings with both the teaching staff and the students of the study field, as well as in consultations with the representatives of the sector. Student representatives participate in the study field councils and in the development of solutions to the comments provided in the surveys (SAR, p. 34).

#### 1.2.5.

1. The DU website lacks information on study fees, amount of budget places for the study programme "Civil Security and Protection".

2. The included information on the "Civil Security and Protection" as the indicated information on the task of the study programme includes outdated list of legal regulations and references such as 02.12.2008. regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers No.990. (see: <https://du.lv/en/studies/study-programmes/1st-level-study-programmes/civil-security-and-protection/>).

3. In the study programme "Labour Protection", the name of the study programme director has not been updated. The indicated one on the website of DU is still the name of the previous study programme director, which must be changed to the current study programme director's name. (see at:

<https://du.lv/en/studies/study-programmes/professional-master-study-programmes/labour-protection/>). Such information does not have to be specified on the VIIS platform, thus the analysis is provided based on what is available on the website and SAR.

4. The website lacks information on study fees, amount of budget places for the study programme "Labour protection".

5. For the study programme "Economic Security" there is a lack of information indicated on the website of DU (available at: <https://du.lv/en/studies/study-programmes/professional-master-study-programmes/economic-security/>). There is a lack of indication of: 1. All implemented types and duration of studies; 2. Study language; 3. Amount of CP to be acquired; 4. There is a lack of indication that there is a change from a professional master study programme to an academic one. 5. There is a lack of indication on the website to see that it is a joint study programme with RSU; 6. There is lack of indication on study fees, available budget places of the study programme. 7. On the website of RSU, there is a lack of information on the study programme at this point.

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

DU has implemented a comprehensive quality assurance system and it is in alignment with ESG and

utilises the EFQM Excellence model. DU's quality management system includes continuous evaluation of study programmes, faculty, and administrative units, with a strong emphasis on feedback from stakeholders such as students, employers, and graduates. Mechanisms for handling complaints and suggestions are in place, though they are rarely used. Data collection on study programme performance is robust, and improvements are made based on feedback. There is a lack of information available to prospective students on the DU website on study programmes that need to be updated, mainly information on study fees, amount of budget places. For the "Economic Security" study programme, there is more information missing.

**Strengths:**

- 1) Regular surveys from key stakeholders (students, employers, and graduates) ensure a cycle of continuous improvement in study programme delivery and content.
- 2) A clear process exists for students to submit complaints or suggestions.
- 3) The quality policy is well-aligned with ESG and EFQM, ensuring that the system meets European higher education quality benchmarks.

**Weaknesses:**

- 1) Lack of information published on DU website in regards to the study programmes - amount of budget places, study fees, amount of CP acquired and others.
- 2) There is some lack of clarity in how quality assurance is managed for the joint study programme "Economic Security", particularly regarding the aggregation and evaluation of student feedback.
- 3) The absence of clear information on tuition fees and budget places for "Labour Protection" and "Economic Security" study programmes.
- 4) Some legal references and study programme details on the website are outdated, which could lead to misunderstandings about the regulatory framework.

## **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

DU has established and implements mechanisms that ensure continuous improvements and developments of the internal quality assurance system. There is a wide range of internal quality documents and regulations that are the basis of governing the processes such as internal quality policy, regulation on studies, and regulation on elections to academic positions.

- 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

DU is implementing the "DU study internal quality ensuring policy", which can be accessed here: [INTERNAL-QUALITY-ASSURANCE-POLICY-OF-STUDIES-AT-DAUGAVPILS-UNIVERSITY.docx](#) (live.com), that facilitates and ensures the quality of higher education. To ensure the improvement of the existing normative documents and procedures at DU and compliance with the student-centred and sustainable higher education, especially assessing and updating quality policy implementation mechanisms, the study quality system is being updated within ESF project "Daugavpils University governance and management competence improvement" (No. 8.2.3.0/18/A/010).

- 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

In accordance with the "Regulation on Studies at Daugavpils University", which can be accessed here: [https://du.lv/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/ENG-NOLIKUMS\\_PAR\\_STUDIJAM\\_DU\\_2018.pdf](https://du.lv/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/ENG-NOLIKUMS_PAR_STUDIJAM_DU_2018.pdf) and "Regulations on Opening and Managing Daugavpils University Study Directions and Study Programmes", which can be accessed here: (REGULATIONS-FOR-THE-OPENING-AND-MANAGEMENT-OF-STUDY-FIELDS-AND-STUDY-PROGRAMS-OF-DAUGAVPILS-UNIVERSITY-1.pdf (du.lv/)) DU have established mechanisms for the development, internal approving of study programmes, their monitoring and periodic examination.

- 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

The established regulatory documents and study course descriptions are freely available to students. Every student has an opportunity of giving proposals for the criteria, conditions, and procedures of the assessment of students' academic performance in surveys. Based on the feedback provided, there are adjustments, changes made within the content of the study programmes and improvements are made in the study processes. The main regulatory document that establishes criteria, conditions and procedures within DU is "Regulation on Studies at Daugavpils University", which is publicly available on the website of DU and can be accessed here:

[https://du.lv/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/ENG-NOLIKUMS\\_PAR\\_STUDIJAM\\_DU\\_2018.pdf](https://du.lv/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/ENG-NOLIKUMS_PAR_STUDIJAM_DU_2018.pdf)

- 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

DU has concrete and specified internal normative acts and mechanisms that regulate the ensuring of the qualification and work quality of the academic staff: "Regulation on elections to academic positions in Daugavpils University", which can be accessed here:

[https://du.lv/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Nolikums-par-velesanam-akademiskajos-amatos-DU\\_A\\_PSTIPRINATAIS.pdf](https://du.lv/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Nolikums-par-velesanam-akademiskajos-amatos-DU_A_PSTIPRINATAIS.pdf) and "Procedure for evaluation of scientific work effectiveness of Daugavpils University academic staff" ("Other attachments"). Self-assessment reports include the results of surveys and measures of implementing students' proposals and averting criticism.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

Surveys of students, graduates and employers are organised on a regular basis - for students one general survey once a year and for employers and graduates - every two years. In addition, CSQA carries out express surveys to learn students' opinion on current issues related to the process of studies and academic staff work efficiency. There is regular cooperation with the Student Council, exchange of opinions, examination of proposals. Study programme directors collect, analyse and discuss information about student progress in Study direction Councils.

Necessary changes in study programmes are reviewed and accepted by the Study Council. It is still a little unclear how the procedure is planned and organised within the joint study programme in cooperation with RSU.

- 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

DU ensures continuous improvement and development through the established framework of mechanisms of quality assurance. There are procedures in place to maintain the QA system and to make sure it is up to the standards and necessities of the involved stakeholders. Thus, surveys and communication with stakeholders (students, graduates, employers) and ensuring their satisfaction and involvement is a substantial part of the QA process.

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

#### Analysis

##### 1.3.1.

The study field “Internal Security and Civil Protection” at DU is funded through state budget subsidies and tuition fees, covering costs such as salaries, materials, and social security for students. While the primary funding source is the state budget, students can also enrol in the study programme for a fee and may apply for tuition fee discounts. (SAR, p. 35) The webpage (available at: <https://du.lv/gribu-studet/studiju-maksa-un-atlaides/>) provides information about tuition fees; however, fee discount options were not included. Clarification from DU confirmed that discounts are regulated separately and are available.

For scientific development in this study field, funding is allocated from the Ministry of Education and Science based on the faculty performance from previous years. Academic staff have opportunities to earn royalties for scientific publications indexed in Web of Science and Scopus databases, as well as remuneration based on their Hirsch index scores. (SAR, p. 35-36) It was also determined during the assessment visit that the teaching staff is motivated by various funding opportunities for publishing and participating in conferences.

DU hosts annual research project competitions open to academic staff and students, aimed at enhancing scientific activity and fostering collaboration with the private sector. For 2024, the project's funding pool is EUR 51,000, with a maximum of EUR 3,000 available per project. Similarly, students can apply for scholarships in the student research project competition, which promotes their involvement in scientific activities and facilitates publication targets. (SAR, p. 36) In 2023, 27 project applications were submitted for assessment, leading to the approval of 18 projects by a commission of experts from the DU Science Council. Among the approved projects there are several significant studies across various fields. Overall, the assessment reflects strong performance based on output and process indicators, further detailed analyses can be found in chapter 1.4.4 in this Report.

Funding for enhancing the educational infrastructure - such as upgrading auditoriums and laboratories, acquiring educational materials, modern research equipment, visual aids, and software - is primarily sourced from various projects, including ERDF and ESF. (SAR, p. 37) During the assessment visit, it was observed that not all equipment and technologies were the latest or most modern. However, feedback from students and graduates indicated a high level of satisfaction with the study environment, particularly regarding practical studies, despite the equipment not aligning with the latest trends and technologies. Additionally, the teaching staff expressed satisfaction with the funding system for research activities and publication bonuses.

Based on collected information, it can be concluded that DU has established a system for determining and redistributing the financial support necessary for the implementation of the study

field "Internal Security and Civil Protection" and its associated study programmes. Additionally, a well-defined and effective system for funding scientific and applied research has been implemented.

### 1.3.2.

DU has successfully identified and secured the necessary infrastructure resources, as well as material and technical support, for the effective implementation of the study field of "Internal Security and Civil Protection". These resources are readily available to both students and academic staff, ensuring a conducive learning and teaching environment. (SAR, p. 37-38)

Support for this study field comes from various academic and research units, including the Institute of Humanities and Social Sciences and the Faculty of Natural Sciences and Health Care. Students benefit from over 20 specialised offices and laboratories, including the newly established Criminalistics laboratory, which facilitate both teaching and scientific research. (SAR, p. 37-38) During the assessment visit, the infrastructure resources and material support were evaluated, and although the environment was not the most modern or technically advanced, students highly valued the practical aspects of their studies conducted in various laboratories.

It is stated in the SAR (p. 37-38) that in recent years, DU has prioritised the modernization of its study and research infrastructure, resulting in access to state-of-the-art laboratories designed for field and laboratory research. Significant projects contributing to this modernization include:

- ERDF Project on STEM and Health Care Modernization (2017-2020): Improved the material and technical base of study programmes with a budget allocation of EUR 1,425,138.
- ERDF Project for Research Infrastructure Development (2017-2020): Enhanced infrastructure through the purchase of new equipment for priority research areas, totaling EUR 3,069,684.
- ERDF Project for Quality Improvement and Accessibility (2010-2015): Renovated auditoriums and developed modern teaching and laboratory facilities, at a cost of EUR 16,715,991.

It could be concluded that to facilitate continuous enhancement of these resources, a comprehensive system has been established for the acquisition and improvement of material, methodological, and informational resources. This structured approach ensures that the institution effectively meets the evolving needs of its educational programmes while providing essential support to students and faculty.

Furthermore, DU offers updated living accommodations, including renovated dormitories and a sports complex. Students and faculty have access to essential resources such as audiovisual equipment, internet connectivity, and online platforms, all of which contribute to seamless learning and research experiences. (SAR, p. 38) During the assessment visit, teaching staff and students expressed satisfaction with the offerings, indicating no significant shortcomings. Therefore, it can be concluded that the infrastructure resources and material and technical support necessary for the implementation of the study field are adequately identified and available to both students and teaching staff.

### 1.3.3.

DU Library maintains a robust collection and subscription system based on requests from faculty lecturers. Every academic year, applications for book purchases are reviewed and approved by the DU Budget Commission, enabling the acquisition of the latest publications. While the library does not digitise its collection, it uploads student final theses to its information system and regularly updates faculty on new literature and database subscription options. (SAR, p. 38)

During the assessment visit, the library showcased new and contemporary literature across most fields (including labour protection, etc.), yet the assessment of the study programmes indicated a reliance on outdated references. However, the impression remained that there are no specific shortcomings within the library resources, while the study courses are merely un updated, which is also highlighted under the specific chapters in this report.

Students and faculty have access to various library services, including an electronic catalogue and

the ability to order, reserve, and renew books online. The library features a spacious open-access reading room with 60 workstations and covers a total area of 1,000 m<sup>2</sup>, housing 267,655 items, including 233,868 books and over 20,000 periodicals. (SAR, p. 38) During the assessment visit, a tour of the library was conducted, and it was noted that students actively utilised the library's resources and facilities. Also it was explained that DU provides access to several electronic databases through its network, including EBSCO, Cambridge Journals, ScienceDirect, Web of Science, and Scopus, offering a wealth of academic resources. Additionally, students can access scientific libraries in DU laboratories, which regularly update their collections with foreign journals. It could be concluded that library resources and databases meet the needs of the study field.

To better accommodate student needs, the library's hours were extended in 2018, now operating from 9 AM to 8 PM on weekdays and from 10 AM to 4 PM on Saturdays, resulting in positive feedback from students. (SAR, p. 39) Additionally, a designated book return drop box is located outside the premises, allowing users to return books at any time.

During the assessment visit, the learning environment and available resources were introduced. Although the tools in use did not incorporate the latest trends and technologies, students indicated that these existing resources were appropriate and effectively diversified the educational experience. Notably, practical subjects were frequently highlighted as favourites among students. Therefore, while there is a recognized need for additional resources to introduce more contemporary tools into the educational process, DU has effectively utilised its existing facilities to provide students with a varied and practical learning experience.

#### 1.3.4.

DU has developed an e-learning environment using Moodle, which facilitates direct communication and provides access to study course information for students. Lecturers utilise Moodle to share various study materials for lectures, seminars, and practical classes, thereby supporting independent student work. The SAR (p. 39) also notes that this online platform helps reduce the risk of dropouts, particularly for the students managing work or health challenges, and is essential for maintaining enrollment both regionally and beyond. However, during the assessment visit, it became clear that this claim was not statistically supported. Nonetheless, students expressed a strong appreciation for the platform, emphasising its necessity, along with the high motivation and support of the teaching staff. Therefore, it can be inferred that, despite the lack of statistical evidence, the platform likely has a positive impact on student retention.

The e-learning system allows students to submit homework and tests via email or Moodle, receive evaluations and feedback, attend consultations, and access library and internet resources. By integrating modern IT solutions such as email, Zoom, and Skype, DU offers flexible e-learning conditions. (SAR, p. 40) During the assessment visit, students highlighted that the teaching staff is supportive and friendly. Even when online or hybrid lectures are not initially planned, faculty members are likely to provide them upon request. This flexibility is a significant benefit for the study programmes, enabling students to balance their work and family responsibilities while staying current with their studies.

Moodle is synchronised with DU's information system (DUIS), granting students seamless access to courses (SAR, p. 40). It was confirmed during the assessment visit that DU also provides regular professional development courses for lecturers to enhance their skills in using the e-learning environment. Additionally, technical support is available at the Student Service Centre and faculty Dean's Offices.

Lecturers can upload video lectures created by the Multimedia Centre using advanced filming equipment available at DU. These videos are stored on the DU server and made accessible to students through Moodle. The DUIS system offers study course descriptions, class schedules, and allows students to track their academic progress. (SAR, p. 40)

Based on the information in the SAR and observations from the assessment visit, it can be



concluded that the information and communication technology solutions used for the study process are appropriate and effective.

#### 1.3.5.

Elections for academic positions at DU are conducted in accordance with the "Regulations on Elections to Academic Positions." (available at: [https://du.lv/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Nolikums-par-velesanam-akademiskajos-amatos-DU\\_APSTI\\_PRINATAIS.pdf](https://du.lv/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Nolikums-par-velesanam-akademiskajos-amatos-DU_APSTI_PRINATAIS.pdf)). The academic positions available include professor, associate professor, leading researcher, docent/assistant professor, lecturer, researcher, assistant, and research assistant. (SAR, p. 40)

The number of positions for assistants, lecturers, and docents is determined by the Rector based on the study workload, while positions for researchers and leading researchers are established according to need and funding. Associate professor positions are also determined by the Rector, pending Senate approval. (SAR, p. 40)

Elections for academic positions such as docents, leading researchers, lecturers, researchers, assistants, and research assistants are conducted through open voting in faculty or scientific councils within three months of the competition announcement, with the results confirmed at a DU Senate meeting. In the case of a vacancy, the Senate has the option to hire a visiting academic for up to two years without a competition, based on recommendations from the faculty and study programme directors. In contrast, professors and associate professors are elected through open voting in the council of professors within their respective fields (SAR, p. 41).

Vacancies and competition announcements are published on the DU website and in the official publication "Latvijas Vēstnesis," allowing anyone qualified to apply within one month. Both Latvian and foreign citizens who meet the qualifications and are proficient in the national language and professional English are eligible. (SAR, p. 41) However, during the assessment visit, it remained somewhat unclear how much effort has been made to attract foreign faculty. While the DU website seemingly offers an open competition for positions, the appropriate target audience may not accidentally come across it. There appears to be significant untapped potential in utilising social media and national websites (such as [www.cv.lv](http://www.cv.lv) or similar platforms) to attract a broader pool of candidates.

#### 1.3.6.

DU effectively identifies and addresses the professional and didactic development needs of its teaching staff through a structured evaluation of relevant improvement measures. The institution has established internal regulations, such as the "Regulations on Elections to Academic Positions" (available at: [https://du.lv/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Nolikums-par-velesanam-akademiskajos-amatos-DU\\_APSTI\\_PRINATAIS.pdf](https://du.lv/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Nolikums-par-velesanam-akademiskajos-amatos-DU_APSTI_PRINATAIS.pdf)) and procedures for evaluating academic activities, ensuring that the selection of academic personnel aligns with the highest standards of qualification and quality assurance. (SAR, p. 41)

To promote continuous professional growth, DU provides targeted professional development programmes supported by the European Social Fund (ESF). These programmes focus on essential skills for lecturers, including communication, leadership, and the use of e-learning platforms. By regularly assessing the effectiveness of these development initiatives, DU ensures that teaching staff are adequately prepared to meet evolving pedagogical demands and educational standards. (SAR, p. 42)

However, during the assessment visit, concerns were raised regarding the actual language proficiency of faculty members as presented in their CVs, particularly since interpretation was required for both questions and responses during the interviews. Nonetheless, some progress was evident compared to previous instances, with faculty members exhibiting increased confidence in

attempting to communicate in English.

Furthermore, despite robust support for language instruction, there has been insufficient emphasis on monitoring and measuring progress, which may hinder the effectiveness of training programmes. Experts recommended the consideration of a more defined quality assessment system, such as the use of the DuoLingo platform for both language learning and evaluation. This approach could help ensure that faculty members are adequately prepared for the implementation of an English-language study programme, an area where current confidence levels appear to be inadequate (during the assessment visit some concern was raised by DU about the second-cycle SP "Economic Security").

Participation in the "Erasmus+" programme offers faculty members valuable opportunities for professional exchange and learning from best practices in international educational settings. This not only enhances their teaching methodologies but also directly impacts the quality of education offered to students. (SAR, p. 42) While progress has been achieved in the realm of international collaboration, there remains uncertainty regarding whether English was utilised as the working language in their Erasmus+ projects, despite earlier recommendations emphasising the importance of developing English language skills. Although this uncertainty does not detract from the value of substantive collaboration, it underscores the necessity of enhancing English proficiency to effectively host more international students and offer study programmes in English. Therefore, it is imperative to place greater emphasis on English language development to support these strategic objectives.

Overall, it could be concluded that DU's approach to determining the development needs of its teaching staff, along with the implementation of tailored improvement measures and ongoing evaluations, underscores its commitment to fostering a dynamic learning environment that continuously enhances professional and didactic competence among its faculty. However, English proficiency skills should be still in focus with measurable evaluation to achieve the desired goal on an international level.

#### 1.3.7.

The teaching staff involved in the "Internal Security and Civil Protection" study field at DU maintain a balanced academic, research, and administrative workload. With a total of 49 lecturers - including three professors and 32 elected members - efforts are made to ensure that the distribution of academic positions and workloads is equitable. (SAR, p. 43)

The workload of lecturers is determined according to the "Procedure for Accounting the Workload of the Academic Staff at Daugavpils University," allowing for appropriate accounting of teaching hours. If a lecturer's study workload exceeds 1,000 hours per academic year, the excess is calculated in accordance with applicable legal procedures. (SAR, p. 44)

In addition, DU promotes an equal distribution of responsibilities among faculty, ensuring that industry professionals are effectively integrated into the study process. This approach not only enhances study programme quality but also fosters an optimal balance between academic, research, and administrative commitments for the teaching staff. Regular yearly evaluations of scientific activities further contribute to maintaining this balance by informing decisions on workloads and remuneration based on performance. (SAR, p. 44)

During the assessment visit, it was evident that the teaching staff was highly motivated and understood their societal role. No specific concerns regarding workload were expressed; instead, there was a clear recognition of DU's role as a local societal influencer, particularly in integrating the Russian-speaking population and ensuring safety. Each DU employee viewed this mission as their personal responsibility, indicating that the hours dedicated to fulfilling this mission were not a primary concern. However, in the long-term perspective, it should be recognized as a topic which needs attention.

### 1.3.8.

DU has effectively identified and established a comprehensive support system to meet the diverse needs of its students, including those from abroad, part-time students, distance learners, and students with special needs. The DU Student Service Center (SSC) serves as a key resource, providing essential information, consultations, and services tailored to support all students. (SAR, p. 44-45)

To enhance accessibility, DU has modernised its infrastructure to accommodate individuals with disabilities, creating an inclusive learning environment. The university has been recognized for its efforts, receiving the "Education for All" award from the Latvian Association of Disabled People, highlighting its commitment to accessibility for all students. (SAR, p. 45)

For international students, the Department of International and Public Relations offers specialised support to help them adjust to their studies and life at DU. The university also provides targeted resources for part-time and distance learners, ensuring they have access to necessary educational materials and support. (SAR, p. 45) During the assessment visit, it was confirmed that students feel comfortable and have not felt the need to submit any formal complaints, despite being aware of the process. The faculty and study programme directors are very supportive and understanding; it was noted that faculty members have even sent additional materials via email to students who missed classes, ensuring they can catch up on necessary knowledge and skills. As a result, no significant shortcomings were identified, and the only expressed nice-to-have wish was related to the occasional lack of parking spaces.

Additionally, the Psychological Support Center offers mental health resources, providing free consultations to all students, thereby recognizing the importance of emotional well-being. The DU Student Social Support Programme assists academically successful students facing financial difficulties by subsidising dormitory rent. (SAR, p. 45)

Furthermore, the Career and Initiative Support Centre promotes career development and community engagement, ensuring all students have access to employment opportunities and professional growth resources. Overall, DU's proactive measures and established support systems effectively cater to the varied needs of its student population. (SAR, p. 45)

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

DU demonstrates a strong commitment to supporting its study field in "Internal Security and Civil Protection" through a well-structured funding model that combines state budget subsidies and tuition fees, alongside significant funding for scientific development. The university has effectively secured the necessary infrastructure resources and technical support, fostering a conducive learning environment for both students and faculty. While the library and e-learning platforms provide essential access to academic resources, there is a need for updates to enhance their functionality. Faculty participation in the Erasmus+ programme presents valuable international collaboration opportunities, although improving English language proficiency is crucial to fully leverage these benefits. Furthermore, DU's effective management of academic workloads and tailored support services for diverse student needs underscore its commitment to inclusivity. Overall, DU's dedication to continuous enhancement of academic quality and student support systems is evident, though enhancing language development and outreach strategies for attracting international faculty remains essential for achieving its strategic goals.

### **Strengths:**

- 1) DU effectively combines state budget subsidies and tuition fees to support the "Internal Security and Civil Protection" study field, securing significant funds for scientific development.
- 2) DU has successfully secured necessary infrastructure and technical support, creating a conducive learning environment for both students and faculty.

- 3) The library and e-learning platforms provide essential access to academic materials, although they may require updates for improved functionality.
- 4) Participation in the Erasmus+ programme offers valuable opportunities for the faculty and student exchanges, enhancing the university's international presence.
- 5) DU manages academic workloads efficiently and offers tailored support services to accommodate diverse student needs, fostering inclusivity and student well-being.
- 6) DU demonstrates a strong dedication to enhancing academic quality and student support systems.

Weaknesses:

- 1) There is a recognized need to enhance English language skills among faculty to fully leverage international collaboration opportunities.
- 2) There appears to be untapped potential in outreach strategies to attract a broader pool of international faculty candidates.
- 3) Reliance on state subsidies may pose risks to financial stability and resource availability if funding decreases in the future as there are not enough international students or students who are ready to pay the tuition fee.

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

##### **Analysis**

###### **1.4.1.**

The SAR states (p. 46) that the research activity of the academic staff involved in the implementation of the study field is carried out in the following directions: Police law, Criminal Law, Criminal procedural Law, Municipal Law, Law of execution of criminal sentences, Criminology and operative theory, Civil Law.

According to the collected data, the DU academic staff purposefully and regularly participate in various professional development activities in the fields corresponding to their scientific interests both in DU and in foreign universities. In addition to academic work at the university, the teaching staff has practical experience in the implementation of scientific projects. There is a short overview in the SAR (p.47) of recently published scientific papers, as well as the attended conferences and seminars, which fit into the study field.

Based on evidence collected by: reading SAR, interviewing key stakeholders during the assessment visit, and checking additional documents, the expert team can mostly agree with the claim that the directions of scientific and applied research of the study field correspond to the development goals of the higher education institution and are relevant for the study field and industry. Annex 2.1.2. titled "DU study field "International security and civil defense development plan summary for the period from 2024 to 2030" outlines: planned action/activity, timeframe and responsible person/structural unit. It sets key aims for studies, research and activities pertaining to material and technical facilities.

Some of them are: 1. Raising the scientific capacity of the teaching staff of the study direction by more active participation in the international activity (international projects, conferences, publications in SCOPUS / WoS); 2. Strengthening the capacity to attract funding from research programmes funded by the European Union (Horizon Europe, etc.); 3. Promoting the involvement of teaching staff and scientific staff in science communication activities participating in at least one event per year; 4. Promotion of cooperation with the research units of DU and other cooperation partners in conducting scientific research. From the document it is visible that there exists a clear intention to continue with research activities that ensure alignment with the DU development goals. However, the document lacks precision in terms of detailed key performance indicators (KPI) and specific time trials.

One important set of information for the full compliance with this criterion is the availability of data describing project activities undertaken within international consortiums relevant for the study field and corresponding study programmes. DU website is quite disorganised and not user-friendly, especially for non-native speakers, and does not collate all the data on various projects or research activities in one single place. Establishing a single contact point or one-stop shop would be of great help to external stakeholders.

One important way of ensuring better integration of research and development goals is to communicate scientific achievements in a streamlined and accessible way. Furthermore, researchers and their work is presented in a very rudimentary way, which does not convey plenty of information, which is visible from the DU website: <https://du.lv/kontakti/darbinieku-kontakti/page/2/?cat=605> .

Since DU is partnering with RSU in the joint implementation of the Master's study programme in "Economic Security" it would be quite logical to follow best practices present at the partner institution. In that regard, organisation of the website along the principle of RSU Research Portal would be highly advisable to ensure aims outlined in the DU development goals, as elaborated by "Daugavpils University development strategy for 2015-2020" (<https://du.lv/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/DU-Strategy-summary-1.pdf>) and the Development plan for the 2024-2030 period.

#### 1.4.2.

SAR (p. 11) divides quality assurance mechanisms on external (those applied by Latvian Higher Education Quality Agency) and internal ones. According to DU study internal quality ensuring policy there is systematic assessment of study fields and study programmes in order to make sure how the study programme objectives and study outcomes are reached, the compliance of the study programme with the current developments of national economy and labour market demands (SAR Table 1.1.1, p.10). Those mechanisms should ensure the connection of scientific and applied research of the study field with the study process.

The expert team can mostly agree that this outcome has been achieved. Annex 2.3.7. titled "Basic information about teaching staff" provides key quantitative performance indicators for all 47 members of the teaching staff. They have published 114 publications indexed in Web of Science/Scopus in the period under assessment. On average, this is tantamount to 2.42 publications per teaching staff member over the cycle of five years and on average 8.74 publications over the lifecycle of their academic careers. Cumulatively, they have published 411 publications in the previously mentioned databases.

Teaching staff members have a cumulative h-index score of 93, which is on average 1.93 per capita. There is only one teaching staff member with an h-index score higher than ten (14 to be precise). The table in Annex 2.3.7. counts 68 cases of participation in various projects, but it could be more specific in the future regarding the type of project activities (national or international, grants obtained, etc.). This is equivalent to the average of 1.44 participation per teaching staff member.

In terms of participating at various conferences there are in total 182 conferences listed in the table contained in the Annex 2.3.7., which averages 3.87 conferences per teaching staff member. Unfortunately, there is no classification of attendance according to the type of conference (national or international), which needs to be improved in the future reporting period.

Finally, there are cumulatively 1272 Scopus citations collected by teaching staff members. On average this is 27.1 citations per teaching staff member. However, this number is not particularly revealing since only one researcher has been responsible for 590 or 46.31% of all citations. If we subtract top 3 performers (590+90+90 citations), then the average amounts to 12.15. It is also important to highlight that 15 members of the teaching staff (mostly without PhD) have no publications and citations, which constitutes too big a percentage of the academic staff members. Similarly, 5 members of the teaching staff with PhDs have no Web of Science/Scopus publications at

all. On the positive side of this analysis, 16 members of the teaching staff have at least 10 Web of Science/Scopus citations.

After this short overview of basic statistical indicators measuring research output one also needs to shed light on the qualitative data on published scientific research. E.g. Annex 2.4.4. titled "List of academic staff publications in the study field "Internal security and civil protection" should serve as a crown evidence of the claim that there exists a logical and justified connection of scientific and applied research of the study field, on the one hand, with the study process, on the other hand.

Unfortunately, the document is written very sloppily and covers only 15 members of the teaching staff. Scientific publications presented in the document are not chronologically-aligned and encompass randomly-mixed years before the 2018-2023 period. This kind of document should provide more qualitative or descriptive information on the title of publications, journal name, journal ranking, scientific field, as well as information on which study courses could profit from enlisting the published scientific work on a list of required and additional readings. In summary, this kind of document should ensure essential aggregation of data to ensure constant monitoring and upgrading of study programmes on the basis of teaching staff research output. Hence, this indicator is only partially fulfilled.

#### 1.4.3

DU has received the Erasmus Higher Education Charter 2021-2027, which enables participation in all Erasmus+ activities (available at: <https://du.lv/en/international-cooperation/erasmus-mobility/>). The Charter sets out the guiding principles that higher education institutions should follow, organising and implementing Erasmus activities. In the Erasmus+ programme, DU provides: student exchange (studying in partner universities abroad); staff exchange (lecturing at foreign partner universities and exchange of experience at foreign universities).

The competence of DU academic staff is developed by participating in mobility within the framework of the European Union support programme in the field of education, training, youth and sports "Erasmus+". Cooperation agreements (available at: [https://du.lv/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/Partner\\_list\\_Erasmus.pdf](https://du.lv/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/Partner_list_Erasmus.pdf)) have been concluded with more than 90 higher education institutions in 22 countries (SAR, p. 49).

"Erasmus+" programme supports teaching as DU lecturers go to one of the foreign cooperation universities or participate in staff training, improving professional competencies, ensuring participation in training, observing work at a foreign cooperation university or other appropriate organisation (SAR, p. 50).

The goals of learning mobility enable DU lecturers and staff to gain knowledge and specific skills by learning from the experience and good practice of foreign partners, as well as to improve the practical skills required for work at DU and professional development, to encourage academic staff to expand and improve the range and content of study courses, enables students who do not have the opportunity to participate in a mobility programme to benefit from the knowledge and experience provided by academic staff and foreign guest lecturers from other European universities, and promotes the exchange of knowledge and teaching experience between European higher education institutions.

The DU Erasmus+ coordinator also visits the international Staff Week several times a year, where there is an opportunity to establish new contacts and conclude inter-university agreements on the exchange of students and teaching staff within the Erasmus+ programme. As an example, one can mention the 2024 student practice in labour protection at Utena University of Applied Sciences (SAR, p. 56).

During the reporting period, the outgoing mobility of lecturers and employees took place both for professional development and for teaching at cooperation partner universities. Teaching activities were carried out in Poland at the University of Gdańsk (Uniwersytet Gdański), in Lithuania at the Vytautas Magnus University, in Portugal at the University of Beira (Universidade da Beira Interior) in

Covilha, in Turkey at the Mediterranean University (Akdeniz Üniversitesi). The professional development activities of employees and lecturers were implemented in Poland at the University of Gdańsk (Uniwersytet Gdański), in Finland at the University of Turku (University of Turku), in the Czech Republic at the University of Pardubice (University of Pardubice), in Cyprus at the University of Cyprus (University of Cyprus). (SAR p. 57). This can be concluded from the Annex 2.5.3 „Statistical data on the incoming and outgoing mobility of teaching staff“, which counts the number of DU teaching staff outgoing mobilities over the last five years: 12 in 2023, 10 in 2022, 12 in 2021, 6 in 2020, 16 in 2019 and 12 in 2018.

The DU teaching staff embraced academic mobility opportunities to a bigger extent than students but according to the data listed in the Annex 2.5.3. all mobilities were of short duration, no longer than a week. While shorter research stay is better than no stay, researchers should aim to prolong their stay at foreign partner institutions to fully embrace all the opportunities of international scientific cooperation and the adoption of best practices. The biggest difficulties that DU faces in the implementation of the mobility of teaching staff are the difficulties of rescheduling lecturers' classes during business trips due to the heavy workload, which precludes mobilities longer than one week. The situation could be improved by better rotation of the academic staff and more inclusion of doctoral level students or external collaborators in classes.

In spite of the progress made over the last couple of years and new cooperation agreements signed (e.g. CEPOL - European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Training, and Warsaw War Studies University, WSB), there are still several important obstacles to further improving academic mobility as an important input to high-quality research output in the study field under assessment. The difficulty in attracting foreign lecturers as part of incoming mobility is the lack of provision of competitive remuneration. Correspondingly, the main difficulties encountered in the implementation of student mobility at DU are students' employment (more than 50% of students work). This can be concluded from the data presented in annexes 2.5.2. and 2.5.3. Since 2018, there have been no incoming foreign students and foreign teaching staff in the study field of "Internal Security and Civil Protection". On the other hand, only four DU students engaged in outgoing mobility from 2018 to 2023.

To conclude, the level of internationalisation and both the quality and quantity of research output are closely intertwined. Hence, more incentives stimulating mobility are needed and one of the key constraints is the budgetary situation, which could be alleviated by more successful participation in research project consortiums.

#### 1.4.4.

Expert team can fully agree that DU has developed mechanisms for the involvement of the teaching staff in scientific research and/or applied research. There are several important financial incentives for the members of the academic staff.

Firstly, in a series of meetings during the assessment visit, especially with the DU management, expert team members were informed about remuneration schemes at DU, which incentivise publication in high-quality academic journals. Firstly, researchers can count on remuneration of EUR 1.000,00 for a publication in Q1-indexed journals.

For the publications indexed in other three quartiles there is a remuneration of EUR 500 for a given researcher. This means that alongside the "Procedure for the evaluation of scientific work effectiveness of Daugavpils University academic staff" (annex:1.4.Procedure of assessing the scientific activity.pdf), which stipulates the minimum requirements for keeping the tenure, there is also in parallel a carrot approach offering financial incentives for especially productive leading researchers and researchers that publish beyond 2 publications indexed in Web of Science or Scopus journals. On the other hand, in cases where the lecturer does not meet the set requirements, DU can make a decision to terminate the contract (SAR, p. 51).

Secondly, the "Procedure for reimbursement of Hirsch index of Daugavpils University academic

staff" (annex: 2.3.1.H-indekss\_kartiba.pdf) stipulates that academic staff (assistants, lecturers, docents, associate professors, professors, scientific advisers, researchers and leading researchers) have the right to collect royalties for the citation rate Hirsch index (hereinafter – H-index) in Scopus and / or Web of Science (hereinafter – WoS).

Furthermore, the amount of money intended for the H-index is confirmed by DU every year (for the financial year) together with the budget of DU. Initially, it was approved by the DU Budget Commission, later by the Senate and the DU Council. The amount depends on the funding allocated by the Ministry of Education and Science, DU's own income, etc. For example, the amount of funding for the H-index in 2023 amounted to EUR 37.540,00.

Thirdly, DU organises a research project competition with a project tender fund of EUR 51.000,00 for 2023

(<https://du.lv/aktualitates/daugavpils-universitate-izsludinats-ieksejo-petniecibas-projektu-konkurss-2023-gadam/>). The maximum allowable amount of funding for one research project is EUR 3.000,00. The specific goals are the involvement of DU doctoral students, doctoral degree applicants in scientific activity, as well as the promotion of the increase in the number of publications indexed in the WoS and/or Scopus databases at DU. This information was obtained from DU after the experts' request for delivering additional information had been received.

The right to submit individual or research group projects to the competition is the right of representatives of the academic and scientific staff working on the basis of an employment contract at DU: professors, associate professors, assistant professors, leading researchers, researchers, lecturers, assistants, research assistants, DU doctoral students and doctoral degree applicants.

In 2023 there were 27 project applications submitted for assessment. In order to organise the evaluation of the submitted projects, the DU Science Council approved a commission of project evaluation experts consisting of 7 LŽP experts. Based on the information gathered during the assessment visit and from the DU website, 18 projects were approved: 7 – in natural sciences, 11 – in social and humanitarian sciences, as could be seen from the DU public website (available at: <https://du.lv/aktualitates/apstiprinati-daugavpils-universitates-petniecibas-projektu-konkursa-2023-gada-rezultati/>).

Some of the supported projects are: "Time and values in Latvia: history and contemporary situation", "Developed transport infrastructure and developed production: what is primary in the development of the territory?", "Development of new luminescent dyes with nonlinear optical properties", "Approbation of the methodology of interdisciplinary studies in literature based on the study of autobiographical and life writing", "Improving the quality and quantity of biogas produced from fish processing waste", "The impact of mobile technologies on business transformation and labour productivity in Latvia", "The impact of population size and structure on the socio-economic development of the region: approaches and forecasts".

To summarise, assessment of the expert team shows rather good performance, as measured by both output and process indicators. In terms of output, it can be pointed to Annex 2.3.7. which gives a detailed overview of teaching staff members and their scientific output in several respective categories, such as the number of scientific publications indexed in WoS/Scopus over the assessed period, the cumulative number of scientific publications indexed in WoS /Scopus, H-index scores, participation in projects, participation at international scientific conferences and the number of citations according to Scopus. The content of those annexes was elaborated in chapter 1.4.2. in this report.

#### 1.4.5.

There are two key mechanisms at work to promote the involvement of the students in scientific research and/or applied research. Firstly, the student research competition. Secondly, the organisation of the international scientific conference "International Scientific Conference of Daugavpils University" and "Researcher's Night 2024" (SAR, p. 51), which is additionally elaborated



below.

Firstly, the SAR states (p. 51) that in order to promote students' skills in the development of scientific projects and the preparation of publications, students in the Bachelor and Master study programmes implemented at DU can apply for an annual student research project competition. After an expert team's additional inquiries to obtain more information on the matter, DU delivered a document titled "Daugavpils University student research projects regulation". In this regulation, DU provides a detailed description on student research competition as the most important avenue for ensuring students' strong involvement into research activities.

Key elements such as the existence of rules to avoid the conflict of interest when awarding financial support to individual research projects, as well the clarification of rules which ensure that students fulfil key performance indicators agreed upon before the financial support is paid in 10 instalments. Additionally, the DU's website (available at: <https://du.lv/aktualitates/apstiprinati-daugavpils-universitates-studejoso-petniecibas-projektu-konkur-sa-2023-gada-rezultati/>) contains key information on the results of the student research competition for 2023.

The evaluation of students' research project applications was completed at Daugavpils University. In total, 12 student research project applications were submitted. In order to organise the evaluation of the submitted projects, a commission of project evaluation experts was approved by the Science Council of DU. Based on the assessment of the expert commission meeting, 10 projects were approved. Some of the projects awarded 2.000,00 for project implementation are: "Ecotoxicity assessment of new luminescent dyes", "Optimization of the method for reducing tar concentrations in the generator gases obtained during the biomass gasification process", "Effect of metal oxide nanoparticles on the growth and genotoxicity of cressate (*Lepidium sativum* L.) in vivo and in vitro", „Respecting the rights of foreigners who illegally crossed the Latvian border: research of innovative solutions in the Latgale region", "Comparative analysis of the stress resilience of students of Latvian universities in face-to-face and remote study forms".

Secondly, in 2024 the DU hosted the 66th International Scientific Conference of Daugavpils University, as well as DU Researchers' Night. This could be inferred from corresponding websites:

1. <https://www.dukonference.lv/en/Programme>

2. <https://lhei.lv/en/researchers-night-2024/>

DU conference website provides basic details with regard to conference organising committee, conference proceedings, abstracts and information for participants. This type of conference is opened up to students which constitutes a valuable outreach to young researchers and students in an attempt to better integrate them in the DU scientific activities. The conference fee of 50 euros for active participants seems reasonable, while it would be reasonable to waive students participating in a conference as listeners of the attendance fee.

Researcher's Night 2024 website was organised under the banner of European Night of Scientists 2024. This year's theme was "Meet Your Scientist!", it emphasises the role of scientists as guides to help discover the sometimes complex world of science and inspire future careers in the field. Visitors were able to meet researchers at the DU and get to know their daily work, learning about different branches of science. The purpose of the European Night of Scientists is not only to expand the knowledge and horizons of citizens, but also to popularise scientific achievements and promote STEM education, especially among young people, highlighting the importance of science in everyday life and its potential in future career choices (<https://www.researchlatvia.gov.lv/lv/events/eiropas-zinatnieku-nakts-2024>). These mechanisms are available to students and seem as an efficient way of including students in the research community at DU. Students confirmed this statement during the assessment visit. However, more data covering this aspect should be made available in the future reporting in a written form, incorporated in the SAR.

#### 1.4.6.

There are several examples of innovative solutions applied in the study field, which reflect positively on the study process. The SAR (p. 52) lists four key categories of innovation: product, process, organisational and marketing innovation. First, in terms of product innovation the SAR states that both researchers and students have access to specialised classrooms and scientific laboratories at DU Faculty of Natural Sciences and Mathematics, DU Institute of Life Sciences and Technologies. The expert team can mostly agree with the statement in the SAR (p. 52) that the study process in the scientific laboratories contributes to updating the content of the study programmes, increasing the quality of the development of research works, by introducing innovative technological, methodological and IT solutions.

Second, in terms of process innovation, the SAR (p. 39-40) highlights the organisation of e-learning based on using Zoom for conducting online classes; which enables video recordings of classes. Furthermore, the DU e-learning website (Moodle) provides descriptions of study courses, necessary study materials, links to certain information for the study course, colloquia and exams.

Third, marketing innovation at DU uses certain marketing tools (Open Door Days at DU, Night of Scientists, DU Science Festival, advising and organising defence of school learners' scientific research works, information about DU on social networks, etc. in person and online format activities (SAR, p. 52). It is also stated that the DU website was renewed and updated. While certain information on the aforementioned activities could be retrieved from the DU website, such as Researchers' Night 2024 (available at: <https://lhei.lv/en/researchers-night-2024/>), the overall impression on behalf of the expert team is that the website could be far more user-friendly in terms of menus and options for a visitor. Many activities mentioned in the marketing innovation section could simply not be verified by visiting the website.

While those activities are valuable, DU should put more emphasis on online promotion. E.g. DU YouTube channel contains 240 videos and only 179 followers (see at: <https://www.youtube.com/@daugavpilsuniversitate7274/videos>) The review of the content shows lack of content in English and short video clips advertising study programmes, as well as interesting scientific discoveries on behalf of the teaching staff.

Fourth, DU uses several digitised systems for implementing organisational innovation. These are: DUIS which digitises many processes and document processing: certificate, order, study contract, their amendment, preparation of diplomas, input of statistics, collection of statistical data), Namejs (document management system that provides correspondence, order, contract, reference, management of procurement documents, efficiency of the document circulation process), HoP (employee self-service portal, which provides the employee with the opportunity to view information about himself/herself, absences of his/her colleagues, apply for leave, check his / her (SAR, p. 50-51).

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

The study field "Internal Security and Civil Protection" fulfils necessary requirements in the domain of scientific research, as stipulated by the assessment procedure and rooted in the Latvian HEI regulatory framework. Hence, it should continue with its work in the coming period as it represents a valuable contribution to the capacity-building in the security domain of the Latgale region, Latvian state and the EU. This conclusion was reached after detailed and careful reading of the SAR, obtained additional materials requested before, during and after the assessment visit. There are more strengths than weaknesses identified in the expert team analysis, and identified strengths are qualitatively more important than weaknesses.

However, the study field has ample ground to cover in the coming period. According to the QS World University Rankings: Northern Europe 2025 DU is ranked as 153th out of 162 universities covered (<https://www.topuniversities.com/universities/daugavpils-university>). The ranking relies on several

weighted categories such as academic reputation, number of citations and papers per faculty. While in the papers per faculty category DU fares well in comparison to other Latvian HEI such as Riga Stradins University, it fares less well in the number of citations category in comparison to University of Latvia and Riga Stradins University.

There is simply a need for better communication of its scientific relevance not only to stakeholders in the Latgale region, but also further afield. This would enhance international cooperation proxied by co-authored papers and other research output indicators. Finally, teaching staff and students should invest in their foreign language skills to feel more comfortable in their interaction with the outside world, which will also positively reflect on international scientific recognizability. If the goal is to perform better and climb up a ranking ladder, which the expert team believes to be the right approach, then decisively addressing weaknesses identified in this part of the report are non-negotiable.

The good starting point is a self-reflection that insufficient scientific cooperation with foreign study programmes and scientific research institutions, as well as language barriers for some students and teaching staff members, constitute weaknesses of the study field (SAR, p. 17). New or updated strategy with clearly specified KPI and time trials is necessary, as well as the reorganisation of the way DU communicates its scientific achievements and activities with the outside world (especially its website, teaching staff Google Scholar profiles and social media channels).

#### Strengths:

- 1) Satisfactory research productivity for the majority of researchers (as measured by Web of Science/Scopus-indexed publications and citations).
- 2) Multiple remuneration schemes for productive researchers (payments linked to H-index score and payments linked to publications indexed in Web of Science/Scopus journals).
- 3) Satisfactory level of digitisation underpinning research and teaching process.
- 4) Organisation of various scientific activities such as DU Researchers' Night and International Scientific Conference of Daugavpils University.
- 5) Inclusion of students into research activities via student research competition projects.
- 6) Inclusion of researchers in the internal research competition projects.
- 7) Satisfactory level of short-term academic mobility on behalf of teaching staff members.
- 8) Relatively straightforward and coherent policy envisaging the scenario of contract termination for researchers who consistently fail to publish research output.
- 9) Realistic assessment of the obstacles to further improvement in the field.

#### Weaknesses:

- 1) Unsatisfactory level of academic mobility for students (outgoing and incoming mobility), as well as low number of guest lecturers (academic staff incoming mobility).
- 2) Rather short duration of researchers' stay at foreign universities or institutes which almost never last longer than 7 days, which is too short for the deeper immersion of researchers into foreign organisational culture and best research and teaching practices.
- 3) A significant contingent of researchers and teaching staff members without a single Web of Science/SCOPUS publications (22) and/or doctoral degree (17 members of the teaching staff).
- 4) Lack of a journal issued by DU, covering topics from the study field, which would increase visibility and prestige of the study programmes under assessment.
- 5) Poor visibility to foreign epistemic communities due to anachronous and unwieldy website providing content mostly in Latvian.
- 6) No Google Scholar for more than 80% of teaching staff members, which reduces overall visibility of researchers and their scientific output. This should be addressed by requiring all staff members to create Google Scholar accounts.
- 7) Lack of administrative capacity and coordination mechanisms to ensure constant collection and

monitoring of key data on research output (conferences attended, published works, implemented projects, obtained grants). This weakness was shown during the study visit when DU was not able to provide requested data on behalf of the expert team for more than 10 days.

8) Lack of specific key performance indicators in the Development plan covering 2024-2030 period, as well as necessary time trials to ensure accountability.

## **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

The quantity and quality of scientific research is gradually improving over time, and is integrated into existing study programmes, while the new ones are in the process of approval. New innovative approaches to enhancing researchers' motivation for scientific research have been rolled out. However, there is still room for growth in the degree of internationalisation, which is essential for raising the scientific profile of DU. The University needs an additional boost in creating more English content for its website and YouTube channel and better presenting of its scientific achievements to external partners and stakeholders. Key documents outlining scientific strategy and conducted activities should be made available in English, and regularly updated.

## **1.5. Cooperation and Internationalisation**

### **Analysis**

#### **1.5.1.**

Based on the information obtained during the assessment visit, DU cooperates with the institutions from Latvia (higher education institutions/ colleges, employers, employers' organisations, municipalities) within the framework of the study field. Within the framework of the study programmes "Economic Security" and "Civil Security and Protection", cooperation takes place practically with state and municipality owned companies. Cooperation with employers takes place even outside the borders of Daugavpils with employers from Rēzekne, Ludza, Preili, etc. DU mainly cooperates with employers who represent the public sector. Employers, social partners, and external experts - provide the expertise for the study programme content and proposals for the improvement of the study content and methods. The content of the study programmes included in the study field is created and changes are made, taking into account the opinions and requests of employers. Cooperation also takes place at the level of lecturers with various professional associations and unions.

The cooperation partners are selected in view of the specific features of the study field and the relevant study programmes. This mainly applies to employers. In accordance with the study programme, for example, such employers as the State Police, the Latvian Prison Administration, the Border Guard are attracted.

DU has a joint study programme with Riga Stradins University, but the students of both universities met only once. In addition, it was a remote meeting of the students on the zoom platform.

According to SAR (section 2.5.1) and the information obtained during the assessment visit, the study courses correspond to the current development trends of modern science and contribute to the expansion of students' horizons, the study programmes have been developed based on the professional standards of qualifications. However, professional standards of such qualifications as Junior officer of the State Police and the Penitentiary and Probation Work Specialist were elaborated in 2015 and respectively in 2008. During the assessment visit, it was explained that consultations

have been made with employers regarding the professional standards and the employers recognized that the professional standards are still relevant. DU invites employers as the guest lecturers. For example, representatives of the State Labor Inspection have participated as guest speakers. Employers also have meetings with the study council.

The main form of cooperation between employers and DU is based on the provision of an internship, as well as participation in the thesis defence committee and management of some student internships. Such cooperation contributes to the achievement of the aims and learning outcomes of the study field and the relevant study programmes.

Students choose to study at DU also because of qualification improvement, which gives additional advantages in terms of employment and work salary. In the entire Latgale region, only DU offers studies in labour protection.

#### 1.5.2.

DU cooperates with the institutions from abroad, mainly with higher education institutions. Cooperation agreements have been signed with more than 90 higher education institutions in 22 countries.

Since 2018, the "Internal Security and Civil Protection" study field has not hosted any foreign students or teaching staff. Statistical data, provided by SAR (section 2.5.2) and its annexes on the outgoing mobility of faculty reveals only limited participation in short courses. The main obstacle to teachers' participation in mobility is English language skills, which was also observed during the assessment visit. However, in June of 2024, DU lecturers attended a seminar organised by the European Commission in Brussels focused on municipal security, a highly relevant topic. Additionally, in October, a conference on tax collection was held in Lithuania, featuring prominent specialists from across Europe who shared their knowledge and expertise. DU maintains collaborative ties with colleagues in Lithuania and Poland in the field of labour protection, and students are encouraged to participate in these joint projects.

During the assessment visit it was described that the teaching staff also cooperates in writing joint articles, with UK, Bulgarian teachers – in the business economy, but cooperation is challenging because of the workload of teaching staff. One of the lecturers of DU also teaches study courses at Riga Stradins University. Students largely do not participate in the Erasmus+ programme due to work commitments, making it difficult for them to find opportunities to be absent from both their jobs and family responsibilities, as many of them are family-oriented individuals.

The cooperation partners are not selected in view of the specific features of the study field and the relevant study programmes. The main criterion is mainly the geographical location of the cooperation partner and the absence of language barriers. Such cooperation poorly contributes to the achievement of the aims and learning outcomes of the study field and the relevant study programmes.

DU has a joint project with the Polish educational institution regarding migration security, as Poland shares a border with Russia.

#### 1.5.3.

According to the information obtained from SAR (section 2.5.3) and its annexes, the number of incoming teaching staff remains very low, which DU attributes to the impacts of COVID-19 on mobility. More precisely, according to the annex 2.5.3. Statistical data on the mobility of teaching staff, there was no incoming mobility during the reporting period. The study programme director actively reaches out to potential lecturers in foreign countries, particularly in Poland, where teaching practices and salary levels are comparable. There are plans to implement an innovative method that involves addressing three countries simultaneously on the same topic. Although guest lectures were conducted in English, the experts noted during the assessment visit that the language barrier could pose challenges to students' comprehension of the study course material.

According to the information obtained during the assessment visit, internationalisation processes are ongoing, there are good chances to attract foreign students, because DU offers study programmes that are not widely available in Europe, such as the study programme “Economic security”.

There have been guest lectures by lecturers from Ukraine from the internal security service, online lectures have also taken place. DU also hosted a guest speaker from the Warsaw National Security Service. During the assessment visit, it was noted that announcements regarding guest lecturers are published on the DU website; however, there is no formal procedure in place. Instead, the practice involves the head of the study programme discussing the need to attract lecturers from abroad with faculty members. DU rarely publishes recruitment announcements for guest lecturers due to the infrequency of changes among faculty; for instance, the last two guest lecturers were invited from the State Police.

During the assessment visit, the expert team got the impression that to some extent, DU is in a comfortable position in terms of the number of students, because it offers unique study programmes in the region and other alternatives to study in similar study programmes in the region are limited. In addition, the labour market is getting used to compulsory higher education, for example in labour protection.

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

DU cooperates with the institutions from Latvia (higher education institutions/ colleges, employers, employers’ organisations, municipalities) and also with the institutions from abroad within the framework of the study field. However, cooperation mainly takes place with the institutions of neighbouring countries, which could be explained by a closer mentality and communication without language barriers, than it would be with Scandinavian or Southern countries. In any case, it would be advisable to expand the representation of cooperation partners. Regarding the state institutions, the cooperation takes place mostly with the state institutions, and DU to some extent fulfils the state orders, providing the existing students with a guaranteed job.

System and procedures for the attraction of the teaching staff and students from abroad within the study field are missing, the system is not effective. Incoming and outgoing mobility of both teachers and students is very low and they do not use, for example, the opportunities provided by the Erasmus+ programme.

#### **Strengths:**

- 1) The specificity of DU is that upon completion of studies there are guaranteed benefits in terms of employment and salary thanks to the good cooperation with the employers.
- 2) The university has good cooperation with neighbouring higher education institutions.
- 3) Cooperation with local cooperation partners contributes to the achievement of the aims and learning outcomes of the study field and the relevant study programmes.

#### **Weaknesses:**

- 1) Number of incoming teaching staff is very low.
- 2) The outgoing mobility of both teachers and students is very low, as students find it difficult to balance their work commitments with studies abroad. Additionally, teachers often lack sufficient proficiency in foreign languages, which hinders their ability to work and study in other countries.
- 3) DU has weak cooperation with cooperation partners outside the Baltic region within the framework of the study field.

### **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

Two things that lower the rating - the low mobility of lecturers and the lack of cooperation with foreign universities outside the Baltic states or close to them. Despite this, DU has good and close cooperation with local employers.

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

### **Analysis**

#### **1.6.1.**

It is stated in the SAR (p. 58-59) the expert recommendations from previous accreditation of the "Internal Security and Civil Protection" study field in 2012 were thoroughly analysed, and an implementation plan was created, which has been executed as much as possible in subsequent years. The review of this implementation is included in Annex 2.6.1. As a result, the study programmes were enhanced, leading to improved quality. During the reporting period, one study programme, the professional master's study programme "Economic Security," was licensed on 04.10.2022 and included in the accredited study field on 06.12.2023. Expert recommendations from 04.12.2023 have also been analysed, and an implementation plan is underway, with a review attached in Annex 2.6.1. Overview of the implementation of the recommendations.

This overview (annex 2.6.1) highlights the progress made in implementing expert recommendations from the 2012 accreditation review for the "Internal Security and Civil Protection" study field and the "Labor Protection" master's study programme. In expert team opinion, the assessment period is quite lengthy, which could result in the situation where a 10-year-old recommendation may no longer hold value today, however recommendations are applied in most of the cases or applied in a way which answers the purpose of the recommendation.

The overview of the recommendations according the collected information from the annex 2.6.1 as well as the assessment visit is:

- The study programme "Civil Security and Protection" was restructured to align its content with contemporary threats, resulting in a universal study programme where 83% of study courses are required for all students. Expert recommendations were fully implemented.
  - DU evaluated the possibility of dividing the study programme into distinct specialisations, such as police and border guard services. While the recommendation included one potential path for development that was not adopted following the analysis, the overarching recommendation itself is still being implemented, as a clear and focused approach to specialisations is regularly assessed. This ongoing evaluation ensures that the region is supplied with the necessary qualified specialists, which could be concluded by the expert team opinion as implemented.
  - Recommendations for increased practical work and excursions to companies were fully executed, enabling students to gain hands-on experience and knowledge relevant to their fields. During the assessment visit it was highlighted by the students as well, the high level satisfaction was expressed.
  - The curriculum was enhanced to place greater emphasis on legal aspects of labour protection. Efforts were made to balance study course credit hours and strengthen skills in leadership and communication.
  - Library resources and modern equipment for labour protection studies were improved, facilitating a better learning environment. DU also promoted student participation in international exchange programmes to broaden their experience.
- Overall, the implementation of expert recommendations in both study programmes has fostered

significant improvements in study programme quality and the qualifications of graduates, ensuring they meet regional workforce needs.

The joint academic master's study programme "Economic Security" and the study field "Internal Security and Civil Protection" have established an implementation plan in response to expert recommendations outlined in December 2023. This ongoing plan provides a framework for enhancing the educational experience and ensuring the sustainable development of the study programmes. It is important to note that the period between the recommendations made in 2023 and the current assessment has been quite short, meaning that most deadlines have not yet been reached. However, some improvements have already been implemented, which the expert team highly acknowledges.

Recommendations from 2023-2024 (provided by experts within the procedure for including the study programme in the study field "Internal Security and Civil Protection") are pointing out the following about the joint study programme "Economic Security":

Firstly, the universities are focusing on improving collaboration by developing a plan for joint activities among students and teaching staff, which includes exchange programmes, seminars, and study trips, with an objective to foster team spirit and cooperation. This collaboration plan was expected to be completed by June 30, 2024. It was confirmed during the assessment visit that there have been one meeting in zoom to both study groups and new activities are scheduled for first-year students. Notably, hybrid-format courses are set to be implemented in the 2024/2025 academic year, addressing key subjects like "Management Theories and Project Development" and "Fundamentals of Cybersecurity." Also it was pointed out during the assessment visit that there will be a joint thesis defence committee. It gives the confirmation that the recommendations are taken into account and started to be implemented.

During the previous evaluation, it was revealed that the joint second-cycle study programme "Economic Security" was not based on an approved professional qualification standard, which led to the recommendation to expedite the development process for 2025. However, during the current assessment, the study programme is being transformed into an academic study programme, as the development of the professional qualification standard is still under the development process. During the assessment visit, a primary concern was expressed that the current study programme is appealing due to its practical approach and significant emphasis on internship, which may lead to a reduction in interest. Nevertheless, the expert team believes that the recommendation has been fulfilled, as the institution has responded appropriately to the situation and resolved the identified concern.

To maintain a steady enrollment, the universities are collaboratively crafting a promotion plan aimed at filling both budget-funded and self-financed study places, including outreach to foreign students. Each semester sees active recruitment efforts, including information campaigns and advertising materials to attract prospective students.

The review of tuition fees is on the agenda as well, with plans for assessing joint educational activities to potentially reduce costs. In line with this, a joint master's thesis defence is scheduled for the 2024/2025 academic year, aiming at resource efficiencies in educational delivery.

To enhance practical experience for students, ongoing efforts include expanding internship opportunities, particularly in the private sector, thereby accommodating the needs of both local and foreign students. Collaboration with professional organisations is growing, facilitating broader access to diverse internship placements.

Finally, the continual improvement of teaching staff's language skills is a priority, with RSU offering English language courses and digital literacy training. This initiative aims to ensure that lecturers are adequately prepared to deliver high-quality education in a multilingual environment.

For long-term objectives, DU is committed to digitising library collections, enhancing student access to vital educational resources. Ongoing digitization efforts at DU are equipping students with necessary tools, and access to databases has already been established.



Expansion of placement providers is being prioritised as well, focusing on securing agreements with private sector organisations to enhance students' practical training opportunities, particularly for those who may face restrictions in governmental institutions.

In terms of faculty development, DU is ensuring that lecturers consistently improve their English proficiency and digital skills through various training options. This commitment not only supports the faculty's professional growth but also aligns with the evolving educational needs and technological advances.

Overall, the implementation plan reflects a proactive approach to enhancing the quality and effectiveness of the "Economic Security" programme and the related study field. The structured actions indicate a commitment to implementing the recommendations, thereby ensuring a robust educational framework that meets both current and future challenges in the field.

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

DU has made significant progress in enhancing the "Internal Security and Civil Protection" study field based on the thorough analysis of expert recommendations from previous accreditations. The implementation of an action plan since 2012 has resulted in improved study programme quality, including the introduction of the professional master's study programme "Economic Security," which was licensed in October 2022. Key enhancements include restructuring the curriculum to address contemporary threats, increasing practical work experiences through company excursions, and improving library resources and equipment. Ongoing initiatives focus on fostering collaboration among students and faculty, expanding internship opportunities, and enhancing faculty language skills to ensure effective education delivery. DU is also committed to long-term objectives such as digitising library collections, securing placement providers, and continually developing faculty competencies. Overall, these strategic efforts reflect DU's commitment to ensuring its educational offerings meet regional workforce needs and prepare graduates for future challenges.

#### **Strengths:**

- 1) DU has made significant improvements to the "Internal Security and Civil Protection" study field programmes, demonstrating responsiveness to expert recommendations and a commitment to quality education.
- 2) The successful licensing of the professional master's study programme "Economic Security" reflects DU's ability to expand and adapt its offerings to meet emerging needs.
- 3) The restructuring of the curriculum to address contemporary threats and the inclusion of practical work experiences, such as internships and industry excursions, enhance the relevance of the education provided.
- 4) Ongoing efforts to expand internship opportunities and collaborations with professional organisations ensure that students gain valuable hands-on experience.
- 5) Plans for joint activities, exchange programmes, and the continual improvement of faculty language skills indicate a proactive approach to fostering a collaborative and multilingual educational environment.
- 6) DU's ongoing digitization of library collections and focus on improving access to resources demonstrate its commitment to enhancing the overall learning experience for students.

#### **Weaknesses:**

- 1) While there is strong intent to enhance study programmes and collaboration, immediate statistical evidence supporting the effectiveness of these changes may not yet be available.
- 2) Despite efforts to improve faculty language skills, there may still be gaps in English proficiency that could affect the delivery of a high-quality education in a multilingual environment.

## 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

The "Internal Security and Civil Protection" study field has benefited from the effective implementation of expert recommendations. Following the 2012 accreditation, DU developed an action plan that enhanced study programmes and improved educational quality, including restructuring to address contemporary threats. A clear approach continues, ensuring qualified specialists are delivered. Recent improvements have been acknowledged despite the short assessment period following the December 2023 recommendations. Ongoing plans reflect a commitment to strengthening collaboration, expanding internships, and enhancing faculty language skills, contributing to a high-quality educational framework for student career readiness.

## 1.7. Recommendations for the Study Field

### Short-term recommendations

- 1) Conduct a thorough review and update of all online content in the DU website, ensuring that titles of study programmes, content, credit points, admission requirements, tuition fees and budget places (e.g. "Labour Protection" and "Economic Security" study programmes) and legal references are accurate and current and available also in English. (30.06.2025).
- 2) The website should be significantly improved by offering far easier access to an expanded set of information on the teaching staff members, projects implemented, recent scientific publications and projects on offer. (30.06.2025).
- 3) Regular audits of website information should be implemented to prevent misunderstandings regarding the regulatory framework and to provide clear, reliable information to prospective students and stakeholders. (continuously).
- 4) To address the lack of clarity in quality assurance for the joint master's study programme "Economic Security", it is recommended that the university establish a clear framework for aggregating and evaluating student feedback. Implementing standardised procedures will enhance transparency and enable continuous improvement, while regularly communicating feedback results and actions taken will foster trust and engagement among students. (31.12.2025).
- 5) DU should implement an IT system which would ensure and streamline management of key research output indicators, entered into the system by academic staff on an ongoing basis (recent publications, conferences attended, participation in projects and academic mobility, etc). This step would significantly improve data management and create a basis for improved strategic planning and implementation monitoring. One way of how this could be done is to adopt the model similar to RSU Research Portal, which would both enhance administrative capacity and research internationalisation. (31.12.2026).
- 6) DU should ensure that all scholars have a verified Google Scholar account to ensure their wider international recognizability. (31.12.2026).

7) To improve the internship programme, it is recommended that DU explore opportunities to establish paid internships. Collaborating with local businesses and organisations could provide funding for these positions, thereby enhancing student engagement and motivation. By developing partnerships that offer financial compensation for internships, the university can attract more students to participate in these valuable experiences while ensuring adequate support for both current and future placements. (31.12.2026).

8) While a strong intention to enhance study programmes and collaboration, immediate statistical evidence demonstrating the effectiveness of these changes may still be lacking. Therefore, it is recommended that DU implement a comprehensive evaluation framework to systematically collect data on study programme outcomes and participant feedback. This approach will provide a clearer understanding of the impact of the changes and inform ongoing improvements. (31.12.2026).

9) DU academic staff should be tested for English language skills to impartially estimate their level of proficiency. This should be followed by further steps which ensure that associate professors obtain at least B2 level of proficiency over the course of next three-five years, while the new members of the teaching staff are required to also demonstrate at least B2 level of proficiency upon employment. (31.12.2026).

### **Long-term recommendations**

1) DU should actively utilise exchange opportunities and increase engagement with international students and faculty. This could include developing partnerships with foreign institutions, promoting student and faculty exchange programmes, and creating targeted outreach strategies to attract a more diverse population of students and educators. (continuously).

2) It is recommended that DU enhance international engagement through targeted language training for faculty and greater support for study abroad opportunities. Developing flexible study programmes that accommodate work commitments will help increase participation in international exchanges and attract diverse teaching staff. (continuously).

3) Low staff remuneration impacts faculty retention and academic quality, while insufficient collaboration with foreign institutions limits research opportunities. To address these issues, it is recommended that the university enhance faculty compensation to improve retention and seek partnerships with international institutions to foster collaborative research initiatives. (continuously).

4) DU should create mechanisms which ensure that all teaching staff members have at least one Web of Science/Scopus publication over the course of next five years, either by organising specialised workshops for writing scientific articles and/or by stimulating co-authored works with established and advanced scholars. (31.12.2028.).

5) It is recommended that the university adopt a more detailed strategic planning approach that identifies key performance indicators (KPIs) and corresponding timelines. This should address the current lack of specific annual objectives and measurable milestones in development plans, enabling effective progress tracking and facilitating continuous improvement. (31.12.2027).

6) To harness the untapped potential in attracting a broader pool of international faculty candidates, it is recommended that DU enhance its outreach strategies. This could include leveraging social media, collaborating with international academic networks, and promoting vacancies through global platforms to increase visibility and engagement with prospective candidates. (continuously).

7) To mitigate the risks associated with reliance on state subsidies, it is recommended that DU diversify its funding sources. This could involve seeking additional revenue streams such as private partnerships, research grants, and tuition fee adjustments, which would enhance financial stability and ensure consistent resource availability in the future. (31.12.2028).

## **II - "Civil Security and Protection" ASSESSMENT**

### **II - "Civil Security and Protection" ASSESSMENT**

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

##### **Analysis**

###### **2.1.1.**

The short-cycle professional higher education study programme (SP) "Civil Security and Protection" (short-cycle SP "Civil Security and Protection") complies with indicators, conditions and criteria of the study field of "Internal Security and Civil Protection". The study programme is indicated as "Civil Security and Protection" in the SAR (p. 63) but it has been named "Civil Security and Defence" on the website of the DU (available at: <https://du.lv/en/studies/study-programmes/1st-level-study-programmes/civil-security-and-protection/>). It is not clear why such discrepancy exists at the moment. Possibly, it is a translation error as in the changes of parameters, no such thing has been indicated. On the VIIS platform, the information is accessible only in Latvian and the indicated title of the study programme is "Civīlā drošība un aizsardzība". It is important to clarify the exact wording of the title of the study programme.

The length of implementation of the study programme is 2 years in a full-time study form. DU takes into account the existing regulations and pays attention to the changes and trends within the study field. The short-cycle SP "Civil Security and Protection" is the basis for learning the fifth-level professional qualification, which corresponds to the fifth level of the Latvian qualifications framework. (SAR, p. 71) Upon obtaining the fifth-level professional qualification, it opens up opportunities for students to continue education in the first-cycle higher education study programme, for example, in the study field of "Law" (SAR, p. 70). It has been stated during the assessment visit that some of the graduates of the study programme decided to continue their studies further specifically in the Bachelor study programme of Law at DU. It can be evaluated that the short-cycle SP "Civil Security and Protection" has a significant length of studies as well as it provides students with the necessary skills and way of thinking to enter the labour market and start working in the field of security.

###### **2.1.2.**

According to the SAR (p. 63), the title of the short-cycle SP "Civil Security and Protection" in the study field of "Internal Security and Civil Protection" with education classification code 41861 with the last 2 numbers (61) standing for civil and military protection and last 3 numbers (861) standing for protection of people and property, and study programmes according to the classification of Latvian education which can be accessed here: <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/291524-noteikumi-par-latvijas-izglitiba-klasifikaciju>. There is a qualification given after graduating which is Security specialist or Penitentiary and probation work specialist or Junior officer of the State Police.

According to the SAR (p. 64), the aim of the short-cycle SP "Civil Security and Protection" is to prepare highly qualified, internationally competitive specialists in police, penitentiary work or organisational security, who are able to independently plan and carry out tasks related to the profession, innovative research, and make a contribution to the growth of the prosperity of the

Republic of Latvia and the European Union. According to the SAR (p. 64), the admission requirements for the admission to studies in this study programme is secondary education. The admission requirements identified are different on the website of DU and VIIS platform. It is specified to be a document certifying secondary education or professional secondary education (available at: <https://du.lv/en/studies/study-programmes/1st-level-study-programmes/civil-security-and-protection/>). It is important to maintain the same requirements everywhere so that they are consistent and aligned. In addition to that it was specified during the assessment visit that students are required to request a proof from the State Probation Office of non-conviction.

According to the SAR (p. 64), the study programme is a full-time study programme with 123 CP to be gathered during the study process of 2 years. During the assessment visit, there was a discussion in regards to the changes wished to be made within the amount of CP that differ from the usual standard of 120 CP. It is due to the changes within the regulations made in the law and must include a free elective study course of 3 CP within the study programme. It was asked if there was no possibility to replace any of the courses in the study programme with a free elective study course and it was stated that it was not due to professional standard requirements. Such practice is allowed by national law, thus the expert group does not object to such practice, however, in addition to that, the expert group found information on the DU website, which seems to be outdated. The amount of credit points differs for the "Civil Security and Protection" study programme. On the website it has been indicated to be 127,5 ECTS credit points (see: <https://du.lv/en/studies/study-programmes/1st-level-study-programmes/civil-security-and-protection/>). On the VIIS register they are indicated to be 80 KP based on the Latvian credit point system, which when converted to ECTS is 120 ECTS. It is important to maintain consistency in information. Therefore, it is needed to update the information on the DU website.

The title, code, aim, objectives, learning outcomes and admission requirements as well as received qualifications after the studies are interrelated. The duration and scope of the short-cycle SP "Civil Security and Protection" implementation as well as the implementation language, are reasonable and justified.

### 2.1.3.

According to the SAR (p. 66-69), a few changes have been made in the short-cycle SP "Civil Security and Protection" parameters since the previous assessment.

1. The name of the sub-programme "CIVORG-specialist in organisational security" of the short-cycle SP "Civil Security and Protection" has been changed to "CIVKIB- specialist in general and cyber security of organisations";
2. Exclude from the short-cycle SP "Civil Security and Protection" study courses in the amount of 16 credit points - 1. Insurance risks (1 CP); 2. Security Tactics (1 CP); 3. Civil rights. Case law (3 CP); 4. Escort of material values and security of stationary objects (3 CP); 5. Security and detective rights (3 CP); 6. Security technical and communication means (1 CP); 7. Basics of security for physical persons (1 CP); 8. Security theory and fundamentals of organisational security (3 CP).
3. To include study courses in the sub-programme "CIVKIB-specialist in general and cyber security of organisations" study courses in the amount of 24 credit points as follows: 1) Security and detective rights. Security tactics (3 CP); 2) The psychology of security operations (6 CP); 3) Security theory and fundamentals of organisational security (3 CP); 4) Basics of security for physical persons (3 CP) and 5) Fundamentals of cyber security and protecting systems against cyber attacks (9 CP).

Based on the analysis provided before, the expert group suggests reviewing the proposed study courses implemented within the short-cycle SP "Civil Security and Protection" in order to ensure that the study programme remains within the amount of 120 CP together with the credit points of 3 CP free elective study courses.

4. Due to the fact that the short-cycle SP "Civil Security and Protection" was supplemented with part C - a free elective study course, in which students can choose a study course from the total free

elective offer, the total number of credit points increased by 3 (ECTS) credit points. Part C was introduced in accordance with Article 55, Part One, Clause 2 of the Law on Higher Education Institutions.

#### 2.1.4.

Based on the information provided in the SAR (p. 71), according to the data of the State Employment Agency, there is a great demand for highly qualified specialists in the field of civil safety and defence in Latvia. Such a trend can be observed both in Riga and in the regions. Approximately 70% of the total number of graduates are employed by the State Police, while around 11% are performing duties as security specialists. 19% of the graduates are performing penitentiary work. DU is the only higher education institution in the region of Eastern Latvia that implements short-cycle civil safety and protection studies, which supports the importance of maintaining short-cycle SP "Civil Security and Protection". Based on the meetings during the assessment visit, it can be noted that the study programme is highly valued and well-recognized within the field by the graduates, students and employers.

Based on the data provided in the SAR (p. 72), during the reporting period, the number of students increased significantly and remains at an average of 76 matriculated per year. There is a trend that interest in studies has increased. 38 students were admitted in 2018 (23 – budget funding, 15 – personal funding); 71 students in 2019 (49 – budget funding, 22 – personal funding); 91 students in 2020 (69 – budget funding, 22 – personal funding); 100 students in 2021 (63 – budget funding, 37 – personal funding); 72 students in 2022 (69 – budget funding, 3 – personal funding); 86 in 2023 (85 – budget funding, 1 – personal funding).

In the study years from 2018 to 2023, 219 students graduated from the study programme: in 2018 – 25, in 2019 – 26, in 2020 – 20, in 2021 – 43, in 2022 – 55, in 2023 – 50. Based on the data provided in the SAR Table 3.1.4., the highest number of graduates remains in the specialisation of police specialist.

In total there has been a dropout of 167 students in the reporting period since 2018. In 2024 there were 18 students, who terminated their studies. Analysing student dropout rates, it can be concluded that most students stop their studies during the first year of study. The percentage of student dropouts is similar to the previous reporting period. The largest dropout is made up of students who stopped their studies of their own accord – 38% (63 students), with whom DU broke the contract – 34% (56 students) and due to failure – 15% (25 students). Most often, students indicate personal reasons for stopping the study process such as financial problems, family circumstances, health problems, inability to combine studies with work, including lack of motivation to continue studies. However, it has to be noted that the dropout rates are still considerably high, thus, it is important to be tackled and review in depth the reasons for such trend of behaviour from students, which is also being done by DU.

Based on the information provided in the SAR (p. 73), in order to reduce student dropout due to financial reasons, DU offers tuition fee discounts for students who continue their studies immediately after graduating from the study programme, students in the last semester and those who have excellent study results. In order to attract and increase the number of potential students, DU participates in or organises various events every year, such as open door days, informational events.

#### 2.1.5.

Not applicable.

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

The short-cycle SP "Civil Security and Protection" at DU is a well-structured, short-cycle professional

higher education study programme designed to meet the needs of the Latvian labour market in the fields of internal security and civil protection. The study programme is aligned with the Latvian qualifications framework and prepares students for careers as security specialists, penitentiary and probation work specialists, or junior officers of the State Police. It also serves as a pathway for further studies, especially in law, and is in demand by employers across Latvia, highlighting its relevance and success. Despite some challenges, including high dropout rates and slight deviations from standard credit requirements, the study programme remains well-recognized and supported within the field.

#### Strengths:

- 1) Graduates of the short-cycle SP “Civil Security and Protection” have a clear path to continue their education in related fields, such as law, which broadens their career opportunities.
- 2) Being the only higher education institution in Eastern Latvia offering this short-cycle SP “Civil Security and Protection” makes DU a critical player in developing civil security professionals for the region, ensuring accessibility and local workforce development.
- 3) Graduates, students, and employers have expressed satisfaction with the short-cycle SP “Civil Security and Protection”, underscoring its practical value and effectiveness in equipping students with relevant skills.

#### Weaknesses:

- 1) The short-cycle SP “Civil Security and Protection” has experienced significant student dropouts, especially during the first year of studies.

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

### **Analysis**

#### 2.2.1.

Documents delivered by DU, “Mapping of study courses Civil Security” (Annex 3.2.1.), “Plan of the short-cycle professional higher education” (Annex 3.2.1.Study plan\_Civil security\_EN.docx), as well as study course syllabi provide key insights into the structure and the flow of the short-cycle professional higher education study programme “Civil Security and Protection” (short-cycle SP “Civil Security and Protection”). “Plan of the short-cycle professional higher education” lists all 37 study courses. They are divided into the A-list containing compulsory study courses (12 courses), B-list containing limited elective study courses (9 courses), one elective study course from the C-list (study course from the total free choice offer), and practice carrying 16 CP/24 ECTS points. Those are followed by study courses in three specialisations: “Specialist in general and cyber security of organisations (ORG)”, “Specialist in penitentiary work (PEN)” and “Specialist in police work (POL)”. The latter two specialisations have five study courses in total, while the first one has four study courses. This organisation of the study programme allows for the individual approach to students, including that the student can choose a specialisation until the beginning of the third semester (SAR, p. 75).

All study courses are well-aligned and topical. Furthermore, SAR (p. 67-68) lists some changes made in the observed period in order to better integrate content of the study courses and contribute to the objectives of the short-cycle SP “Civil Security and Protection”. SAR (p. 73-74) gives a brief overview of all active study courses and how they are distributed across all four semesters. The expert team agrees that the content of the study courses/modules is interconnected and complementary, corresponds to the objectives of the short-cycle SP “Civil Security and Protection” and ensures the achievement of learning outcomes, as well as meets the needs of the industry, labour market and scientific trends.

Study course syllabi for the short-cycle SP “Civil Security and Protection” are standardised and

conform to the requirements of the regulation. Every single study course contains: basic information on the study course (lecturer, number of CP/ECTS points, lecture hours), study course abstract (outlining purpose and assignments), study course calendar plan (key topics and issues covered), study results (knowledge, skills, competencies), characteristics of the organisation and tasks of students' independent work, requirements for acquiring credit points, study course content, mandatory and additional bibliography. Besides fulfilling the necessary form, the study course syllabi are also substantively in compliance with the objectives of the short-cycle SP "Civil Security and Protection".

One important aspect of civil protection and security which was left missing from the study plan is the need to teach students how to leverage big data management and analytics in preventing crime and tackling contemporary security challenges. Hence, it would be of great importance to offer students a B-list study course which covers the issue.

In conclusion, the choice of short-cycle SP "Civil Security and Protection" content topics corresponds to the defined results of the study courses: skills, knowledge and competences. This conclusion was mostly corroborated during the assessment visit meetings with students, graduates and employers. The short-cycle SP "Civil Security and Protection" complies with national regulations. However, it would be recommended to slightly change the number of ECTS points to fully align with prevailing international standards requiring students to obtain 120 and not 123 ECTS points.

#### 2.2.2.

Not applicable.

#### 2.2.3.

In the implementation of the short-cycle SP "Civil Security and Protection", the study forms such as lectures, seminars, practical work, training, group work, independent work are used. In all study courses, board games, lessons are oriented towards creative participation of students in the process of acquiring knowledge. At the end of each study course, there is a theoretical or practical skills exam or test, which is evaluated with a grade. 1 ECTS corresponds to 26.7 academic hours, of which 10.7 are contact hours, which is 40% of the intended volume. (SAR, p. 75)

The short-cycle SP "Civil Security and Protection" is in line with Standard 1.3 of the "Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area" adopted in 2015, according to which institutions of higher education should ensure that study programmes are implemented in such a way as to encourage students to play an active role in the design of the study process and that the evaluation of students' achievements is in line with this approach (SAR, p. 75).

The process of learning is student-centred to a satisfactory degree since in addition to lectures and classes, students learn the study course material individually by developing an organisation continuity plan, civil protection plan, cybersecurity and physical security plan for a particular organisation that allow for the practical application of knowledge acquired in the study course. A war game is envisaged as part of the training methods to better understand crisis procedures. Lectures and seminars contain many practical examples and case studies to better learn the study course material.

The study course syllabi for the short-cycle SP "Civil Security and Protection" are standardised and tick all the boxes in terms of regulatory compliance. Every single course contains: study course planning (lecture to classes ratio), study course description (objectives and previously required knowledge), topic layout per lecture week (both for full-time and part-time students), assessment (unaided work description, exam composition and assessment criteria), learning outcomes (knowledge, skills and competencies) and bibliography (required and additional reading plus additional sources of information).

Generally, one can agree with the statement that the degree to be awarded is based on the achievements and findings of the relevant field of science. However, some members of the teaching



staff offer only documents or online sources pertaining to practical cases in the list of required readings. This is indeed an important part, to be a practically-oriented scholar. However, every study course should at least have one seminal book enjoying wide international acclaim and reach, which provides key theoretical insights and offers a cognitive map for future practitioners, since there is no theory without practice and vice versa. Furthermore, academic staff should more clearly and visibly incorporate their scientific contribution into the class materials.

During the assessment visit meetings conducted with teaching staff members and students enrolled in the short-cycle SP "Civil Security and Protection" it was assured that this Standard 1.3. is regularly upheld via a student-centred learning and teaching process. The expert team were guided across student facilities and laboratories to show how practical student-centred classes are being implemented. Facilities and resources for developing practical skills are greatly adapted to the needs of student-centred learning.

The adopted teaching style plays a stimulating role in student motivation, self-reflexion and the level of engagement. In the implementation of the short-cycle SP "Civil Security and Protection", lecturers use types of studies such as lectures, seminars, practical work, training, group work, independent work, etc. This is in line with the core stipulation of the evaluated criterion that the methods for the implementation of studies, including assessment, contribute to the achievement of the objectives and learning outcomes of the study courses and study programme, the principles of student-centred teaching and learning are taken into account. All of this has been confirmed during the meeting with students and graduates.

One important recommendation on behalf of the expert team to the teaching staff members is to connect the bibliography units with topics per lecture week in their study course syllabus design. Namely, besides identifying topics per lecture week, each syllabus should pair the number of the bibliographical unit with a given topic, which would significantly facilitate class preparation for students, as well as their active participation. This step would additionally improve the study course implementation from an already satisfactory level.

According to the SAR (p. 76), students' work is assessed on a 10-point grading scale and lecturers are guided by the outcomes defined for the study course, which could be inferred by analysing study course syllabi. The assessment principles are the following:

- The criteria are aimed at the assessment of the student's work (in the intermediate stage or at the end of the study course);
- The student's work is assessed on the basis of criteria or compared with the standard, not with the work of other students;
- Students know the criteria in advance;
- Creating a clear grading algorithm based on which a student can independently determine his/her level of achievement;

The assessment criteria are derived from the objectives and outcomes of the study course.

Online learning environment has been ensured by the Moodle platform, whose functional properties have been shown to expert team members during the assessment visit. Students have not raised any major concerns with regard to the online component of teaching.

#### 2.2.4.

Internship in the short-cycle SP "Civil Security and Protection" is provided in accordance with Cabinet of Ministers regulations of June 13, 2023 No. 305 "Regulations on the State Standard for the Professional Higher Education". The scope of the practice is 24 credits (16 weeks), which is implemented in the 2nd year of study in the 4th semester (SAR, p. 77). The purpose of the professional qualification practice is to strengthen and supplement the student's theoretical knowledge, as well as to improve their professional skills, in accordance with the qualification requirements and the professional standard.

According to SAR (p. 77), the tasks of professional qualification practice are to:

1. Acquire professional skills, according to the qualification requirements and professional standard.
2. Familiarise yourself with the tasks to be solved and the technologies used in the specific institution according to their specialisation.
3. Gain practical work skills and experience working in real conditions.
4. Familiarise yourself with the compilation and design of documentation.

The tasks of the professional qualification internship have been developed based on the standards of the qualification professions: the standards of the professions of security specialist, junior officer of the State Police and penitentiary and probation work specialist. Over the course of internship duration, students become familiar with the structure and operating principles of the place of implementation of the internship, factors characterising the work environment; with the specifics of assigned duties (SAR, p. 77).

During the assessment visit more information was requested by the expert team regarding internship programmes as a vital part of the studies. A formal document was presented titled "Internship Program: First Level Professional Higher Education Study Program". The document is composed of four key parts covering: 1. General rules of internship organisation; 2. Responsibilities and rights of the University, internship provider and intern; 3. Practice tasks; 4. Practice achievement evaluation procedure.

The document also contains evaluation form, practice diary and practise final report. It would be advisable to have those documents available in English to provide better understanding of the process to potential foreign students, if the study programme will be internationalised in the future, as well as to external experts assessing the study programme. Internship duration is 16 weeks and the scope of practice is 16 CP/24 ECTS.

Upon the expert team's request the study programme director delivered a more detailed set of information on the implementation of internship. This means that second-year students undergo an internship from February to May in accordance with the agreement concluded between the University, the institution providing the internship and the student. In 2024, the internship took place from February 5 to May 26. Internship providers: State Police, senior inspectors of investigation and response departments trained 25 students; Senior inspectors of prison administration, security and rehabilitation departments trained 8 students; Municipal police, senior inspectors of the response department trained 7 students: One student interned at the State Probation Service and one student - at the security company "Evor M". DU also delivered a sample report on the implemented internship which is very meticulously prepared.

#### 2.2.5.

Not applicable.

#### 2.2.6.

Annex 3.2.6. covers topics of the qualification theses defended during the reporting period (2019 – 2023) in the short-cycle SP "Civil Security and Protection" (Annex 3.2.6.). In total, there were 198 defended theses over the course of five years. In 2019 there were 26 defended theses with an average grade of 7.55 (10 is the maximum grade and 5 the lowest passing grade). In the following pandemic year there were 22 theses with an average grade of 7.45. In the second pandemic year there were 43 defended theses with an average grade 7.51.

2022 as the first post-pandemic year saw an expansion of the number of defended theses. There were 56 defended theses with an average grade 7.41. Finally, in 2023 there were 50 defended theses with an average grade 7.46. It is important to underline that grading scores are very consistent across various years. Only two students achieved the highest grade 10 over the course of five years, which also testifies to the rigorous grading criteria applied. At the same time, there were only 5 students with a final thesis grade of 5, which is the lowest grade. This aligns with the provided statistics that in the reporting period the evaluations of qualification theses are as follows: 10

(excellent) – 2%, 9 (excellent) – 16%, 8 (very good) – 22%, 7 (good) – 29%, 6 (almost good) – 20%, 5 (average) – 5%, 4 (almost average) – 6%. The final grade is an average grade given by the mentor and member of the thesis committee. It includes the content of the thesis, oral presentation and students' replies to the questions of grading committee members. Grading criteria are clearly stipulated.

When it comes to the topics of final theses, the expert team will count only several of them to demonstrate their relevance to the field and correspondence to the short-cycle SP "Civil Security and Protection": "Police action in cases of domestic violence against children in the Latgale region", "Acceptance of railway cargo for security", "Police activities control the regulation of the sale of alcoholic beverages in the Latgale region", "Preventive measures for the prevention of road traffic accidents in the Latgale region", "Order of implementation of police administrative detention in the Latgale region".

From theses' titles one can infer that many of them are related to the security and protection issues facing the city of Daugavpils and wider Latgale region. Having said that, one can confirm the claim that the research interests of students are dominated by the legal regulation of serving a sentence with deprivation of liberty, incl. prison regimes, monitoring practices, resocialization of persons, etc., as well as the application of administrative responsibility and police duties in combating various criminal offences (SAR, p. 79).

Last but not least important is the procedure to ensure ethical conduct and good scientific practices. DU developed and adheres to the procedure for submitting final thesis for plagiarism control, which provides for mandatory submission and storage of electronic versions of final theses in the DU Information System and provides an opportunity to compare students' final theses with the set of theses defended in previous years. This is done with the help of a software package called Turnitin (SAR, p. 78).

The compliance with the good scientific practices is made possible by the issuance of 18-page long methodological recommendations for the development and defense of the qualification work (available at:

<https://du.lv/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/kvalifikacijas-darba-noformesana-Civila-drosiba-2-2.doc>).

Finally, it is important to ensure that in the coming period both partners (DU and RSU) ensure full transparency of the procedure and that defended theses are available online at least in a form containing abstract in Latvian and English, key words and student contact. This will enhance and facilitate dissemination of new knowledge and practices to a broader community of researchers and practitioners. The date of defense should also be made publicly available at the DU website in order to open up the procedure to broader public scrutiny.

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

The short-cycle SP "Civil Security and Protection" is a generally well-structured study programme tailored to the needs of the Latvian labour market in the domain of civil security. Special emphasis is being put on the DU's contribution to the regional developmental needs of the Latgale region. The short-cycle SP "Civil Security and Protection" offers three specialisation paths: "Specialist in general and cyber security of organisations (ORG)", "Specialist in penitentiary work (PEN)" and „Specialist in police work (POL). The internship programme is well-executed with key security partners and potential employers in the region. Final theses are topical and the grading is consistent and rigorous. Students are quite motivated and their feedback on the quality of the short-cycle SP "Civil Security and Protection" was very positive. In the coming period, the study programme's management should put more emphasis on developing quantitative skills for future graduates in the domain of security. Furthermore, the short-cycle SP "Civil Security and Protection" should be more open to external stakeholders in terms of improved communication via website offering key information, data on the defended students' theses and partnerships with employers.

#### Strengths:

- 1) Students are offered to deepen their knowledge and specialise in one of three different specialisations: Specialist in general and cyber security of organisations (ORG), Specialist in penitentiary work (PEN) and Specialist in police work (POL). All three specialisations are in line with professional standards, which are available via hyperlink on page 74 of the SAR. Furthermore, the list of study courses covering all three specialisations are well-designed and in line with professional standards.
- 2) Well-integrated study programme covering strong discipline core (A-list study courses), as well as offering further diversification into closely-related subdisciplines (B-list study courses).
- 3) Final theses are topical to the study field/programme and there are well-established grading criteria which ensure high-quality output.
- 4) Internship opportunities with key security partners in the Latgale region.
- 5) Strongly motivated students who are for the most part very satisfied with the short-cycle SP "Civil Security and Protection".

#### Weaknesses:

- 1) No study course which would equip students with strong data analytics and quantitative skills, which are ever important in tackling contemporary security challenges.
- 2) Defended final theses are not easily accessible online at the DU website, which should be addressed in the coming period.

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

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

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

#### **Analysis**

##### 2.3.1.

It is stated in the SAR (p. 79) that the resources for the short-cycle SP "Civil Security and Protection" adequately meet the necessary conditions for effective implementation and achievement of study results. The availability of well-equipped facilities, including the forensics laboratory, alongside essential tools, information networks, and various databases, supports students in acquiring practical skills and conducting research effectively. Additionally, the provision of comprehensive administrative, financial, and IT support services contributes to a flexible and student-oriented learning environment at DU. During the assessment visit the premises were introduced and all the stakeholders emphasised the satisfactoriness of the study environment, however it was admitted that it is not the latest technology and materials to use, while it is enough to keep the studies practical and interesting. Detailed analyses of the criteria is available in Chapter 1.3 in this report.

##### 2.3.2.

Not applicable

##### 2.3.3.

The primary funding source for the full-time short-cycle SP "Civil Security and Protection" comes from the state budget, supplemented by funds from natural or legal entities. The Department of

Finance and Accounting at DU conducted a detailed cost analysis for one student in this study programme, which includes various expenses such as salary, employer social security contributions, business trips, materials, utilities, equipment purchases, and student social security. The costs per student are outlined as follows (regarding that 9 students in a group is the minimum number of students to ensure the profitability of the SP): salary fund (€5,976.14), employer SSIC (€1,409.77), business trip expenses (€84.17), services (€784.15), materials and utilities (€720.14), and equipment investment costs (€480.36). (SAR, p. 80-81).

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

The resources allocated for the short-cycle SP "Civil Security and Protection" effectively meet the requirements for implementation and achieving study outcomes. The university provides well-equipped facilities, including a forensics laboratory, essential tools, and access to information networks and databases, which facilitate practical skills acquisition and research. Additionally, the comprehensive administrative, financial, and IT support services create a flexible, student-oriented learning environment, which were expressed by the students as well. The financial analysis indicates that the short-cycle SP "Civil Security and Protection" is primarily funded by the state budget and supplemented by other sources, with specific cost allocations per student detailed in the SAR.

#### **Strengths:**

- 1) The resources for the short-cycle SP "Civil Security and Protection" are deemed sufficient for effective implementation and achieving desired study outcomes, ensuring a solid foundation for student education.
- 2) The availability of specialised facilities, such as the forensics laboratory, enhances students' practical learning experiences and supports effective research activities.
- 3) Students benefit from a range of tools, information networks, and databases, facilitating enhanced research capabilities and practical skills development.
- 4) The provision of administrative, financial, and IT support services contributes to a flexible and student-centred learning environment, enhancing overall student satisfaction.
- 5) Positive feedback from stakeholders during the assessment visit reflects a high level of satisfaction with the study environment, indicating that the short-cycle SP "Civil Security and Protection" is well-received.
- 6) The detailed cost analysis provided by the Department of Finance and Accounting offers transparency regarding funding and expenses, supporting effective financial management.

#### **Weaknesses:**

- 1) While resources are adequate, there may be concerns about the frequency of updates and advancements in materials and technology to keep pace with evolving industry standards.

### **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 resources allocated for the short-cycle SP "Civil Security and Protection" effectively meet the requirements for implementation and achieving study outcomes. DU provides well-equipped facilities, including a forensics laboratory, essential tools, and access to information networks and databases, which facilitate practical skills acquisition and research.

## 2.4. Teaching Staff

### Analysis

#### 2.4.1.

Evaluating the submitted CVs (annex: CV\_EN.zip) of the teaching staff and the additional information provided in the SAR (annex: 2.3.7.Basic information about teaching staff\_EN.xlsx), as well as the information indicated by DU (SAR, p. 81-82), it has been found that their qualifications and professional experience meet the needs of the short-cycle SP "Civil Security and Protection" implementation.

During the assessment visit students praised the teaching staff expertise, specifically highlighting certain individuals. The practical experience of the teaching staff and their ability to offer real-world examples relevant to future careers are greatly appreciated.

At the same time, it should be noted that in the assessment visit it was found that some of the teaching staff had incorrectly indicated their level of English language skills in their CVs. Furthermore, the response regarding the assessment of English language proficiency indicated that it is evaluated through interpersonal communication and participation in conferences. DU representatives indicated that there are courses at DU or within specific projects that allow open enrollment for everyone. If someone is observed to lack proficiency in English at the required level, they are approached personally. The staff is described as active. The assessment metric includes a certificate that indicates the specified level, awarded after examinations. Currently, a list is being compiled of individuals capable of teaching in English, and their skills are being evaluated. There is no standardised approach for the staff; their abilities are assessed through conversations with colleagues, observations at international events, and their interactions with one another. In the opinion of the expert team, there is uncertainty regarding the effectiveness of the current evaluation methods. It is recommended exploring alternative approaches that may provide a more comprehensive and accurate assessment, for example, Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR).

#### 2.4.2.

According to the information provided in the SAR (p. 82-83), during the reporting period, there have been minimal changes to the teaching staff of the short-cycle SP "Civil Security and Protection": two lecturers earned their doctoral degrees. A new study course, "Professional Terminology of a Foreign Language (German)" has been introduced along with a new lecturer. Additionally, four new faculty members from law enforcement and security institutions joined the study programme, thereby enhancing the professional interaction between the staff and the students. During the assessment visit, the study programme management confirmed that there is not much variability in teaching staff. Information about vacancies is announced on the DU website. The expert team suggests that while vacancies are currently announced on the DU website, relying solely on this platform, it is insufficient for attracting potential candidates, particularly from an international audience. Experts recommend expanding DU recruitment efforts to include targeted social media campaigns, collaborations with international job boards, and outreach through professional networks. By diversifying DU approach, DU could enhance visibility and better engage a wider range of applicants. Decisions regarding staff recruitment are made by the study programme director in collaboration with the department head. The requirements for instructors are set in accordance with the programme content.

#### 2.4.3.

Not applicable

#### 2.4.4.

According to information provided in the SAR (p. 81-82), 37 teaching staff members are involved in the implementation of the short-cycle SP "Civil Security and Protection" and the ratio of the number of students to teaching staff is 1:3. Evaluating the CVs submitted by the teaching staff, as well as the annex 2.3.7. Basic information about teaching staff\_EN.xlsx, it was found that 21 academic (elected) faculty members, 2 visiting lecturers elected at other higher education institutions, and 9 industry professionals who are not elected are involved in the implementation of the study programme.

During the assessment visit, the representatives of the DU management and short-cycle SP "Civil Security and Protection" management confirmed that the teaching staff are motivated to write publications and participate in scientific conferences. Also, DU management informed that there are several structural units that support research activities. The Project Department assists in preparing project applications, while the Science Department helps academic staff network for the establishment of research groups. Internal grants are available to support faculty, covering publication fees of up to €500. If the publication is in a high-impact journal indexed by Scopus or WoS, the fee can reach €2,000 to €3,000. Additionally, participation in conferences is incentivized, with higher funding provided for those with an elevated h-index. Publication fees in journals range from €1,000 to €1,500. This was also confirmed in the assessment visit by the teaching staff of the study field.

However, a thorough evaluation of the submitted CVs and the information provided in the 2.3.7.table has revealed that 5 of the academic staff do not have any scientific publications, and 2 individuals have fewer than five. Although some of the academic staff involved in the implementation of the short-cycle SP "Civil Security and Protection" are actively engaged in writing scientific papers, it is observed that for some of the academic staff, the number of publications has decreased in recent years, or there have been none, with the last publications in the assessed period are from year 2018 and/or 2019.

Evaluating the CVs submitted by the industry professionals involved in the teaching in the short-cycle SP "Civil Security and Protection", their professional experience is in accordance with the Law on Higher Education Institutions.

#### 2.4.5.

According to information provided in the SAR (section 3.4.5.), the teaching staff involved in the short-cycle SP "Civil Security and Protection" collaborate on developing study course descriptions and planning study course content. They work together to agree on the goals, tasks, expected outcomes, and content for the study courses to be developed and taught. In some study courses, two instructors share responsibilities, with one delivering lectures while the other conducts seminars or practical classes, and they jointly assess the results achieved. The logical flow of study course implementation is discussed and evaluated both within the "Internal Security and Civil Protection" study field and during meetings of the relevant department, which helps prevent topic overlap across different study courses.

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

The professional experience of the teaching staff adequately meets the needs of the short-cycle SP "Civil Security and Protection"; however, discrepancies in some CVs regarding English language proficiency were noted. Currently, English skills are assessed informally through conversations and conference participation, lacking a standardised approach, though study courses and personal interventions for improvement are available. While there have been minimal changes in staffing, with some faculty members earning doctoral degrees and new study courses introduced, the addition of faculty from law enforcement enhances professional interactions. Efforts to boost scientific output are ongoing, supported by internal grants and departmental assistance. Although

many teaching staff members are involved in research, a few have not published recent work. Collaboration among faculty on study course content and structure ensures consistency and minimises overlap, while joint teaching approaches are utilised in certain study courses, contributing to a cohesive educational experience.

**Strengths:**

- 1) Support is available for the academic staff's scientific activities, including publications and conferences.
- 2) Students highly value the teaching staff professionalism and their ability to provide practical examples.
- 3) The practical knowledge and skills of the professionals involved in teaching.

**Weaknesses:**

- 1) There is no standardised approach to assessing the teaching staff's English proficiency, leading to unclear evaluations of their language skills.
- 2) Controversial scientific publication activity: some academic staff lack publications, while others have seen a decline in publishing activity compared to 2018 and 2019.

## **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

Some of the teaching staff have few or no recent scientific publications - there are 5 academic staff members that have no publications in the assessment period. While 3 of them also have other workplaces, where they have practical experience and it could replace the publication requirement, but for two of them the only workplace is DU in academic positions.

## **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 short-cycle SP "Civil Security and Protection" complies with the rules of the Cabinet of the Ministers No 305 "Regulations on the state standard of professional higher education". Annex 3.2.1. of the SAR "Compliance with the state education standard\_Civil security\_EN.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 professional standard of the Junior officer of the State Police was approved in 2015, and the professional standard of a Penitentiary and Probation Work Specialist - in 2008. Both professional standards are not updated by employers, however, it was confirmed that



professional standards are still relevant. Annex 3.2.1. of the SAR "Compliance with professional standards\_Civil security\_EN.docx."

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The descriptions of the study courses and the study materials have been prepared in Latvian and English (Annex 3.2.1. of the SAR "3.2.1.Study course descriptions\_Civil security") and they comply with the requirements set forth in the Law on Higher Education Institutions.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The samples of the diploma comply with the rules of the Cabinet of the Ministers No 202 "The procedure for issuing documents certifying higher education recognized by the state". (Annex 3.1.2.of the SAR "3.1.2.Diploma and supplement example\_EN")

- 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

DU confirms that the official language proficiency of the teaching staff involved in the implementation of the short-cycle professional higher education study programme "Civil Security and Protection" complies with the "Regulations regarding the extent of the knowledge of the official language and the procedures for examining the proficiency in the official language" for the performance of their professional duties.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The sample of the study agreement complies with the rules of the Cabinet of the Ministers No 70 "Mandatory provisions in the study agreement" (annex of the SAR "2.1.4. Agreement on studies")

- 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:** Partially compliant

Annex of the SAR "Certificate of acceptance of students". If the study programme "Civil security and protection" is stopped at DU, it is assured that the students of this study programme will be able to continue their education in the DU bachelor's study programme "Law science" which is not the same qualification. However, it is considered to evaluate as a partial compliance as there is no similar study programme at the same level available, and DU has offered the best possible solution.

- 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

Annex of the SAR "Confirmation. Compensation guarantee for students".

DU guarantees compensation for damages caused to the student if, due to DU conduct (act or omission) the study field "Internal Security and Civil Protection" is not accredited or the licences of the study programmes belonging to the study field are withdrawn.

- 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

Expert team has found that the overall evaluation of the short-cycle SP "Civil Security and Protection" is fully compliant. There were two shortcomings noted; however, updating the professional standards depends on employers, and secondly- the opportunities to continue the studies if the study programme is terminated, are offered considering the available options.

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

The short-cycle SP "Civil Security and Protection" at DU is designed to address the growing demand for civil security professionals in Latvia. This study programme prepares students for careers in internal security, penitentiary work, and as junior officers of the State Police, making it relevant to the needs of the Latvian labour market. Despite the study programme's alignment with the Latvian qualifications framework and its recognition as a pathway for further studies, particularly in law, it faces several challenges.

Students appreciate the professionalism of the academic staff and the practical applications of the knowledge provided. The study programme includes three specialisation paths: "Specialist in General and Cyber Security of Organizations," "Specialist in Penitentiary Work," and "Specialist in Police Work," all of which are aligned with professional standards. The curriculum is well-structured, allowing for a solid foundational education while providing avenues for more specialised knowledge through internships with key security partners in the Latgale region. However, the study programme has experienced high dropout rates, particularly among first-year students, which could reflect either the challenging nature of the coursework or a lack of adequate support for new students.

To optimise the learning process, it is recommended to reduce the total duration of the study programme to 120 credit points. This shift could create a more compact and focused study experience, potentially reducing the number of modules offered and enhancing the development of business professional competencies.

Resource availability is regarded as adequate, featuring facilities like a forensics laboratory which enhances practical skill acquisition. However, concerns about the materials and technology used in the study programme's delivery suggest a need for periodic updates to remain aligned with industry standards.

While many faculty members are engaged in research, there are inconsistencies in publication activity, with some academics not publishing recent work, which raises concern regarding the overall academic output of the study programme.

In conclusion, the short-cycle SP "Civil Security and Protection" remains a vital and well-regarded educational offering that equips students with essential skills for their future careers. While it stands out as a significant contributor to developing civil security professionals in the Latgale region, addressing concerns like high dropout rates, and publication activity will be critical for its continued success and evolution.

## **Evaluation of the study programme "Civil Security and Protection"**

Evaluation of the study programme:

Good

## 2.6. Recommendations for the Study Programme "Civil Security and Protection"

### Short-term recommendations

- 1) Implement a comprehensive support system for the first-year students, which should include for example regular monitoring of student engagement, identification of dropout reasons, and personalised interventions for academic, emotional, and financial support. Additionally, establishing mentorship programmes and enhancing orientation activities can foster a sense of community, ultimately increasing retention rates and helping students successfully complete their studies. (31.12.2026).
- 2) Defended final theses should be easily made accessible online at the DU website, at least in the form of offering 300-500 words abstract and keywords. (31.12.2025).

### Long-term recommendations

- 1) Short-cycle SP "Civil Security and Protection" management should introduce a study course which would equip students with strong big data management and analytics, which is essential for tackling contemporary security challenges. Students should understand how to leverage data obtained with the help of multiple sensors and video surveillance units for enhanced security in an ethical way. (31.12.2027).
- 2) Short-cycle SP "Civil Security and Protection" should put more emphasis on improving academic mobility statistics. (continuously).
- 3) Establish a regular review and update schedule for its educational materials and technology to ensure they align with evolving industry standards. This could involve collaborating with industry professionals to identify necessary advancements and implementing a feedback system from students and faculty to assess the effectiveness of current resources. By prioritising continuous improvement and timely updates, the university can maintain a high-quality educational experience that prepares students for the demands of the field. (continuously).
- 4) Establish a standardised approach to assessing the teaching staff's English proficiency, to avoid unclear evaluations of teaching staff language skills. (continuously).
- 5) Implement a monitoring system to regularly track the scientific activities of the teaching staff and provide timely reminders about the need for publications, as well as about the support and incentives available from DU to encourage publishing. (31.12.2027).

## II - "Economic Security" ASSESSMENT

### II - "Economic Security" ASSESSMENT

#### 2.1. Indicators Describing the Study Programme

##### Analysis

##### 2.1.1.

The Professional Master's study programme (in the process of accreditation transmission to Academic Master's study programme) "Economic Security" (second-cycle SP "Economic Security") complies with indicators, conditions and criteria of the study field of "Internal Security and Civil Protection". The length of implementation of the study programme is 2 years in a full-time study form and 2 years and 6 months for part-time study form. The second-cycle SP "Economic Security"

is a unique interdisciplinary joint study programme with RSU. DU takes into account the existing regulations and pays attention to the changes and trends within the study field ensuring provision of the most recent framework of knowledge within the field of economic security. The study programme is interdisciplinary, combining economic and financial knowledge in civil security, protection of property with legal knowledge regarding economic security and including improvement of competences necessary for qualification of leadership and management, as a result of mastering the study programme it is planned to award the degree of a Master of Social Sciences in Economic Security. Appropriately prepared specialists will acquire in-depth knowledge, skills and competences in these areas corresponding to level 7 of the LQF (SAR, p. 119).

It can be evaluated that the second-cycle SP "Economic Security" has a significant length of studies as well as it provides students with the necessary skills and way of thinking to enter the labour market and start working in the field of security.

#### 2.1.2.

According to the SAR (p. 109), the title of the second-cycle SP "Economic Security" in the study field of "Internal Security and Civil Protection" with education classification code 45861 with the last 2 numbers (61) standing for civil and military protection and last 3 numbers (861) standing for protection of people and property, and study programmes according to the classification of Latvian education (available at: <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/291524-noteikumi-par-latvijas-izglitiba-klasifikaciju>). There is no qualification provided at the end of the studies. Based on the expert team opinion and information acquired during the assessment visit discussions with students, it would be important for the students that have already started their studies to be able to graduate the programme as a professional study programme, if possible. As the students specified, the labour market and employers value professional study programmes higher as well as the internships are a significant part of the study process that the students of this study programme have already started as they are in the second year of their studies at the moment (from September 2024).

According to the SAR (p. 109), the aim of the second-cycle SP "Economic Security" is to prepare a Master of Economic Security with cultivated analytical abilities and critical thinking that uses scientific methods and other forms of cognition to solve various theoretical and practical situations and problems in the prevention, detection and investigation of economic crimes, as well as to develop science and research in the field of economic security.

According to the SAR (p. 112), the second-cycle SP "Economic Security" is implemented in 2 languages - Latvian and English, although currently the study programme is active in Latvian, and the English stream is planned to be implemented in the future. In the assessment visit it was stated within the timeframe of one to two years. The admission requirements for the admission to studies in this study programme are first cycle higher education in business and administration, management, economics, finance, organisational security, internal security and civil defence, policing or law, or equivalent, as well as entrance test for Latvian stream applicant's/potential students. Additionally, for the English stream the requirement is knowledge of the English language at least at B2 level. After graduation the students are awarded with a Master of Social Sciences in Economic Security. In accordance with the new regulation the title awarded will be Master of Economic Security.

According to the SAR (p. 112), the study programme is a full-time study programme with 120 CP to be gathered during the study process of 2 years. During part time studies, the same amount of credit points must be gathered in the study period of 2 years and 6 months. The title, code, the degree obtained, aim, objectives, learning outcomes and admission requirements are interrelated.

At this point it is not exactly clear to the expert team how the second-cycle SP "Economic Security" is planned to be managed between both universities of DU and RSU as the processes of admission, organisational matters, state-funded places, quality assurance matters, platforms for studies, resource base, lectures are all planned to be conducted separately, even the admission time of

studies as RSU plans to admit the first stream of students during winter admission. It is important to synchronise the procedure and ensure that the study programme is organised and does perform jointly, including lectures being organised together, when possible for students as currently it is very easy with the use of Zoom and other platforms to provide remote lectures. Otherwise, the duration and scope of the second-cycle SP "Economic Security" implementation as well as the implementation language, are reasonable and justified.

#### 2.1.3.

According to the SAR, (p. 114-119), a few changes have been made in the second-cycle SP "Economic Security" parameters since the previous assessment:

1. The current professional study programme must meet both the national standard of professional higher education and the standard of the profession. But it was expected that successful completion of the study programme would only award a professional master's degree in organisational security, but not a professional qualification. There is no professional standard and it is not possible to develop a professional standard that complies with the regulatory framework, taking into account the relevant requirements for professional qualification. Consequently, the Joint Professional Master's Study Programme "Economic Security" was changed to the Joint Academic Master's Study Programme "Economic Security". Based on that the study programme, title has been changed.
2. The code was changed from 47 to 45 in accordance with Regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers No. 322 "Regulations on the Latvian Education Classification".
3. The objective of the study programme has changed to reflect the target audience and scope of activity in accordance with academic study programme.
4. Tasks of the study programme have been updated in order to meet learning outcomes.
5. Learning outcomes have been updated to reflect more accurately the knowledge, skills and competences to be obtained during studies.
6. Due to amendments to the Law on Higher Education Institutions, following the transition from Latvian credit points to ECTS, the volume of the study programme is expressed in ECTS.
7. The admission requirements have been editorially specified in accordance with the cycles established in the external regulatory framework: First cycle higher education in business and administration, management, economics, finance, organisational security, internal security and civil defence, policing or law, or equivalent education. Entrance test. For studies in English - knowledge of the English language at least at B2 level.
8. The degree to be awarded changes from professional Master's degree in Organisation Security to Master's degree of Social Sciences in Economic Security.

#### 2.1.4.

Based on the SAR (p. 120), the development of the second-cycle SP "Economic Security" was aimed at preparing specialists for the field of economic security, because there was practically no offer of higher education in Latvia in this very specific field. Such development was also determined by the National Security Concept, which emphasises that internal security is related to the everyday feeling of security of Latvian residents, socio economic situation in the country, observance of the rule of law, as well as security of the state border. This led to the choice to prepare specialists directly in the field of economic security, where there is a lack of both specialists and adequate education supply. National security and its protection are linked not only to the prevention of physical dangers, but also to the establishment and maintenance of an economic security system. The study programme intends to address such civil security issues by strengthening the competence of the graduates of the study programme, thus the priorities included in the National Development Plan of Latvia 2021-2027 are in line with the tasks of the second-cycle SP "Economic Security" and provide sustainable influence for the development of the Latvian national economy.

Based on the information and data provided in the SAR (p. 123), in academic year 2022/2023, 11

students were enrolled during winter admission of RSU: 10 of them study for state budget funds, but one – for funds of natural/legal persons. 20 students were expected to be admitted to the study programme. No students were admitted in the academic year 2023/2024. 13 students were admitted for the 2023/2024 academic year in DU with state budget funds. It was predicted that 15 full-time students will be admitted to the study programme of the academic year 2024/2025, however, as clarified during the assessment visit, no students were admitted in the study programme this year. It was specified with study programme directors, that there was an interest from around 20 students, however, they did not meet the admission requirements, thus could not be admitted to the studies.

#### 2.1.5.

Based on the information provided in the SAR (p. 124), on 24th of April 2019, RSU concluded an agreement with the Central Finance and Contracting Agency (CFCA) on the project “Reduction of fragmentation of StPs and promotion of internationalisation of studies at Rīga Stradiņš University” (project No. 8.2.1.0/18/A/014, Operational Programme “Growth and Employment”, specific objective 8.2.1 “To reduce fragmentation of study programmes and strengthen resource sharing” second project applications selection round (hereinafter referred to as SO 8.2.1). Within SO 8.2.1, a joint professional Master’s study programme (PMSP) was developed, on the creation of which RSU and DU agreed before the approval of consolidation plans at the Ministry of Education and Science. In cooperation with DU, combining the capacity and previous experience of both institutions of higher education and developments in implementation of the study field “Internal Security and Civil Protection”, a qualitative and competitive study programme “Economic Security” is implemented, which fosters improvement of the security system at the national level. The study of the economic security situation is one of the areas of activity of increasing attention, especially given the increasing impact of economic processes on national security and individual foreign efforts to use economic instruments to realise their geopolitical interests.

Expert team believes that such initiative is promotional and encouraged, however, as mentioned in the analysis above, it is crucial to pay closer attention to managing practical matters including administrative cooperation to ensure the second-cycle SP “Economic Security” is working jointly not in parallel as separate study programmes in each of the partner universities without any study courses taking place at the same time provided by the same lecturer, for example. It is important to promote the study programme as a joint programme and advertise it like that in both universities, including their websites, providing the same information on the study programmes in great detail. At the moment, the information in both websites is very limited and does not project the preparedness for implementation (the information on the study programmes available at: 1. DU - <https://du.lv/en/studies/study-programmes/professional-master-study-programmes/economic-security> and RSU - <https://www.rsu.lv/en/study-programme/economic-security>)

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

The second-cycle SP “Economic Security” aligns with the indicators and criteria of the study field “Internal Security and Civil Protection”, ensuring its relevance in current educational standards and workforce needs. The study programme effectively integrates economic, financial, and legal knowledge to equip graduates with comprehensive competencies in economic security. There are evident management challenges in coordinating between the two collaborating universities, which could hinder the effectiveness of the joint study programme. The transition from a professional to an academic master's degree reflects adaptability to regulatory changes and market needs, while at the same time the current students expressed their concern and preference of studying in a professional study programme and hope to graduate with a professional master’s degree.

#### Strengths:

- 1) The second-cycle SP “Economic Security” directly addresses a critical gap in higher education for economic security professionals in Latvia, aligning with national security objectives.
- 2) The intention to offer the second-cycle SP “Economic Security” in both Latvian and English broadens accessibility and appeal to a wider range of students.

#### Weaknesses:

- 1) The lack of clear management strategies between DU and RSU could lead to inefficiencies and confusion among students regarding the study programme's delivery.
- 2) The limited availability of information on the study programme's websites may hinder potential applicants from understanding the benefits and unique aspects of the studies.

## 2.2. The Content of Studies and Implementation Thereof

### Analysis

#### 2.2.1.

With regard to the second-cycle SP “Economic Security”, implemented collaboratively by RSU and DU, it is important to note the observable advancements in the study programme's structure compared to the version currently available on the DU website (available at: <https://du.lv/en/studies/study-programmes/professional-master-study-programmes/economic-security/>). These advancements apply to both the content of mandatory and elective study courses.

In the provision of second-cycle SP “Economic Security” content acquisition, alongside knowledge transfer and skill development, during the creation equal attention was given to both knowledge transfer and co-creation methods, as well as to the format of teaching and implementation of the study courses, including extracurricular and seminar activities in real economic security environment, covering a specific amount of knowledge for the interconnection of study courses, in particular over a semester and respective academic year (SAR, p. 125).

Annex 3.2.1. “Mapping of study courses for the achievement of learning outcomes in the academic Master's study programme Economic Security” and a document titled “Academic Master's study programme “Economic Security” plan for full-time regular studies in LV and EN” provide a set of concise information on the content and structure of study courses over four semesters (and five semesters for part-time students), as well as connection between study courses and learning outcomes to be achieved. Descriptions of knowledge, skills and competences corresponding to the 7th level of the Latvian Qualifications Framework (LQF) (corresponding to the descriptions of the European Qualifications Framework) are well translated into learning outcomes of the academic Master's study programme (Annex 3.2.1.).

There is a total of 80 CP / 120 ECTS to be achieved in the second-cycle SP “Economic Security” according to categories A = 44 / 66, B = 34 / 51 and C = 2 / 3. The study programme intends to balance theoretical and practical aspects of the studying process. In that regard the third semester envisages placement, as required by professional study programmes and it carries 9 ECTS points.

It is commendable to see new study courses which cover some of the key contemporary issues in the domain of economic security: “Law of Cryptocurrency and Blockchain Technologies”, “Basics of Cyber Security and Protection of Systems against Cyber Attacks”, “Methodology and Specific Character of Investigating and Combating Economic Crime” or “Prevention of Economically Financial Crime”.

Generally, in its proposed form the second-cycle SP “Economic Security” meets the needs of the industry, labour market and incorporates new scientific trends. However, regardless of the presented improvements there is still some ground to be covered to be fully updated with two aspects of economic security, which is missing from the curriculum.

First, the COVID-19 pandemic, Russian aggression on Ukraine, US-China trade and tech wars



constitute major geopolitical shocks which have put forward the critical importance of secure supply chains and economic resilience. Numerous cases of economic coercion and weaponization of interdependence have exposed the necessity to compile and analyse data on trade and investment dependencies and vulnerabilities. In that light the second-cycle SP “Economic Security” should incorporate the study course “Security of Supply Chains and Economic Resilience” in its structure. Second, the escalation of hybrid warfare over the course of the last decade puts the security of critical infrastructure (electricity grid, water supply systems, oil pipelines, underwater internet cables) at the very centre of national security. In that regard, an elective study course on critical infrastructure security should cover this gap.

In the opinion of the expert team, the skills in identifying and alleviating economic vulnerabilities and enhancing economic resilience are needed both in public and private sector organisations. Rising number of export controls, foreign direct investment screening procedures, economic sanctions and trade embargos globally, have all increased demand for qualified policy experts and political risk managers on the aforementioned subjects.

At the moment, the second-cycle SP “Economic Security” is implemented in Latvian language stream only, but in the future it should be implemented in the English stream as well, in order to increase the international attractiveness of the Latvian higher education programmes. However, one limiting factor could be the English proficiency level on behalf of teaching staff members, most of whom opted to communicate with the expert team during the assessment visit via interpreter.

#### 2.2.2.

The SAR (p. 126-127) states that obtaining a Master’s degree is clearly based on scientific achievements and developments. The study process of second-cycle SP “Economic Security” is divided: acquiring theoretical knowledge in regular studies, independent studies and learning of practical skills while studying.

The process of learning is student-centred to a satisfactory degree since in addition to lectures and classes, students learn study course material individually by developing an organisation continuity plan, civil protection plan, cybersecurity and physical security plan for a particular organisation that allow for the practical application of knowledge acquired in the study course. A war game is envisaged as part of the training methods to better understand crisis procedures. Lectures and seminars contain many practical examples and case studies to better learn course material.

All of this could be attested by a detailed overview of delivered syllabi. The study courses syllabi for the study programme in Economic Security are standardised and tick all the boxes in terms of regulatory compliance. Every single study course contains: study course planning (lecture to classes ratio), study course description (objectives and previously required knowledge), topic layout per lecture week (both for full-time and part-time students), assessment (unaided work description, exam composition and assessment criteria), learning outcomes (knowledge, skills and competencies) and bibliography (required and additional reading plus additional sources of information).

Generally, one can agree with the statement that the degree to be awarded is based on the achievements and findings of the relevant field of science. However, some members of the teaching staff offer only documents or online sources pertaining to practical cases in the list of required readings. This is indeed an important part, to be a practically-oriented scholar. However, every study course should at least have one seminal book enjoying wide international acclaim and reach, which provides key theoretical insights and offers a cognitive map for future practitioners, since there is no theory without practice and vice versa.

#### 2.2.3.

First of all, it is important to state that the admission and matriculation of students for the second-cycle SP “Economic Security” is ensured by each partner university independently, as the joint study

programme is conducted by RSU and DU. However, there are several important criteria to ensure the application of a consistent set of standards pertaining to enrollment (SAR, p. 128).

The second-cycle SP “Economic Security” is in line with Standard 1.3 of the “Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area” adopted in 2015, according to which institutions of higher education should ensure that study programmes are implemented in such a way as to encourage students to play an active role in the design of the study process and that the evaluation of students’ achievements is in line with this approach (SAR, p. 129). During the assessment visit, it was assured by the teaching staff members and students enrolled in the second-cycle SP “Economic Security” that this Standard 1.3. is regularly upheld via a student-centred learning and teaching process. The expert team were guided across student facilities and laboratories to show how practical student-centred classes are being implemented.

The adopted teaching style plays a stimulating role in student motivation, self-reflexion and the level of engagement. In the implementation of the RSU and DU second-cycle SP “Economic Security”, lecturers use types of studies such as lectures, seminars, practical work, training, group work, independent work, etc. This is in line with the core stipulation of the evaluated criterion that the methods for the implementation of studies, including assessment, contribute to the achievement of the objectives and learning outcomes of the study courses and study programme, the principles of student-centred teaching and learning are taken into account (SAR, p. 128).

One important recommendation on behalf of the expert team to the teaching staff members in their study course syllabus design is to connect the bibliography units with topics per lecture week. Namely, besides identifying topics per lecture week each syllabus should pair the number of the bibliographical unit with a given topic, which would significantly facilitate class preparation for students, as well as their active participation. This step would additionally improve study course implementation from an already satisfactory level.

On page 129 of the SAR it is mentioned that: during their studies at RSU, students have a possibility to ask questions they are interested in, and discuss them with the lecturer and fellow students. Problem-centred teaching strategies are used for studies. For example, in the study course “Scientific Research in Economic Security”, lead researcher Dzintra Atstāja introduced discussion of student research work in the implementation of the study course in the moot courtroom of the Faculty of Social Sciences, where students could discuss security and economic strategic matters. The problem with this claim is the fact that nothing similar is being mentioned pertaining to student-centred activities undertaken at DU.

Furthermore, this is only one of several examples in the SAR whereby RSU is being and DU is not being mentioned in a similar context, as if the study programme is conducted only by one partner institution. The best visual proof for this kind of claim is that study course syllabi have only the RSU logo in the header of each syllabus, without any visual identity representing DU as a partner responsible for the joint study programme.

Students' work is assessed on a 10-point grading scale and lecturers are guided by the outcomes defined for the study course, which could be inferred by analysing study course syllabi. The assessment principles are stated in the SAR (p. 130) as follows:

- The criteria are aimed at the assessment of the student’s work (in the intermediate stage or at the end of the study course);
- The student’s work is assessed on the basis of criteria or compared with the standard, not with the work of other students;
- Students know the criteria in advance;
- Creating a clear grading algorithm based on which a student can independently determine his/her level of achievement;

The assessment criteria are derived from the objectives and outcomes of the study course.

Assessment methods are in line with both formative and summative approach, e.g. control questions during the lectures and classes, as well as in the form of final exams/projects. The ultimate

assessment is the task to write a final Master thesis (there is an error on page 130 of the SAR mentioning Bachelor thesis).

Online learning environment has been ensured by the Moodle platform, whose functional properties have been shown to expert team members during the assessment visit. Students have not raised any major concerns with regard to the online component of teaching.

#### 2.2.4.

Placement comes in the second semester in the SP “Economic Security” and is provided in accordance with Cabinet of Ministers regulations of June 13, 2023 No. 305 “Regulations on the State Standard for the Professional Higher Education” (SAR, p. 126). The purpose of the professional qualification practice is to strengthen and supplement the student's theoretical knowledge, as well as to improve their professional skills, in accordance with the qualification requirements and the professional standard.

According to SAR (p. 131) the tasks of professional qualification internship are to:

1. Combine students’ theoretical knowledge with the latest trends in the field of economic security and to develop their skills in ensuring economic security by linking it to the activities of a specific law enforcement agency.

2. Strengthen and deepen the knowledge and practical skills acquired during studies to use them not only in the prevention and combating of economic crime, but also to develop an action plan in crisis and tension conditions.

3. Link theoretical knowledge with the application of practical skills in the field of economic security. Study placement is an essential part of the second-cycle SP “Economic Security”, placement takes place in law enforcement agencies competent in economic security matters. Placement in an institution is supervised by industry professionals. Placement has placement regulations defining specific tasks, which are subordinate to the aim of placement and the aim of the study programme. Taking into account a student-centred approach, the student’s placement site shall be evaluated individually, evaluating the capacity of the potential placement site and the possibilities of the student, as well as taking into account recommendations of the Ministry of the Interior. (SAR, p. 131) The SAR (p. 131) states that in the autumn and spring semester of academic year 2023/2024, students chose as placement sites: State Police, State Revenue Service, Financial Intelligence Division of the Tax and Customs Police Department of SRS, Corruption Prevention and Combating Bureau, Financial Intelligence Unit, SIA “A.Medical”, Prosecutors’ Office for Investigation of Criminal Offences in Public Institutions, Corruption Prevention Coordination Division of the Criminal Legal Department of the Prosecutor General’s Office, SIA Actio projekt (SAR, p. 131). Since there have been no foreign students enrolled in the second-cycle SP “Economic Security”, there is still no need to ensure placement options for non-native speakers. However, the study programme management should provide a credible assurance that this option is feasible, which has not been provided in the obtained documents or conveyed during the assessment visit.

During the assessment visit, the expert team requested more information regarding internship programmes as a vital part of the studies. Expert team was presented with a formal document titled „Internship Program: First Level Professional Higher Education Study Program“. The document is composed of four key parts covering: 1. General rules of internship organisation; 2. Responsibilities and rights of the University, internship provider and intern; 3. Practice tasks 4. Practice achievement evaluation procedure. The document also contains evaluation form, practice diary and practise final report. It is important that the documents covering internship are written in English, as the second-cycle SP “Economic Security” delivery is being planned in English. Internship duration is 16 weeks and the scope of practice is 6 CP/9 ECTS. Annex 3.2.4. is not aligned with the preceding statement made in the key DU document regulating internship, mentioned above. Namely, Annex 4.2.4 claims that practice durations amount to 6 weeks.

Upon the expert team request the study programme director delivered additional information on the

implementation of the internship. Hence, second-year students undergo an internship for the first time in accordance with the contract concluded between DU, the institution providing the internship and the student. The internship lasts from September 2, 2024 to January 19, 2025. All 11 students undergo an internship at the Economic Crimes Combating Department of the Main Criminal Police Department of the State Police, the internship leaders are chief inspectors. In the future, one should try to expand the list of placement options to students.

#### 2.2.5.

Not applicable.

#### 2.2.6.

In the winter/spring semester of academic year 2023/2024 RSU students study in semester 3 of the second-cycle SP "Economic Security" and choose topics to work on their research in the autumn semester of academic year 2024/2025. In the winter/spring semester of academic year 2023/2024 DU students study in semester 2 and are just planning their research. RSU and DU lecturers have proposed potential topics which students could choose and which are summarised in Table 2 (SAR, p. 132-133).

There are several examples which show that topics are socially and scientifically relevant, both in terms of the needs of the Latvian and EU labour market: "Legal regulation of deep fakes as a technical solution in the European Union and Latvia", "Analysis of the tax planning process and methods for ensuring economic activity", "Economic and financial cybercrime, national and international regulation, its application problems", "Assessment of the norms included in the European Union regulatory framework, which are binding on the Republic of Latvia (regarding economic security of Latvia) (potential benefits/threats, how already implemented EU norms function, etc.) and implementation problems". This information was obtained in an additional batch of documents required from DU.

Overall, it will be of essential importance to track quality of the defended theses. As of this writing one can also point out to a very significant share of supervisors possessing only an MA diploma. Additionally, one can underline that some titles of topics supervised by mentors with MA diplomas are too large and clunky. Titles should be clear and informative at all times. Finally, in the SAR (p. 132) there is a statement "In the winter/spring semester of academic year 2023/2024 RSU students study in semester 3". This does not correspond to reality as the second-cycle SP "Economic Security" is to be conducted jointly and there are several DU professors on the list of supervisors. Hence, in situations like this both partner institutions should be mentioned as they share rights and responsibilities in a joint study programme.

Last but not least important is the procedure to ensure ethical conduct and good scientific practices. DU developed and adheres to the procedure for submitting final thesis for plagiarism control, which provides for mandatory submission and storage of electronic versions of final theses in the DU Information System and provides an opportunity to compare students' final theses with the set of theses defended in previous years. This is done with the help of a software package called Turnitin (SAR, p. 136).

The compliance with the good scientific practices is made possible by the issuance of 18-page long methodological recommendations for the development and defense of the qualification work (available at: <https://du.lv/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/kvalifikacijas-darba-noformesana-Civila-drosiba-2-2.doc>).

Finally, it is important to ensure that in the coming period both partners ensure full transparency of the procedure and that defended theses are available online at least in a form containing abstract in Latvian and English, key words and student contact. This will enhance and facilitate dissemination of new knowledge and practices to a broader community of researchers and practitioners. The date of defense should also be made publicly available at the RSU/DU website in order to open up the

procedure to broader public scrutiny.

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

The content of the second-cycle SP "Economic Security", which is to be implemented collaboratively by RSU and DU, represents a significant improvement over the current study programme offered at DU. This conclusion is based on a comparison between the existing study programme detailed on the DU website (available at: <https://apply.du.lv/courses/course/12-economic-security>) and the proposed changes outlined in the new study plan provided in Annex 3.2.1.

The joint professional master's study programme "Economic Security" was changed to the joint academic master's study programme "Economic Security". This change, along with two institutions partnering in the implementation of the study programme, should expand the range of options to graduates, from the application of theoretical knowledge in the industry to the advancement of academic science. Namely, the study programme has been updated to reflect the target audience and scope of activity of the study programme in accordance with academic study programme.

Learning objectives have been also updated to reflect more accurately the knowledge, skills and competences to be obtained during studies. The second-cycle SP "Economic Security" is offered in both full-time and part-time versions, which will expand options to students already employed. Core members of the teaching staff from DU have a well-established reputation. It is praiseworthy to have the ambition to conduct a study programme in English and cater to an international target audience. Nevertheless, the key prerequisite is to improve language skills of teaching staff members engaged in the study programme.

Some of the weaknesses of the second-cycle SP "Economic Security" are to be found in the insufficient coordination between both partner institutions engaged in the joint MA study programme. Promotional activities, enrollment season, composition of committees for the final thesis defense and better interoperability and mobility should be better synchronised. Furthermore, some additional content should be covered in the study plan, such as issues pertaining to supply chain and critical infrastructure security.

The second-cycle SP "Economic Security" is a good initiative which will create an improved learning environment and new synergies between two partner institutions. In order to fully grasp their potential one needs to address several coordination issues mentioned in the recommendation section of this report.

#### **Strengths:**

- 1) Improved and updated content of the second-cycle SP "Economic Security", which expands the range of career options available to students. New study courses in the study plan tend to cover key challenges brought about with rapid technological change and emerging security threats.
- 2) Established connection between learning outcomes and the content of study courses in the study plan.
- 3) Standardised and coherent study course syllabi, which convey key information to students enrolled in the second-cycle SP "Economic Security" (a big improvement as compared to old study course descriptions available on the DU website covering the study programme).
- 4) Part-time study plan which allows for more flexibility to fully-employed students.
- 5) Favourable context for attracting potential students due to rising security threats.
- 6) Strong core of 6 DU researchers and teaching staff members engaged in the second-cycle SP "Economic Security", who have both double-digit number of Web of Science/Scopus publications and citations.

#### **Weaknesses:**

- 1) Uncoordinated enrollment procedure and advertising campaign, as well as the lack of genuine

- symmetry between partners implementing the second-cycle SP "Economic Security" (e.g. only 11 out of 47 identified lecturers responsible for the study programme implementation come from DU).
- 2) Since the second-cycle SP "Economic Security" is conducted jointly, it would be important to ensure quality control by requiring joint composition of the final theses' committees, which would also lead to fair burden sharing between partners involved in the implementation.
  - 3) Lack of high English proficiency (C1 level) on behalf of the DU staff, which is essential for successful internationalisation of the second-cycle SP "Economic Security".
  - 4) Lack of initiative to apply for joint research projects or to establish a jointly published journal dedicated to topics of economic security, issued by both DU and RSU. This would further enhance the quality of the teaching staff and enable positive spillover of best research practices into the second-cycle SP "Economic Security".
  - 5) Study plan which does not fully account for the new security challenges such as security of supply chains and of critical infrastructure.

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

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

#### **Assessment of compliance:** Partially compliant

The second-cycle SP "Economic Security" deserves a chance and should be implemented. It is a welcome update on the existing version of the study programme offered by both institutions. The study plan and study courses are well-aligned and offer valuable knowledge and skills to students. What is missing is an improved stewardship over the study programme implementation on behalf of both partners. More coordination and cooperation is needed to ensure that both partners ensure quality control.

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

### **Analysis**

#### **2.3.1.**

The study resources and infrastructure supporting the second-cycle SP "Economic Security" at DU are aligned with the specifics needed for effective study programme implementation and the achievement of learning outcomes. This interdisciplinary study programme, which encompasses civil security, law, and management, has undergone thorough planning and development, taking into account best practices from countries like Lithuania, Estonia, and Poland. Key elements include modern auditoriums equipped for various teaching methods, an extensive e-learning environment, and access to comprehensive library resources, which support both academic and research activities. (SAR, p. 133-134)

The second-cycle SP "Economic Security" benefits from specialised facilities, such as a forensic laboratory and the RSU Medical Education Technology Centre, which provide hands-on learning experiences. Furthermore, support services throughout the university, including the Human Resources and International Departments, ensure a smooth study process, while ongoing investment in technological upgrades and educational resources are planned to enhance teaching effectiveness. (SAR, p. 134)

Access to numerous electronic databases and online resources enriches the curriculum, enabling students to engage with current research and literature in their field. Though the necessary resources are in place, there are opportunities for improvement, particularly regarding the

enhancement of technical support in computer labs and the development of additional materials and equipment to further elevate the quality of education. (SAR, p. 134-136)

Additionally, the provision of comprehensive administrative, financial, and IT support services contributes to a flexible and student-oriented learning environment at DU. During the assessment visit the premises were introduced and all the stakeholders emphasised the satisfactoriness of the study environment. Overall, it can be concluded that DU is committed to providing a robust learning environment that meets the evolving needs of the second-cycle SP "Economic Security". Detailed analyses of the criteria is available in Chapter 1.3 in this report.

#### 2.3.2.

Not applicable

#### 2.3.3.

According to SAR (section 3.3.3.) funding for all study programmes at DU primarily supports personnel remuneration, the attraction of visiting lecturers, licences, and scientific activities. In addition to the direct costs associated with lectures and classes, funding must also cover infrastructure maintenance, including facilities and IT solutions, as well as common resources used in the study programme such as Student Services and the Library.

The second-cycle SP "Economic Security" is jointly implemented by RSU and DU, benefiting from extensive facilities that allow for the booking of study rooms and computer classes through a common system. Overhead costs for full-time study programmes tend to be higher than for part-time study programmes due to more intensive use of resources. (SAR, p. 137)

Funding for the second-cycle SP "Economic Security" is expected to come from state budget allocations, with 10 budget-funded study places planned, as well as from individual and legal entity contributions. Under RSU's discount regulation, an excellence discount may reduce the tuition fee to EUR 3,000 per year or EUR 6,000 for a two-year programme. (SAR, p. 137)

For the second-cycle SP "Economic Security" various options are outlined with planned student numbers and costs. The full-time regular study programme in English is expected to attract 20 students, with a tuition fee of EUR 4,500 per year or EUR 9,000 for a two-year duration. The part-time study programme in Latvian also anticipates 20 students, with tuition fees set at EUR 3,500 per year or EUR 8,750 for a total of 2.5 years. (SAR, p. 138) Additionally, there is "Economic Security" 2.5 years, part-time regular, English. It is planned to finance the study programme from the resources of private and legal persons, setting the tuition fee of 4,000 EUR per year or EUR 10,000 per 2.5 years. The planned number of students in the study programme is 17 students. (SAR, p. 139) Financial analysis includes average income and costs per student, allocation percentages for academic staff, department resources, direct expenditures, and capital investment per student across different study programmes, indicating a well-structured financial approach to maintain the quality of education. The minimum student enrollment to ensure the second-cycle SP "Economic Security" profitability at DU is five students. (SAR, p. 138-139)

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

The study resources and infrastructure supporting the second-cycle SP "Economic Security" at DU are well-aligned with the requirements for effective implementation and achievement of learning outcomes. This interdisciplinary study programme draws from best practices in civil security, law, and management, benefitting from modern facilities, an extensive e-learning environment, and comprehensive library resources that enhance both academic and research activities. While adequate support services and ongoing investment in technology contribute to a flexible learning environment, there remain opportunities for improvement, particularly in technical support and resource enhancement. Overall, DU demonstrates a strong commitment to providing a robust

educational experience for the second-cycle SP "Economic Security", ensuring it meets evolving student needs and maintains high-quality standards.

**Strengths:**

- 1) The study resources and infrastructure are effectively tailored to meet the specific needs of the second-cycle SP "Economic Security", facilitating successful learning outcomes.
- 2) The second-cycle SP "Economic Security" integration of civil security, law, and management reflects a comprehensive and relevant educational framework.
- 3) Strong administrative, financial, and IT support services contribute to a flexible, student-centred learning environment.

**Weaknesses:**

- 1) There are opportunities for improvement in technical support for computer labs, which may limit the effectiveness of resource utilisation.
- 2) While resources are adequate, the updates and advancements in materials and technology may not be sufficiently frequent to keep pace with industry standards.
- 3) There is a lack of details on how the effectiveness of resources and second-cycle SP "Economic Security" is evaluated, which is crucial for ensuring continuous improvement.

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

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The study resources and infrastructure supporting the second-cycle SP "Economic Security" at DU are well-aligned with the requirements for effective implementation and achievement of learning outcomes.

## **2.4. Teaching Staff**

### **Analysis**

#### **2.4.1.**

According to SAR (p. 140-141), the lecturers involved in the implementation of the second-cycle SP "Economic Security" are industry professionals. The experience of lecturers working in different positions in the industry allows the content of study courses to be enriched with practical examples that students appreciate, as mentioned in study course assessment surveys. There are 18 lecturers, 14 of whom have been elected to DU academic positions. Among them, one is a professor, six are associate professors, five assistant professors, one leading researcher, one lecturer and four guest lecturers. 13 with a doctorate and five with a master's degree.

Evaluating the submitted CVs (annex: CV\_EN.zip) of the teaching staff and the additional information provided in the SAR (annex: 2.3.7.Basic information about teaching staff\_EN.xlsx), as well as the information indicated in the SAR (p. 140-141), it has been found that teaching staff qualifications and professional experience meet the needs of the second-cycle SP "Economic Security" implementation. During the assessment visit, students praised the teaching staff's expertise, particularly emphasising the practical experience of certain individuals and their ability to provide real-world examples relevant to future careers.

It was discovered during the assessment visit that some teaching staff members had inaccurately reported their English language proficiency on their CVs. The information provided in the SAR (p.



140-141) also indicates that one of the challenges of teaching the second-cycle SP "Economic Security" in English is the insufficient knowledge of the teaching staff. DU provided information showing that the level of English proficiency of most second-cycle SP "Economic Security" lecturers corresponds to B2-C2, while the level of knowledge of some lecturers corresponds to B1 or lower. If the second-cycle SP "Economic Security" is also implemented in English, the study courses will be provided by the lecturers whose English proficiency corresponds to at least level B2.

In this situation, it is important to also assess whether the English-speaking staff will have sufficient expertise to teach the relevant study courses, especially in relation to the industry professionals involved in delivering the second-cycle SP "Economic Security". Considering that students expressed a high evaluation during the assessment visit for situations where the instructor can provide practical real-life examples, it is necessary to maintain this level equally high when teaching in English. Simultaneously, the information presented in SAR (annex: 2.3.7.Basic information about teaching staff\_EN.xlsx) indicates that industry professionals face the most significant challenges regarding their English language proficiency.

During the assessment visit, DU representatives informed that English skills of the teaching staff are assessed through interpersonal conversations and conference participation. DU representatives mentioned that there are courses available at DU or through specific projects with open enrollment. If someone is found lacking the required English proficiency, they are addressed personally. There is no standardised approach for assessing staff; their abilities are evaluated through colleague conversations, observations at international events, and their interactions. In the opinion of the expert team, there is uncertainty regarding the effectiveness of the current evaluation methods. It is recommended to explore alternative approaches that may provide a more comprehensive and accurate assessment, for example Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR).

#### 2.4.2.

According to the SAR (p. 142), there have been no significant changes in the composition of DU lecturers since the start of the second-cycle SP "Economic Security" implementation.

#### 2.4.3.

Not applicable

#### 2.4.4.

During the assessment visit, the representatives of the DU management and second-cycle SP "Economic Security" management confirmed that the teaching staff are motivated to write publications and participate in scientific conferences. During the assessment visit, DU management informed that there are several structural units that support research activities. The Project Department assists in preparing project applications, while the Science Department helps academic staff network for the establishment of research groups. Internal grants are available to support faculty, covering publication fees of up to €500. If the publication is in a high-impact journal indexed by Scopus or WoS, the fee can reach €2,000 to €3,000. Additionally, participation in conferences is incentivized, with higher funding provided for those with an elevated h-index. Publication fees in journals range from €1,000 to €1,500. This was also confirmed during the assessment visit by the teaching staff of the study field "Internal security and civil protection".

A thorough evaluation of the submitted CVs (annex: CV\_EN.zip) and the information provided in the SAR (annex: 2.3.7.Basic information about teaching staff\_EN.xlsx) has revealed that from 12 elected academic staff one of them does not have any scientific publications, but have practical experience. From this, it can be concluded that most of the second-cycle SP "Economic Security" teaching staff are actively engaged in writing publications.

Evaluating the CVs submitted by the industry professionals involved in the teaching in the second-

cycle SP "Economic Security", their professional experience is in accordance with the Law on Higher Education Institutions.

#### 2.4.5.

According to the SAR (p. 143), teaching staff of both DU and RSU cooperate with each other in the development of study course descriptions and in the planning of study course content, jointly agreeing on the objectives, tasks, learning outcomes and content of study courses to be developed and taught, and conduct joint research. For example: a joint research and publication by DU assistant professor, and RSU guest lecturer.

During the assessment visit, there was clear evidence of strong collaboration between second-cycle SP "Economic Security" management at DU and RSU. Additionally, the teaching staff noted that they actively collaborate with colleagues from RSU.

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

The second-cycle SP "Economic Security" benefits from a diverse team of lecturers who are industry professionals, bringing valuable practical experience that enhances study course content. The teaching staff's qualifications, with the majority holding doctorates, align well with the study programme's requirements. While most lecturers demonstrate a satisfactory level of English proficiency (B2-C1), some have reported lower levels (B1 or below), which presents a challenge for delivering study courses in English and highlights the need for careful assessment of staff language capabilities. Additionally, the stability in the composition of DU lecturers since the second-cycle SP "Economic Security" inception suggests continuity in teaching personnel, which is likely to have a positive impact on the study programme delivery and student learning outcomes.

#### Strengths:

- 1) Students have expressed high satisfaction with the expertise of the teaching staff, particularly appreciating their ability to relate study course material to practical situations relevant to future careers.
- 2) The teaching staff demonstrates a motivation to engage in research activities, and it is supported by institutional resources such as grants and assistance from dedicated departments.
- 3) There is evidence of collaboration between DU and RSU second-cycle SP "Economic Security" management and teaching staff, with joint efforts for the study programme and its study course development.

#### Weaknesses:

- 1) Some teaching staff members reported their English language proficiency inaccurately on their CVs. This misrepresentation and provided information of some other teaching staff English language proficiency raises concerns about the staff's actual ability to teach in English, especially since the second-cycle SP "Economic Security" is intended to be delivered in that language. This discrepancy could hinder the effective delivery of the study programme in English, potentially affecting students' learning experiences and outcomes.

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

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

Most of the second-cycle SP "Economic Security" teaching staff are actively engaged in scientific work. The professional experience of industry professionals, involved in the teaching in the second-cycle SP "Economic Security" is in accordance with the Law on Higher Education Institutions.

## 2.5. Assessment of the Compliance

### Requirements

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The second-cycle SP "Economic Security" complies with the rules of the Cabinet of the Ministers No 240 "Regulations on the national standard of academic education" (3.2.1.Compliance with the state education standard\_Economic security.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 and the study materials have been prepared in Latvian and English. (3.2.1.Study course descriptions\_Economic security.zip) and comply with the requirements set forth in the Law on Higher Education Institutions.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The sample of the diploma complies with the rules of the Cabinet of the Ministers No 202 "The procedure for issuing documents certifying higher education recognized by the state" (3.1.2.Diploma and supplement\_Economic security.zip)

- 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

Not less than five professors and associate professors altogether who are elected in DU take part in the implementation of the compulsory part and the limited elective part of academic study programmes (Section 55, Paragraph one, Clause 3 of the Law on Higher Education Institutions). Annex 2.3.7. of the SAR "Basic information about teaching staff\_EN".

- 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

DU confirms that the official language proficiency of the teaching staff of the study programme "Economic Security" complies with the "Regulations regarding the extent of the knowledge of the official language and the procedures for examining the proficiency in the official language" for the performance of their professional duties. Annex of the SAR "Statement National language skills". (STATEMENT National language skills.docx).

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Partially compliant

Annex of the SAR "STATEMENT foreign language B2". Although the provided official DU statement of English language skills testifies about the B2 level, during the assessment visit, the expert team had doubts about the English language skills of the teaching staff at the B2 level.

- 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 complies with the rules of the Cabinet of the Ministers No 70 "Mandatory provisions in the study agreement", Annex of the SAR "2.1.4. Agreement on studies".

- 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:** Partially compliant

Annex of the SAR "Certificate of acceptance of students". DU confirms that the students of the joint professional master's study programme "Economic security" will be provided with the opportunity to continue their education in the DU's professional master's study programme

"Management of societies and institutions" if the implementation of the study programme is stopped which does not provide the same/equal education. However, the study programme "Economic Security" is unique and there is not available the same kind of study programme to offer, it was taken into account that DU has done the best they can do to achieve the compliance.

- 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

Annex of the SAR "Confirmation. Compensation guarantee for students". It is confirmed by DU that students are guaranteed compensation for losses if the study programme is not accredited or the study programme's license is revoked.

- 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:** Partially compliant

The joint study programme complies with the requirements prescribed in Section 551, Paragraphs one and seven of the Law on Higher Education Institutions. The joint study programme partly complies with requirements prescribed in Section 551, paragraph two of the Law on Higher Education Institutions.

While the expert team regards the absence of joint activities in the joint study programme as a significant weakness, confirmation received during the assessment visit that the recommendations made a year ago during the previous assessment on the same topic have been seriously considered and that changes are planned. These include, for instance, joint lectures in an online format, a shared thesis defence committee, and collaborative visits to institutions, among other initiatives. Consequently, the expert team does not see partial compliance as overly critical, especially since there is a clear recognition of the ongoing development activities in this area.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

## **Assessment of the requirement [8]**

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Partially compliant

The main reason for the partial compliance is related to the English language skills. During the assessment visit, the experts were not convinced of the B2 level of English of the teaching staff, as an interpreter's assistance was needed during the meetings. Also, there is a lack of joint activities in the study programme at the moment and in case the study programme is closed, it is not possible to continue it in a similar study programme.

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

The second-cycle SP "Economic Security" at DU aims to address the growing need for qualified professionals in the field of economic security, aligning with national security objectives and current educational standards. By integrating economic, financial, and legal knowledge, the study programme provides graduates with comprehensive competencies necessary for navigating the complexities of economic security in a rapidly evolving landscape.

One of the study programme's key strengths is its relevance in filling a critical gap in higher education for economic security professionals in Latvia. Furthermore, the second-cycle SP "Economic security" is essential and very relevant in this geopolitical situation, when threats from neighbouring countries are very close, especially in the case of Daugavpils.

The updated curriculum introduces new study courses that tackle challenges posed by technological advancements and emerging security threats, while flexible part-time study options cater to working professionals. At the same time, the current curriculum does not sufficiently encompass contemporary security challenges, such as supply chain and critical infrastructure security, which are critical to the field.

During the assessment visit, the experts did not gain confidence that a joint study programme is being implemented jointly. Even more, each university (DU and RSU) works separately, and there is no common study course or exchange by study course, nor the coordinated enrollment and advertising campaigns between the two universities. Additionally, limited availability of information on DU and RSU websites may hinder prospective students from fully understanding the study programme's benefits and unique attributes. To fully realise the study programme's potential, it is essential to enhance collaboration between partnering institutions, promote joint research initiatives, and improve communication strategies. Addressing these coordination issues will facilitate a more cohesive learning environment and ensure that the study programme remains relevant and responsive to the evolving demands of the economic security landscape.

Students have expressed great satisfaction with the competence of the teaching staff, however the main disadvantage is the lecturers' insufficient knowledge of the English language at proficiency level. The initiative to offer the study programme in both Latvian and English enhances accessibility, appealing to a diverse range of students and potential applicants. Furthermore, language proficiency among faculty is a concern as well which needs attention; while some of the teaching staff exhibit strong capabilities, inconsistencies in reported English proficiency may affect the study programme's delivery in English and, consequently, the learning experience of students.

Even though the switch from a professional to an academic study programme was inevitable, students still greatly appreciated during the assessment visit the practical elements of the existing study programme, especially the internship part, which will be shortened significantly after the transition to an academic study programme.

In conclusion, while the second-cycle SP "Economic Security" presents a robust framework for cultivating skilled professionals in a crucial area, proactive measures are necessary to overcome its existing challenges. By addressing these concerns, DU and RSU can create a study programme that not only meets immediate educational and workforce needs but also prepares graduates for the complexities of the future economic security landscape.

## **Evaluation of the study programme "Economic Security"**

Evaluation of the study programme:

Good

## **2.6. Recommendations for the Study Programme "Economic Security"**

### **Short-term recommendations**

- 1) Establish a clear management strategy between RSU and DU on how to ensure consistency and common framework of functioning second-cycle SP "Economic Security" as a joint study programme, including provision of the same study courses simultaneously by the same lecturers, providing study courses for both university students, ensuring shared activities as organising activities, seminars, lectures online and on-site in Riga and Daugavpils. (30.06.2025)
- 2) Ensure clear structure and information that is regularly updated on the websites of both universities (DU and RSU), providing a link and indication to the partner university. Include on both of the websites description on how the study process is being organised, the admission structure, available budget places, admission requirements, provided forms of study, study fees and all the relevant details that students find crucial for their studies. Provide specification that it is an academic study programme, potential job placements, the benefits of having a joint degree. (30.06.2025).
- 3) It is recommended that the enrollment process be more closely coordinated between Daugavpils University (DU) and Rīga Stradiņš University (RSU), as this synchronisation is currently lacking. This coordination should involve aligning enrollment dates and study cycles to ensure a more seamless student experience. (30.06.2025).
- 4) It is recommended that study course syllabi include the logos of both partner universities, and that information about the second-cycle SP "Economic Security" be equally represented on the respective university websites. (31.12.2025).
- 5) It could be considered to enrich the study plan of second-cycle SP "Economic Security" and expanded with two study courses which account for new economic security challenges such as the security of supply chains and the security of critical infrastructure. (31.12.2026).
- 6) DU should ensure that the study groups in DU and RTU within the joint study programme are evaluated using the same criteria and that the results are shared among them. This collaboration is vital for DU and RTU to effectively establish and implement clear agreements, thereby facilitating continuous improvement. (31.12.2026).

### Long-term recommendations

- 1) It could be considered to launch a new scientific journal dedicated to economic security, issued by both DU and RSU, which would expand the international reach of both universities and of their jointly implemented second-cycle SP "Economic Security". (31.12.2027).
- 2) DU should create mechanisms which ensure that all teaching staff members have at least one Web of Science/Scopus publication over the course of next five years, either by organising specialised workshops for writing scientific articles and/or by stimulating co-authored works with established and advanced scholars. (31.12.2028).
- 3) Establish a standardised approach to assessing the teaching staff's English proficiency, to avoid unclear evaluations of teaching staff language skills. (continuously).
- 4) It is recommended that DU establish a regular review and update schedule for its educational materials and technology to ensure they align with evolving industry standards. This could involve collaborating with industry professionals to identify necessary advancements and implementing a feedback system from students and faculty to assess the effectiveness of current resources. By prioritising continuous improvement and timely updates, the university can maintain a high-quality educational experience that prepares students for the demands of the field. (continuously).

## **II - "Labour Protection" ASSESSMENT**

### **II - "Labour Protection" ASSESSMENT**

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

##### **Analysis**

###### **2.1.1.**

The professional master's study programme "Labour Protection" (second-cycle SP "Labour Protection") complies with indicators, conditions and criteria of the study field of "Internal Security and Civil Protection". The length of implementation of the study programme is 2 years in a full-time study form. DU takes into account the existing regulations and pays attention to the changes and trends within the study field. Based on the analysis provided in the SAR (p. 92), the second-cycle SP "Labour Protection" has been developed based on the strategy developed by DU and the latest trends in the professional education system in the European Union. The study programme has been formed taking into account the standard of the profession of a senior labour protection specialist (agreed at the meeting of the tripartite cooperation sub-council of Professional education and employment on February 9, 2022, (available in Latvian: <https://registri.visc.gov.lv/profizglitiba/dokumenti/standarti/2017/PS-207.pdf>). The content of the second-cycle SP "Labour Protection" is designed to ensure the graduate's compliance with employers' requirements for a highly qualified graduate with a wide range of knowledge and practical skills in occupational safety and health. It can be evaluated that the second-cycle SP "Labour Protection" has a significant length of studies as well as it provides students with the necessary skills and way of thinking to enter the labour market and start working in the field of labour protection as professionals well-prepared for the practical work.

###### **2.1.2.**

According to the SAR (p. 86), the title of the second-cycle SP "Labour Protection" in the study field of "Internal Security and Civil Protection" with education classification code 47862 with the last 2 numbers (62) standing for civil and military protection and last 3 numbers (862) standing for occupational health and safety, and programmes according to the classification of Latvian education (available at: <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/291524-noteikumi-par-latvijas-izglitibas-klasifikaciju>). There is a qualification given after graduating which is Senior Specialist in Labour Protection.

According to the SAR (p. 86), the aim of the second-cycle SP "Labour Protection" is to provide students matriculated at DU with qualitative education that meets the needs of the state and is aligned with the requirements of professional standards, providing the opportunity to acquire theoretical and practical knowledge, to supplement the skills and abilities of research work, thus preparing students to become specialists in labour protection. According to the SAR, (p. 88), the admission requirements for the studies in second-cycle SP "Labour Protection" are either first cycle higher education in the field of labour protection, environmental protection, engineering sciences, physics or chemistry or first cycle higher education and at least 2-year work experience in labour protection.

According to the SAR (p. 88), the second-cycle SP "Labour Protection" is a full-time study programme with 123 CP to be gathered during the study process of 2 years. During the assessment visit, there was a discussion in regards to the changes wished to be made within the amount of CP that differ from the usual standard of 120 CP. The expert team believes it should be possible to make adjustments within the study course content and to ensure that the amount of credit points do not get exceeded. It is advised by the expert team to review any possibilities to ensure that the 120 CP limit remains with 3 CP free elective study courses included in the amount of CP. The title, code, aim, the qualification, objectives, learning outcomes and admission requirements are interrelated. The duration and scope of the second-cycle SP "Labour Protection" implementation as well as the



implementation language, are reasonable and justified.

#### 2.1.3.

According to the SAR, (p. 90-91), 2 key changes have been made in the second-cycle SP “Labour Protection” parameters since the previous assessment. Other improvements have been enlisted in the SAR analysis, however those are not considered fundamental changes for the study programme parameters.

1. Due to the fact that the second-cycle SP “Labour Protection” was supplemented with part C - a free elective study course, in which students can choose a study course from the total free elective offer, the total number of credit points increased by 3 ECTS. As mentioned under analysis 2.1.2. the aspect of increase of overall credit points within the study programme has to be reviewed.

2. In order to promote students' interest and develop new competencies, study courses are taught by professionals working in the industry with extensive work experience. For example, the study courses "Fire Safety I" and "Fire Safety II" are taught by the commander of the State Fire and Rescue Service.

#### 2.1.4.

As stated within the analysis of SAR (p. 93), there is a great demand for highly qualified specialists in the field of labour protection in Latvia. The labour market requires specialists with professional knowledge and skills in the areas of management, organisation and monitoring of the labour protection system, work environment risks, analysis, forecasting, who are able to make decisions on the improvement of the labour protection system and implement them. The second-cycle SP “Labour Protection” is an essential condition for further professional education in the field of labour protection, with its main focus on preparation of qualified specialists in the Latgale region. The students of the study programme are mostly from Eastern Latvia, but it should be noted that some students come from other regions of the country, as well as from Riga. This means that the implementation of the second-cycle SP “Labour Protection” is very important both from the point of view of regional and national development interests. Latvian food production and processing companies, construction companies, manufacturers of building materials and others dominate among employers. Graduates are also employed in cosmetics production and recycling companies, state controlling institutions. The results of the graduate survey show that more than 90% of the graduates are working in a job that corresponds to the education they received at DU and are employed full time, as well as some graduates are working and continuing their studies.

Based on the statistical data provided in the SAR (p. 94), from 2013/2014 to 2023/2024, the student admission trends show distinct phases. Initially, there was growth, with admissions increasing from 21 to 26 between 2013/2014 and 2015/2016, indicating rising interest or expanded capacity. However, this was followed by a sharp decline, dropping to 16 in 2017/2018, suggesting a sudden reduction in demand or external challenges. For the next few years, admissions remained relatively low, ranging from 14 to 8 between 2017/2018 and 2021/2022. This period of stagnation could reflect ongoing difficulties, possibly influenced by factors like the COVID-19 pandemic, which impacted education globally. Notably, the recent years show a recovery, with admissions increasing to 20 in 2022/2023 and stabilising at 18 in 2023/2024, hinting at renewed interest or improvements within the second-cycle SP “Labour Protection”. This rebound suggests a positive trend that could be further built upon to attract more students.

Based on the data provided in the SAR (p. 94-95) on the graduates of the second-cycle SP “Labour Protection”, it shows several notable trends from 2013/2014 to 2022/2023: there was a significant increase, with the number of graduates rising from 6 in 2013/2014 to 16 in 2015/2016. This growth suggests improvements in student retention, study programme effectiveness, or a maturing cohort that successfully completed their studies. The peak was observed in 2017/2018, with 21 graduates, indicating a strong completion rate during this period. However, after this peak, the numbers began

to decline steadily, with graduates dropping to 17 in 2018/2019 and further decreasing to 11 by 2020/2021. The lowest point came in 2021/2022, with just 9 graduates, but there was a slight recovery in 2022/2023, reaching 10 graduates.

In regards to the third table provided in the SAR (p. 95) on the enrollment of students per study years, such conclusions can be drawn: the number of students in the second-cycle SP "Labour Protection" has shown notable shifts over the years. In the early years, there was a period of growth, with total enrollments rising from 36 in 2013/2014 to a peak of 43 in 2015/2016. This growth suggests a strong intake and retention during this period, indicating that the study programme was attracting and keeping students effectively. However, starting from 2017/2018, there was a marked decline, with the total number of students dropping to 32. This downward trend continued over the following years, reaching a low of 17 students in 2021/2022. The consistent reduction in both first and second-course enrollments during these years suggests possible challenges such as reduced admissions, higher dropout rates, or external factors affecting student interest and retention. The 2022/2023 data shows a significant shift, with a jump in first-course enrollments to 20 but a notable drop in second-course students to only 2, leading to an overall total of just 22. While the increase in first-course numbers suggests a possible recovery or renewed interest, the low number of second-course students could indicate retention issues or changes in the second-cycle SP "Labour Protection" structure. To conclude, the study programme experienced early growth, followed by a steady decline in student numbers, and recent signs of recovery in new enrollments. Addressing the retention of students into the second course will be critical for maintaining and further boosting overall study programme strength in the future.

2.1.5.

Not applicable.

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

The professional master's study programme "Labour Protection" at DU aligns well with the standards of the "Internal Security and Civil Protection" study field. It has been designed to comply with national and EU-level requirements, aiming to produce highly skilled professionals ready for the labour market. The study programme has seen varied trends in student admissions and graduates over the years, reflecting changes in demand, external factors, and study programme adjustments. Despite periods of decline, recent years show a promising recovery in admissions, suggesting a renewed interest in the field.

Strengths:

1) Graduate surveys indicate that over 90% of graduates find employment in roles aligned with their education. This high employment rate underscores the second-cycle SP "Labour Protection" effectiveness in preparing students for the job market.

Weaknesses:

1) While the second-cycle SP "Labour Protection" serves Latgale region well, its success is closely tied to regional needs. Diversifying the appeal of the study programme to attract students from a broader national pool could enhance stability and growth in student numbers.

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

### **Analysis**

2.2.1.

According to SAR (p. 96) as well as the later responses provided by the Director of the second-cycle

SP "Labour Protection", it is stated that the structure of the study plan ensures a range of study courses corresponding to the interests of students and the specific requirements of professional standard. The included study courses provide opportunities for students to learn the chosen "Senior Labor Protection Specialist" profession. Evaluating the attached study plan (annex: 3.2.1. Study plan\_Labour protection), it was found that the offered study courses cover most of the requirements set by the professional standard. However, when assessing the requirement of the professional standard to have a comprehensive knowledge of labour protection regulatory norms and standards, it was found that within the studies, students are not given the opportunity to learn the current labour protection management standard "ISO 45001:2018 Occupational health and safety management systems — Requirements with guidance for use." This standard is not mentioned in the literature of any of the three study courses indicated as meeting this section of the professional standard. It is not listed in the literature of other study courses either. Considering that senior labour protection specialists are often tasked with creating a labour protection system in accordance with the ISO 45001:2018 standard requirements and certifying it, mastering the standard requirements, and the ability to work practically with it, is critically important.

The professional standard for a senior labour protection specialist anticipates the ability to develop an action plan for emergency prevention, including, if necessary, to develop a civil protection plan, and this skill should be emphasised. According to the information provided by DU (annex: 3.2.1. Study course descriptions\_Labour protection\_EN.zip), currently, the "State, civil and environmental protection" study course that is included in the second-cycle SP "Labour Protection" is a general, additional study course outside the optimal credit point distribution, intended for a broad group of the public rather than specifically for senior labour protection specialists, and there is no information about its content or lecturer. The study course Fire Safety II includes 4 hours dedicated to civil protection. Given that the study course "Environmental Protection" is included in part B of the second-cycle SP "Labour Protection" with 3 credits, this additional study course could potentially be excluded, instead refining the fire safety study courses by supplementing them with civil protection topics to the extent required by the professional standard. Moreover, it is unclear why study courses taught in one semester are named Fire Safety I and Fire Safety II. It could be one study course.

Another significant issue is the outdated list of literature in both fire safety (Fire Safety I and Fire Safety II) study courses (annex: 3.2.1. Study course descriptions\_Labour protection\_EN.zip). For example, the main teaching material listed is the Cabinet of Ministers regulations No. 82 "Fire Safety Regulations." The experts would like to note that these regulations were repealed on September 1, 2016, when the new Cabinet of Ministers regulations No. 238 "Fire Safety Regulations" came into effect. The rest of the literature is also outdated, dated from 2002-2008, including old guidelines for 2008-2013, and similar materials. It appears that the fire safety study courses have not been updated for a long time since the list of regulations includes Cabinet of Ministers regulations No. 228 "Procedures for the Classification, Labelling, and Packaging of Chemical Substances and Chemical Products" which were issued in 1999 and repealed in 2002 (the replacing regulations were also repealed in 2015). Considering that during the assessment visit it was indicated by the students that this study course could also lead to receiving fire safety officer certifications, it is critical to ensure that current regulatory requirements are covered and that literature sources from recent years are used in the study course.

Evaluating the DU submitted information about study courses (annex: 3.2.1. Study course descriptions\_Labour protection\_EN.zip), the main and supplementary literature listed in other study courses is also significantly outdated. For example, in the study course "Labor Protection and Safety Equipment," the most recent main literature was published in 2010, and most supplementary literature was published in 2003. The same study course's list of regulations includes Cabinet of Ministers regulations that have long been repealed, such as No. 379 "Procedures for Internal Supervision of the Work Environment" repealed in 2007, No. 125 "Labor Protection Requirements at Workplaces" repealed in 2010, and No. 323 "Regulations on Training in Labor Protection Issues"

repealed in 2010. This situation raises concerns that the updating of study courses is done superficially, and current industry developments are not being followed. It was also found that students are not offered new international scientific publications and books that contain the latest findings and approaches in the study field.

#### 2.2.2.

Although it is indicated in the SAR (p. 96) that the theoretical and practical components of the second-cycle SP “Labour Protection” are based on the current scientific developments in the industry and include information on the latest achievements, this claim was not confirmed upon reviewing the study course content and literature. The included literature is outdated, and in some of the study courses a part of mentioned regulations have been repealed. Students are not provided with recent publications and books featuring the latest approaches and discoveries. Examples of these discrepancies are detailed in the previous section (3.2.1) of this report.

#### 2.2.3.

In the SAR (p. 97-99) it is stated that the second-cycle SP “Labour Protection” at DU uses a diverse range of educational methods to ensure comprehensive learning. These include lectures, seminars, practical (laboratory) lessons with individual and group work, independent study, and the use of computer technology and internet resources. Workshops further enhance the learning experience. All study courses are designed to foster creative student participation, integrating both theoretical and practical exams or tests that are graded.

The second-cycle SP “Labour Protection” is structured around modern teaching approaches, such as cognitive, research, creative, problem-solving, and autonomous learning. These methods promote the acquisition and expansion of theoretical knowledge and the development of critical and creative thinking skills. Students are encouraged to engage in discussions, articulate their opinions, and utilise active learning methods to gather and analyse information, ultimately forming well-structured action plans. (SAR, p. 97-99)

DU implies (SAR, p. 97-99) that a significant focus is placed on developing students' independent, critical, and creative thinking abilities. The second-cycle SP “Labour Protection” aims to enhance communication skills, group collaboration, conflict resolution, confidence, and compliance with set standards. It also seeks to instil values such as patriotism, respect for human rights, honesty, and a commitment to lifelong learning. The primary teaching methods include problem-solving, group work, role-playing, and the defence of reports. Students are encouraged to participate in scientific and popular science events organised by DU.

The second-cycle SP “Labour Protection” is governed by the DU Constitution and other regulatory documents, ensuring compliance with national and university standards. Student self-governance plays a crucial role, with representatives actively participating in decision-making bodies such as the DU Senate and Faculty Council. Students have opportunities to influence the study process by evaluating study courses based on content, progression, examination forms, and lecturer-student interactions. They contribute to the study programme's improvement through practical work, seminars, and the development of qualification papers analysing real situations. (SAR, p. 98)

The second-cycle SP “Labour Protection” adheres to the “Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area”, focusing on student-centred learning. This approach motivates students, encourages self-reflection, and fosters engagement. It considers diverse learning styles, interests, and experiences, offering an individual approach and involving students in evaluation processes. Assessment criteria are clear and aligned with study course objectives, with students informed in advance. (SAR, p. 99)

The second-cycle SP “Labour Protection” uses Moodle to provide support materials and facilitate coursework submission, enhancing the learning experience and offering timely feedback. Teachers act as organisers, consultants, and experts during these processes. The study methods used provide

opportunities to acquire both theoretical knowledge and practical skills, improving students' critical thinking and collaboration abilities. According to SAR (p. 97-99) the practical implementation of the second-cycle SP "Labour Protection" follows a structured work plan, including lectures, seminars, practical lessons, module training, and independent work with literature and legislative materials. Practical lessons are crucial in study courses requiring specific skill sets. The second-cycle SP "Labour Protection" also emphasises the use of the latest IT technologies for designing independent and group projects, reports, and presentations.

This information was also confirmed during the assessment visit and in the attached documents. Students provided positive feedback about their teachers' approach and provided learning and evolving opportunities.

Also in SAR (p. 97-99) it is described that DU pays attention to students' independent work, including literature and legal analysis and summary writing. DU provides access to educational and scientific literature, including electronic databases, and ensures ongoing academic support through consultations. This information was confirmed only partly, despite the offered and available opportunities, the amount of scholarly literature referenced is minimal, with a predominant reliance on internet resources, including informational brochures and legislative documents.

#### 2.2.4.

According to SAR (p. 100) the internship at DU is organised in line with Cabinet of Ministers regulations no. 305, which pertains to the standard of state professional higher education. This practice is a compulsory component of professional higher education study programmes, designed to bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application. The aim is to prepare students to become qualified and creative specialists by enhancing their competence through practical experience. For students in the second-cycle SP "Labour Protection", professional qualification practices are crucial for reinforcing the theoretical knowledge, skills, and abilities gained during their study courses.

The total duration of second-cycle SP "Labour Protection" internships are 26 weeks, equivalent to 26 CP/39 ECTS credits. These internships are strategically scheduled across the study programme: 8 weeks during the spring and summer of the first study year, 12 weeks in the autumn of the second study year, and 6 weeks in the spring of the second study year for full-time students. The specialisation in "Senior Labour Protection Specialist" involves practice placements mainly in companies within the Daugavpils region, such as Daugavpils Regional Hospital and AS "Latvijas Maiznieks." During these professional qualification practices, students are introduced to tasks related to work safety and techniques. They update their theoretical knowledge from lectures and practical work, preparing them for further studies in work safety study courses and the development of a master's thesis. During their internship, students familiarise themselves with the safety techniques and regulations of their placement locations. They engage with local, regional, national, and international institutions, participating in the planning of labour protection measures for local governments and partner companies. They also explore existing challenges within municipalities and partner companies and consider potential solutions. (SAR, p. 100)

Additionally, during the assessment visit it was described that students contribute to specific labour protection projects, involving tasks such as project documentation and design. Throughout the professional qualification practice, students develop individual projects, presenting their results at a final conference. It is stated in the SAR (p. 100) that the regulation governing professional qualification practice is approved by the Faculty Council, the DU Study Council, and the DU Senate, underscoring its importance in the study process. Practice placements occur in institutions with which DU has established practice agreements. These structured stages ensure that students gain comprehensive practical experience, which is an integral and mandatory part of their education.

During the assessment visit it was also confirmed by students, and later - by the study programme director's provided answers. Students mentioned that they often prefer to complete their internships

at their current workplaces, as it allows them to integrate their learning with their existing roles. For those who lack this opportunity, DU provides valuable assistance in locating suitable internship placements. This support ensures all students have access to practical experience, regardless of their personal circumstances. Additionally, students expressed appreciation for the guidance provided by DU's internship supervisors, highlighting their expertise and support throughout the process. They also emphasised the convenience and benefits of having internship options available close to their homes, which helps reduce travel time and allows them to balance their studies with personal commitments more effectively.

#### 2.2.5.

Not applicable

#### 2.2.6.

The evaluation of the master's thesis topics of the second-cycle SP “Labour Protection” confirms that they meet the requirements for obtaining a professional master's degree, indicating that students are selecting relevant and appropriate subjects for their research. However, a random review of the thesis content reveals significant shortcomings in the depth and breadth of the literature utilised. Specifically, the volume of scholarly literature referenced in these theses is insufficient, suggesting a lack of thorough engagement with existing scientific research. Many theses predominantly rely on internet resources, such as informational brochures and legislative documents, rather than drawing from a diverse array of academic sources. This trend raises several concerns regarding the academic rigour and credibility of the research being conducted.

The reliance on non-scholarly sources can lead to a superficial understanding of the topic, as these materials often lack the critical analysis and peer-reviewed validation that characterise high-quality academic literature. Consequently, students may miss out on key theories, methodologies, and findings that could enhance their work and provide a more robust foundation for their arguments.

This situation underscores the necessity for a more extensive and rigorous approach to literature review in future master's thesis preparations. Faculty advisors and second-cycle SP “Labour Protection” coordinators should emphasise the importance of engaging with a wide range of peer-reviewed journals, books, and other scholarly publications relevant to the students' fields of study. Additionally, it may be beneficial to provide resources and training on effective literature search strategies, evaluation of sources, and synthesis of research findings. Implementing these measures would not only improve the quality of the theses but also foster a culture of academic integrity and scholarly inquiry among students.

Ultimately, enhancing the literature review process will contribute to the overall academic experience and better prepare graduates for their professional roles, equipping them with the critical thinking skills and comprehensive knowledge necessary to excel in their fields.

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

To enhance the scientific quality of master's level final theses, it is crucial to focus more on the use of scholarly literature in thesis preparation. There is a concerning trend of outdated literature across several study courses, particularly in fire safety and labour protection, with numerous references to regulations that have been repealed, indicating a lack of timely updates and raising questions about the second-cycle SP “Labour Protection” responsiveness to current industry practices and standards. While DU claims to provide access to educational and scientific literature, the actual inclusion of contemporary scholarly resources in study courses remains minimal. This dependence on outdated materials and internet resources may hinder students' understanding of current trends and research in labour protection, resulting in a shortage of scientific sources in their final theses.

However, DU's diverse educational methods encourage independent, critical, and creative thinking,

and positive student feedback confirms the effectiveness of these approaches in fostering engagement and participation. Additionally, the alignment of the internship component with regulatory standards reinforces the integration of practical experience into the educational process, providing students with valuable hands-on experience relevant to their future careers.

#### Strengths:

- 1) The second-cycle SP “Labour Protection” emphasises the development of critical and creative thinking skills. By encouraging students to engage in discussions, problem-solving, and group work, the curriculum fosters an environment where students can enhance their analytical and independent thinking abilities.
- 2) The structured work plan, which includes practical lessons and internships, ensures that students gain relevant hands-on experience. This practical exposure is crucial for developing the skills needed in real-world labour protection scenarios.
- 3) The positive responses from students regarding their experiences with teachers and the learning environment indicate that the educational methods and support provided are effective. This feedback can be leveraged to further enhance the second-cycle SP “Labour Protection”.

#### Weaknesses:

- 1) Many study courses rely on outdated materials and regulations, hindering the relevance of the education provided.
- 2) The second-cycle SP “Labour Protection” does not adequately cover the current labour protection management standard, ISO 45001:2018, which is critical for senior labour protection specialists.
- 3) Lack of thorough updates to study course content, missing recent developments in the field. The second-cycle SP “Labour Protection” lacks incorporation of new scientific publications and approaches, limiting exposure to current industry trends.
- 4) Insufficient consideration of the possibility to integrate “extra” credit points into the study content of already included study courses, thereby ensuring a profession-appropriate rather than superficial understanding of environment and civil protection content.

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

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

#### **Assessment of compliance:** Partially compliant

There is a concerning trend of outdated literature across multiple study courses, notably in fire safety and labour protection. Many references are to regulations that have been repealed, which indicates a lack of timely updates. This raises questions about the second-cycle SP “Labour Protection” responsiveness to current industry practices and standards.

The amount of scholarly literature referenced in the final thesis is minimal, with a predominant reliance on internet resources, including informational brochures and legislative documents.

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

#### **Analysis**

##### 2.3.1.

Detailed analyses of the criteria is available in Chapter 1.3 in this report, based on the Chapter 1.3 and the SAR (p. 103-104) it could be concluded that the resources and provisions for the second-cycle SP “Labour Protection” at DU are adequate for effective implementation and achieving

educational outcomes. The array of available resources, including modern facilities, laboratories, and comprehensive databases, supports both theoretical and practical learning, ensuring that students are well-equipped to acquire the necessary knowledge and skills. The Department of Environment and Technology effectively oversees the delivery of the second-cycle SP "Labour Protection", including the creation and renewal of study course descriptions and the management of practical sessions. Since 2016, the second-cycle SP "Labour Protection" has been largely conducted in the new Life Sciences and Technologies building, which enhances the learning experience through state-of-the-art teaching environments.

The library's significant collection of over 343,000 books and 25,000 magazines, coupled with advanced technological resources, further enriches the academic experience. However, according to the second-cycle SP "Labour Protection" the significant amount of obsolete literature in the study courses was recognised by the expert team, which understood not the lack of literature in the library but the outdated study courses descriptions. Overall, during the assessment visit student feedback corroborates that these resources facilitate a high-quality educational process, demonstrating DU's commitment to providing a flexible and supportive learning environment.

### 2.3.2.

Not applicable

### 2.3.3.

According to the SAR (p. 104-105) the primary funding source for the full-time second-cycle SP "Labour Protection" comes from the state budget and contributions from natural or legal entities, with additional funding available through project implementation. The Department of Finance and Accounting at DU conducted a detailed cost analysis for one student in the programme, calculating total expenses to be €15,127.56. This includes various costs such as the salary fund (€9,914.16), employer social security contributions (€2,503.74), business trip expenses (€99.16), material and energy costs (€716.18), and student social security (€503.96). The established study fee is €1,600 per year, with a minimum enrollment of seven students required to ensure the second-cycle SP "Labour Protection" profitability.

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

The resources and provisions for the second-cycle SP "Labour Protection" at DU are adequate for effective implementation and achieving educational outcomes, as detailed in Chapter 1.3 of this report. The second-cycle SP "Labour Protection" benefits from modern facilities, laboratories, and comprehensive databases that support both theoretical and practical learning, equipping students with the necessary knowledge and skills. Oversight by the Department of Environment and Technology ensures the study programme's successful delivery, including the management of study course content and practical sessions. The second-cycle SP "Labour Protection" has thrived in the new Life Sciences and Technologies building since 2016, enriching the academic experience with a robust library collection and advanced technological resources. Additionally, funding primarily comes from the state budget and contributions from entities. Overall, the assessment confirms DU's commitment to providing a flexible and supportive learning environment.

### Strengths:

- 1) Integration of theoretical and practical elements, along with well-managed practical sessions, ensures that students acquire relevant skills.
- 2) The second-cycle SP "Labour Protection" benefits from state-of-the-art facilities within the new Life Sciences and Technologies building, enhancing the overall educational experience.
- 3) The primary funding sources are identified, and the detailed cost analysis provides transparency



regarding the financial aspects of the second-cycle SP "Labour Protection".

Weaknesses:

1) Although the current resources are adequate, there may be a need for continuous updates to ensure the curriculum keeps pace with emerging industry trends.

### **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 resources and provisions for the second-cycle SP "Labour Protection" at DU are adequate for effective implementation and achieving educational outcomes.

## **2.4. Teaching Staff**

### **Analysis**

#### **2.4.1.**

According to the SAR (p. 105-106), all teaching staff in the second-cycle SP "Labour Protection" meet the requirements outlined in Article 55, paragraph three, of the University Law. Teaching staff selection is based on criteria ensuring that study courses are led by qualified specialists with active scientific engagement. During the reporting period, 11 teaching staff members were involved in the second-cycle SP "Labour Protection": one professor, one visiting professor, one associate professor, four assistant professors, two lecturers, and two guest lecturers. Of these, 8 were elected by DU. Sixty-four percent (7 lecturers) hold doctoral degrees in fields such as physics, chemistry, economics, psychology, and law, providing students with essential knowledge and skills. The remaining lecturers hold master's degrees. Three of the staff are recognized as experts by the Latvian Science Council in social and natural sciences, demonstrating their scientific competence. Their qualifications are further confirmed by active roles in other study programmes and institutional positions. The teaching staff is committed to professional growth and continuously enhancing the quality of their study courses. The staff's national language proficiency complies with regulations for professional and official duties.

Evaluating the submitted CVs (annex: CV\_EN.zip) of the teaching staff and the additional information provided in SAR (annex 2.3.7.Basic information about teaching staff\_EN.xlsx as well SAR, p. 105-106), it has been found that their qualifications and professional experience meet the needs of the second-cycle SP "Labour Protection" implementation. During the assessment visit, students praised the teaching staff's expertise, particularly emphasising the practical experience of certain individuals and their ability to provide real-world examples relevant to future careers.

It was discovered during the assessment visit that some staff members had inaccurately reported their English language proficiency on their CVs. During the assessment visit DU representatives pointed out that English skills of the teaching staff are assessed through interpersonal conversations and conference participation. It was highlighted that there are courses available at DU or through specific projects with open enrollment. If someone is found lacking the required English proficiency, they are addressed personally. There is no standardised approach for assessing staff; their abilities are evaluated through colleague conversations, observations at international events, and their interactions. In the opinion of the expert team, there is uncertainty regarding the effectiveness of the current evaluation methods. We recommend exploring alternative approaches that may provide a more comprehensive and accurate assessment, for example Common European Framework of

Reference for Languages (CEFR).

#### 2.4.2.

According to SAR (p. 106), during the reporting period, the second-cycle SP "Labour Protection" experienced changes in teaching staff—two lecturers left, and four new members joined. Collaboration with state institutions has improved. For example, the study courses "Fire Safety I" and "Fire Safety II" are now taught by the commander of the Rēzekne Division of the State Fire and Rescue Service, who brings extensive experience and high qualifications in fire safety.

The second-cycle SP "Labour Protection" management provided additional information during the assessment visit, pointing out that changes in the teaching staff occur as needed in response to the natural passage of time and the needs of the study programmes. In the last two years, three lecturers of the second-cycle SP "Labour Protection" have been replaced: lecturer of the study course "Fundamentals of Labour Ergonomics" resigned, this subject is now taught by another professional. Also this year one lecturer retired, instead, the study course "Occupational medicine and occupational health" has been taught since October by a young specialist. They pointed out that lecturers are invited to implement a specific study course after consultation with the Department of Studies and relevant department management, by finding a potential lecturer at the university or, if there are no such lecturers or the existing ones are busy, by inviting a guest lecturer with appropriate education, qualifications and experience, whose candidacy is considered by the study field council based on the submitted CV, then it is approved by the Study Council. Visiting lecturers mostly have additional qualifications or practical experience in the field of activity related to the course of study to be implemented and are practising specialists in the fields. The DU contract with them is concluded for one study year or a study semester.

#### 2.4.3.

Not applicable

#### 2.4.4.

According to SAR (p. 107) 11 teaching staff members were involved in the second-cycle SP "Labour Protection": one professor, one visiting professor, one associate professor, four assistant professors, two lecturers, and two guest lecturers. Of these, 8 were elected by DU. This section also includes information that many teaching staff members engage in professional development through outgoing mobility, enhancing their qualifications in line with the study course requirements and desired outcomes. They prepare scientific articles for internationally peer-reviewed journals, participate in conferences, practical seminars, training, internships, and various scientific events, publish textbooks, develop methodological materials, and engage in international and national research projects and the research conducted by the academic staff significantly contributes to their field and the second-cycle SP "Labour Protection" development, enhancing and updating study course content. Their research covers theoretical aspects and current industry trends, which are integrated into study courses, fostering a strong link between research and teaching, thus improving study quality.

In the assessment visit, the representatives of the DU management and second-cycle SP "Labour Protection" management confirmed that the teaching staff are motivated to write publications and participate in scientific conferences. During the assessment visit, DU management informed that there are several structural units that support research activities. The Project Department assists in preparing project applications, while the Science Department helps academic staff network for the establishment of research groups. Internal grants are available to support faculty, covering publication fees of up to €500. If the publication is in a high-impact journal indexed by Scopus or WoS, the fee can reach €2,000 to €3,000. Additionally, participation in conferences is incentivized, with higher funding provided for those with an elevated h-index. Publication fees in journals range

from €1,000 to €1,500. This was also confirmed by the teaching staff during the assessment visit. However, a thorough evaluation of the submitted CVs (annex: CV\_EN.zip) and the information provided in the SAR (annex 2.3.7.Basic information about teaching staff\_EN.xlsx) has revealed that from 8 elected academic staff members 4 of them do not have any scientific publications, 2 of them could be considered as industry professionals. 1 person's latest publication is dated 2018. From this, it can be concluded that actually less than half of the second-cycle SP "Labour Protection" academic teaching staff are actively engaged in writing publications.

Evaluating the CVs submitted by the industry professionals involved in the teaching in the second-cycle SP "Labour Protection", their professional experience is in accordance with the Law on Higher Education Institutions.

#### 2.4.5.

According to SAR (p. 107) the teaching staff involved in the second-cycle SP "Labour Protection" collaborate on developing study course descriptions and planning study course content. They work together to agree on the goals, tasks, expected outcomes, and content for the study courses to be developed and taught. In some study courses, two instructors share responsibilities, with one delivering lectures while the other conducts seminars or practical classes, and they jointly assess the results achieved. The logical flow of study course implementation is discussed and evaluated both within the second-cycle SP "Labour Protection" study area and during meetings of the relevant department, which helps prevent topic overlap across different study courses.

The second-cycle SP "Labour Protection" management provided additional information that DU lecturers collaborate in scientific projects, conferences, seminars, conducting joint research and publishing the results of this research. The involvement of teaching staff in joint cooperation and research is ensured and promoted in accordance with the "Daugavpils University procedure for paying the expenses of preparing scientific publications", "The procedure for paying scientific publications and monographs of Daugavpils University academic staff", "Daugavpils University research projects" competition procedure". Faculty members of the study field are involved in science communication activities, participating in the Night of Scientists, DU Science School events. DU also regularly organises informal events (sports games, excursions in Latvia, concert visits, etc.) that promote the strengthening of friendly staff relations.

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

The professional experience of the teaching staff generally meets the needs of the second-cycle SP "Labour Protection", as they collaborate on study course content and share teaching responsibilities, preventing overlap and ensuring cohesive study course delivery. The selection of teaching staff and any changes made within the faculty are justified and reflect the second-cycle SP "Labour Protection" requirements. DU offers substantial support for research activities, including funding for publications and conference participation, which encourages staff engagement in scientific work.

However, it is concerning that less than half of the faculty members are actively publishing, as motivation for research and publication appears to depend more on individual initiative than on a consistent support structure, leading to potential variability in effectiveness among staff. Additionally, some discrepancies were noted in the reported English proficiency levels.

Strengths:

- 1) Support is available for the academic staff's scientific activities, including publications and conferences.
- 2) Justified criteria and methods for selecting teaching staff.
- 3) The practical knowledge and skills of the professionals involved in teaching.

Weaknesses:

- 1) Insufficient publication activity - less than half of the second-cycle SP "Labour Protection" teaching staff are actively engaged in writing scientific publications.
- 2) There is no standardised approach to assessing the teaching staff's English proficiency, leading to unclear evaluations of their language skills.

### 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

Less than half of the second-cycle SP "Labour Protection" academic teaching staff are actively engaged in scientific work.

## 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 second-cycle SP "Labour Protection" complies with the rules of the Cabinet of the Ministers No 305 "Regulations on the state standard for the professional higher education" (3.2.1. Compliance with the national standards\_Laour protection.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:** Partially compliant

The second-cycle SP "Labour Protection" complies with a valid professional standard (updated in 2021) (3.2.1. Compliance with the professional standard\_Labour protection.docx) However, the second cycle SP "Labour Protection" does not sufficiently cover the current labour protection management standard ISO 45001:2018, which is critical for senior labour protection specialists.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Partially compliant

The descriptions of the study courses and the study materials have been prepared in Latvian and they comply with the requirements set forth in Section 561 , Paragraph two of the Law on Higher Education Institutions. (3.2.1. Study course descriptions\_Labour protection\_EN.zip) Although descriptions of the study courses and the study materials have been prepared in Latvian and they comply with the requirements, literature mentioned in some study course descriptions, and also links to regulations are not updated.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The sample of the diploma complies with the rules of the Cabinet of the Ministers No 202 "The procedure for issuing documents certifying higher education recognized by the state" (3.1.2.Example of diploma und supplement.zip).

- 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

DU confirms that the official language proficiency of the teaching staff involved in the implementation of the study programme "Labour Protection" complies with the "Regulations regarding the extent of the knowledge of the official language and the procedures for examining the proficiency in the official language" for the performance of their professional duties. Annex of the SAR "Statement National language skills". (STATEMENT National language skills.docx),

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

The sample of the study agreement complies with the rules of the Cabinet of the Ministers No 70 "Mandatory provisions in the study agreement", annex of the SAR "2.1.4. Agreement on studies". (Annex 2.1.4\_Agreement\_on\_studies.docx).

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Fully compliant

Annex of the SAR "Certificate of acceptance of students". (Certificate of acceptance of students.zip) RTU undertakes to provide study opportunities for students in the same study programme

- 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

Annex of the SAR "Confirmation. Compensation guarantee for students" (CONFIRMATION Compensation guarantee for students.docx). DU confirms that students are guaranteed compensation for losses if the study programme is not accredited or the study programme's license is revoked.

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Not relevant

### **Assessment of the requirement [8]**

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

**Assessment of compliance:** Partially compliant

The second-cycle SP "Labour Protection" complies mostly with the relevant requirements, is unique in the region and highly evaluated by the students and employers. However, the second cycle SP "Labour Protection" does not sufficiently cover the current labour protection management standard ISO 45001:2018, which is critical for senior labour protection specialists, literature mentioned in some study course descriptions, and links to regulations are not updated.

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

The professional master's SP "Labour Protection" at DU is well-aligned with the standards of the "Internal Security and Civil Protection" study field, designed to meet both national and EU requirements. This study programme effectively aims to equip graduates with the necessary skills for success in the labour market, as evidenced by a high employment rate where over 90% of graduates secure jobs relevant to their education. Besides, the second-cycle SP "Labour Protection"

is unique in the region and education is mandatory for those who would like to work as labour protection specialists. It makes the study programme sustainability and potential in the near and long term future.

One of the study programme's significant strengths is its emphasis on practical experience, which is integrated into the curriculum through structured internships and practical lessons, ensuring that students gain essential hands-on experience alongside theoretical knowledge. Additionally, the study programme fosters the development of critical thinking by encouraging discussions, problem-solving, and collaborative work, which helps enhance students' analytical and independent thinking capabilities. The study programme benefits from modern facilities within the Life Sciences and Technologies building, including comprehensive databases and advanced laboratories that support effective learning.

However, there are critical weaknesses that need to be addressed to ensure the study programme remains relevant and effective. Many study courses currently rely on outdated literature and regulations, which undermines their applicability to contemporary industry practices, particularly in areas like fire safety and labour protection. Furthermore, the curriculum does not sufficiently cover important current standards, such as ISO 45001:2018, which is crucial for training senior labour protection specialists.

Another concern is the limited research activity among faculty; less than half of the teaching staff is actively engaged in publishing scientific work, which may affect the study programme's academic rigour and the currency of the material. Additionally, there is a lack of a standardised approach to assessing English language proficiency among faculty members, leading to uncertainties regarding their teaching abilities, especially since the study programme is offered in both English and Latvian.

In conclusion, while the second-cycle SP "Labour Protection" at DU has a solid foundation with many strengths, such as a high employment rate and a focus on practical learning, there are critical areas that require improvement. Addressing the reliance on outdated materials, enhancing the inclusion of current industry standards, and increasing faculty research activity are essential for maintaining the study programme's relevance in a rapidly evolving field. Furthermore, implementing standardised assessments for language proficiency will strengthen the overall quality of education. DU demonstrates a commitment to providing a supportive and flexible learning environment, but ongoing improvements will be vital to ensure the study programme meets the demands of the labour market and educational standards.

## **Evaluation of the study programme "Labour Protection"**

Evaluation of the study programme:

Average

## **2.6. Recommendations for the Study Programme "Labour Protection"**

### **Short-term recommendations**

1) Review the study course content literature sections thoroughly to identify and remove any outdated regulations that are currently included. It is important to ensure that the materials are up-to-date. Additionally, wherever possible, enrich the section with newer scientific literature to enhance the overall quality and relevance of the study course content. (31.12.2025.).

2) Integrate aspects of ISO 45001:2018 in existing study course/ courses, highlighting its application in developing and maintaining occupational health and safety systems. (31.12.2026)

### **Long-term recommendations**

- 1) Diversifying the appeal of the second-cycle SP "Labour Protection" to attract students from other parts of Latvia for their studies. (continuously)
- 2) Establish a standardised approach to assessing the teaching staff's English proficiency, to avoid unclear evaluations of teaching staff language skills. (continuously)
- 3) Establish a regular review and update schedule for its educational materials and technology to ensure they align with evolving industry standards. This could involve collaborating with industry professionals to identify necessary advancements and implementing a feedback system from students and faculty to assess the effectiveness of current resources. By prioritising continuous improvement and timely updates, the DU can maintain a high-quality educational experience that prepares students for the demands of the field. (continuously).
- 4) Implement a monitoring system to regularly track the scientific activities of the teaching staff and provide timely reminders about the need for publications, as well as about the support and incentives available from DU to encourage publishing.(31.12.2028).
- 5) Promote research activities among students and faculty that explore and present recent trends and innovations. (continuously).

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

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

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

| <b>Requirements</b>  | <b>Requirement Evaluation</b> |  |  | <b>Comment</b>   |
|--|-------------------------------|--|--|--|
| R1 - Pursuant to Section 5, Paragraph 2.1 of the Law on Higher Education Institutions, the higher education institution/ college shall ensure continuous improvement, development, and efficient performance of the study field whilst implementing its internal quality assurance system: | Fully compliant               |  |  | DU has established and implements mechanisms that ensure continuous improvements and developments of the internal quality assurance system. There is a wide range of internal quality documents and regulations that are the basis of governing the processes such as internal quality policy, regulation on studies, and regulation on elections to academic positions. |



| Requirements   | Requirement Evaluation |                     | Comment  |
|--|------------------------|---------------------|--|
| R2 - Compliance of scientific research and artistic creation with the level of development of scientific research and artistic creation (if applicable)        |                        | Partially compliant | The quantity and quality of scientific research is gradually improving over time, and is integrated into existing study programmes, while the new ones are in the process of approval. New innovative approaches to enhancing researchers' motivation for scientific research have been rolled out. However, there is still room for growth in the degree of internationalisation, which is essential for raising the scientific profile of DU. The University needs an additional boost in creating more English content for its website and YouTube channel and better presenting of its scientific achievements to external partners and stakeholders. Key documents outlining scientific strategy and conducted activities should be made available in English, and regularly updated. |
| 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 | Two things that lower the rating - the low mobility of lecturers and the lack of cooperation with foreign universities outside the Baltic states or close to them. Despite this, DU has good and close cooperation with local employers.   |

| Requirements   | Requirement Evaluation |  |  | Comment   |
|--|------------------------|--|--|---|
| R4 - Elimination of deficiencies and shortcomings identified in the previous assessment of the study field, if any, or implementation of the recommendations provided. | Fully compliant        |  |  | The "Internal Security and Civil Protection" study field has benefited from the effective implementation of expert recommendations. Following the 2012 accreditation, DU developed an action plan that enhanced study programmes and improved educational quality, including restructuring to address contemporary threats. A clear approach continues, ensuring qualified specialists are delivered. Recent improvements have been acknowledged despite the short assessment period following the December 2023 recommendations. Ongoing plans reflect a commitment to strengthening collaboration, expanding internships, and enhancing faculty language skills, contributing to a high-quality educational framework for student career readiness. |

#### 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   | Civil Security and Protection (41861) | Not relevant        | Fully compliant | Partially compliant | Fully compliant     | Good   |
| 2   | Economic Security (45861)             | Partially compliant | Fully compliant | Fully compliant     | Partially compliant | Good   |
| 3   | Labour Protection (47862)             | Partially compliant | Fully compliant | Partially compliant | Partially compliant | Average  |

#### The Dissenting Opinions of the Experts

None